

Writing About Boys: Using the Feminist Method of Strategic Contemplation When Researching Male Subjects

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In her preface to Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch's recent book, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Patricia Bizzell, who inspired many of us in 2000 by acknowledging "the role of emotion in feminist historiography" (10), claims that the feminist rhetorical practices and methods developed in the last three decades by composition and rhetoric scholars can be used to study subjects who aren't women and topics that aren't explicitly feminist (xii). Bizzell once again makes a timely claim as men's studies scholars express frustration that gender has not been used as a lens for studying men often enough, or at all. Two of these scholars argue specifically that "the ongoing quest for gender equity should be inclusive of [male subjects] and responsive to their challenges" (Harper and Harris 5).

To further the case that feminist methods can apply to the study of men, in this article I showcase methods Royster and Kirsch call "strategic contemplation" that I used when studying a set of archives compiled and left behind by male members of the same extended American family, the Prices. Royster and Kirsch associate strategic contemplation with self-reflexivity and the "inward journey" researchers take when aligning their identities as people with their topic as scholars, engaging meanwhile in the "outward journey" of the research process, collecting data. In this analysis that emphasizes synergy between theory and practice, I outline a specific case of strategic contemplation in the study of male subjects, while punctuating that the interpersonal work required of strategic contemplation (the inward journey) has epistemological functions. That is, as we sort our vantage point as scholars, we gain insights about how

certain subjects and their struggles reflect or are in conflict with our own values and identities. As a result, we can better theorize why our subjects and conflicts/struggles might matter to anyone else and ideally better craft our arguments and identify our audiences. As Royster and Kirsch put it, “[M]editative/contemplative moments, and naming them as such, enhance the possibility of recognizing the dynamic intersections between the fact of intellectual discovering and the experience of it as a credible strategy in the rhetorical act of knowledge creation” (87). When noting that over-identification with a research subject can circumvent critical analysis (78), Royster and Kirsch also claim that “identity plays a much larger role in research than we have considered at this point” (95). Indeed, while finishing a draft of the project using the Price family archives, I realized that significant experiences profoundly shaping my identity corresponded with the cultural conflicts experienced by my historical subject, and that my subject and I shared significant collective experiences as college students, if years apart. My research about a historical male subject might be framed as a feminist endeavor with an insight by feminist historian Kathryn Kish Sklar who claims, “One possible difference between a feminist work process and that of a nonfeminist biographer might be the degree to which a feminist biographer is willing to connect her work with the vulnerabilities and struggles associated with her own life” (32). With that directive, and to that end, in this essay I will show how the vulnerabilities of my own life have connected with those of my subject, John M. Price (1899-1976), whose work I studied while editing his diaries set in post-World War I America during the years he was in college at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. For the sake of clarity, and the fact that I discuss several “Prices,” I will be calling John Price, “John” or “John Price” throughout this piece.

John Price was the grandson of Thomas Price (1826-1900), the son of Enoch Price (1864-1945) and the nephew of Ira Price (1856-1939), all diarists whose volumes I studied as well. John was born in Chicago in a neighborhood known as Morgan Park where his father was a lawyer. His family also had an acre of land which they used to do some light farming, way ahead of the contemporary urban farming craze. An undergraduate at Denison University in Granville, Ohio from 1917 to 1921, John was a member of a fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta. John’s father Enoch, his mother, and several of his uncles attended Denison. Enoch, in fact, had

been a founding member of “Phi Gam.” The Price ancestral homestead was about 10 miles away from Granville, outside the city of Newark. John, like Enoch, his grandfather Thomas, and some of his uncles, was an avid diarist a bit after diary writing became more associated with women’s interests early in the twentieth century. In 1950 Price typed up his diaries, commented on them, and gave this archive to his son. Upon graduating from Denison in 1921, and after some vocational angst, he landed a job as an editor at the *New York Herald Tribune*, where he worked for his entire career. While he was well respected for his work, he also was looked upon suspiciously as a self-declared Communist during the McCarthy era. His retirement from the paper coincided with the paper’s folding. Some of his radical views as an older adult are foreshadowed by his rebellious spirit when a college student.

Prior to the epiphany about how conflicts shaping my personal identity corresponded with John’s historical experiences, I was perhaps armed with a better approach to scholarly inquiry and analysis from a cynical standpoint. I was objective. Or somewhat. I didn’t like John very much. Most of the time I was bringing part of his story to life by editing his diary, I was bored with him. Yes, like me, John liked to write and yes, like me, John kept a diary. But unlike me, John was, of course, male. And, John reveled in the kind of slackerdom that drives most college professors crazy. He tended to hand in all of his homework at once at the end of the semester, particularly in his English classes that were otherwise easy for him. As a result, and most significantly, during most of my data gathering stage, I didn’t take John very seriously as a subject who could teach *me* something. The treatment of our research subjects as just that, *subjects*, who can teach us something, instead of objects whose data we manipulate to prove a theory, or about whom we are so-called objective, might not be considered a feminist perspective, although Royster and Kirsch make connections between strategic contemplation and “[a]n ethics of hope and caring” (146).

Although I had been writing about feminist research design in the field of composition and rhetoric before and during my research with the Prices, and also with Gesa Kirsch was editing essays in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process, a collection* which foregrounds feminist methods of scholarly inquiry for historical work as one of its themes, I was not ready to determine if and how feminist methods

might apply to the study of male subjects. However, I was somewhat unconsciously, if inevitably, applying the feminist methods I had learned to appreciate when studying women such as my dissertation subject, the missionary Janette Miller. Her lived experience had inspired my interest in mindful research about historical subjects whose perspectives are no longer considered mainstream or progressive. Inevitably and eventually, when studying male subjects, specifically the Prices, I could not help but employ facets of “strategic contemplation,” a method for which I previously did not have a name but for which I was developing a vocabulary in some of my research and when working on the production of *Beyond the Archives*. Prior to major discussions in our field, and discussions with Kirsch about the application of ethics to research about historical subjects, including the role of emotion in feminist research design, I had borrowed methods from feminist anthropology, and particularly from anthropologist Ruth Behar. In her 1996 book, Behar calls a researcher who ‘locates her self in her text’ a “vulnerable observer” (13). To make some interdisciplinary connections, one might claim that a “vulnerable observer” values “strategic contemplation” as a research method, and may or may not share her vulnerability in published reports. So, in this essay, I set up the reader to ideally understand a feminist move when writing about a male subject, John Price, characterized most specifically by the connections I eventually made between the particular cultural contexts shaping my life and his.

The Outward Journey of Strategic Contemplation

My outward journey for this project began shortly after I discovered a diary belonging to John’s father Enoch, when I also came across John’s diary and related materials. John’s brother Allen had donated their father’s diary to the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor because it chronicles Enoch’s year of law school at the university during 1890-91. I happened to have read about Enoch’s diary in a March, 1971 issue of the University of Michigan-Dearborn student paper, *Ad Hoc*, as I was preparing for a discussion about college life in one of my introductory writing courses. From reading Enoch’s diary, which had just been donated to the Bentley library in 1971, the *Ad Hoc* writer learned that in the fall of 1890 a town and gown scuffle between a crowd

of students and the local Ann Arbor militia, a type of national guard, resulted in a freshman’s accidental death. The writer thought there might be similarities between this 1890 scuffle and the then recent violence at Kent State where several students died during a conflict with the national guard following a war protest.

When reading the 1971 article featuring information from Enoch’s diary, I was also planning a course on diaries. I had been writing about women’s diaries, but wanted to read some male diaries as well for some balanced perspective. As a newcomer to Ann Arbor, Enoch observed and wrote about the death of the young freshmen in October of 1890 with some logical alarm. Although Enoch plays the role of the stern breadwinner in his son John’s papers, he shows a tender side in the 1890-91 diary, which chronicles his decision to propose to his future wife Louise, his then correspondent, who lived with her parents in Dayton, Ohio. Enoch used the diary to emote about this commitment as he also pondered his future as a lawyer in Chicago. Despite the fact that Enoch reported a quintessential masculine event in his diary, a young man’s death by violence, he largely used his diary to write about his relationships with his fellow law students, his law professors, and Louise. Because writing about relationships is a function of diary writing that might be associated with women, I decided to write an article about Enoch’s diary in which I roughly make this argument.

Along with Enoch’s diary, which is actually a photocopy of the original diary, Allen also included a note that five of Enoch’s brothers, Ira, Silas, Milo, Orlo, and Homer, were all listed in a *America’s Who’s Who* directory, along with the citation and page number for this volume. I followed up on the reference to learn that all these men had gone to Denison University. All of them also had careers of distinction in higher education in the field of religion except for Homer who became dean of the agricultural college at Ohio State. *This must be some college*, I thought, as I planned a research trip to the university in Granville, Ohio.

My trip to Denison University to read more about the Price family after finding Enoch’s diary parallels, analogously, an excursion I undertook the summer of 2006, attempting to “run around Lake Minnetonka” when visiting my cousin Ann who lives in a Minneapolis suburb on this lake. Eyeballing the landscape and the houses across the lake from Ann’s house, I surmised that it would be about a six-mile run around it. Doable, for

an avid runner like myself, and, what the heck, it was a beautiful day and I was on vacation. Yet on my run I seemed to have taken a wrong turn. After about an hour and half on the road, when I failed to make any kind of circle, I realized I was lost, made my way up to a main road and told a man pumping gas at a gas station that I was trying to run around Lake Minnetonka. Could he help me?

Minnesotans are stoic people, which is probably why this man did not burst out laughing as he calmly set down the gas hose, led me into the gas station and pointed to a map of “Lake Minnetonka” behind the cash register, and in the grim manner of Scrooge’s ghost of Christmas future.

Lake? Lake Minnetonka is not a lake—it’s a *generation of lakes*, except that all of these lakes are Siamese twins, none of the lakes ever left home, just got married and kept pro-creating. As a result the “lake” on the map looks like a three year old and a drunken sailor tried to draw Lake Superior. I learned, from my next shot at getting directions later in this fun run turned marathon, with a different map and another stoic yet kindly stranger, that my cousin lived on a bay of this lake that has over 100 miles of shoreline. To put it analogously: Enoch’s diary was my 6-mile run. Finding out about where Enoch’s diary came from was like, well, seeing a map of Lake Minnetonka.

I was introduced to John’s college papers pretty early in my the process of discovering the Price family’s large and scattered archive during my first visit to the Denison University library. The archivist there Heather Lyle brought out what she had on Enoch, on his brother Ira, and also, since I “was interested in diaries,” John’s diary manuscripts. During a cursory sift through John’s diary as I meanwhile skimmed articles about Enoch, Ira, and the remarkable Price brother family of which they were members, I surmised immediately that John’s papers told a comprehensive story of college life and that the manuscript could interest general readers, particularly college students. At the time I was not thinking about how the manuscript would interest the male students in my classes particularly, but this would prove true. The manuscript, which, as mentioned, describes John’s four years as a college student at Denison from 1917 to 1921, includes all of his diary entries, letters to and from home to his parents and family members, correspondence with friends, particularly during the Great War, and other artifacts including tuition bills and report cards. John also annotated the diaries to define slang

terms, to identify people mentioned in diary entries and letters, and also to reflect on some of the events in the diary, presumably as he retyped and rearranged these artifacts from 1950 to 1962. As a longtime editor for the *New York Herald Tribune*, he obviously used his vocational skills when creating a comprehensive archive. Fortunately and unfortunately, Heather also showed me a finding aide of the Price family papers that are housed at the Ohio Historical Society in nearby Columbus and include more of Enoch’s papers, Ira’s papers, and their father Thomas’s papers, all within 20 boxes of documents. I learned then that Thomas kept a diary for fifty years. The universe was laughing at me, or was it *with* me? I had been looking for diaries by men and I had hit the jackpot. If Allen had been looking for a witness to his family’s passion for writing, and diary keeping in particular, when donating his father’s diary to the Bentley Library, he had found her.

Somewhere in between finishing up the research for the Enoch diary article and still vaguely planning to publish John’s diary manuscript even though I had only more or less skimmed it, I embarked on the enterprise of sifting through the Price family papers. It was a blur of going to Ohio and reading diaries, a process that was driven by passion, but not with a purpose that I would call strategic nor with any insight about how this project might parallel any ongoing and oft-studied conflicts I was working out in my inner life. These insights that I will describe, would come a few years later. My initial research on the Price family took place before editing *Beyond the Archives*, a process which garnered me more tools for understanding the role of “strategic contemplation,” a method for which, as mentioned, I hadn’t a name for yet but that I began to think about and apply in a non-linear fashion. That is, I wasn’t considering how feminist methods of research might apply to the study of men, but it was inevitable that how I had been learning to think about history, people, texts, gender, as well as self-reflection, was shaping my work in the archives. Hence, although I hadn’t yet engaged in much interpersonal work vis a vis the Price brothers’ texts and their contexts, I was relatively self-aware about my emotions as a researcher when conducting this preliminary research, even though these emotions had yet to add up to any insights I could use to significantly shape an argument about this research.

I read Thomas’s diaries—all fifty years’ worth—outlining his life as an apple farmer, Sunday school teacher, and father. He often wrote about

family life, the books he read, his accounts, and also about how he babysat for his wife on Sunday afternoons. I read about Thomas's grief when his son Asa died as a young man in college, and when using the college funding tactic he had founded, the perpetual fund, and for his perpetually arriving sons whose births he had dutifully and lovingly described in his diaries. I read Thomas's son Ira's diaries, where he described his journey to Germany—the country where two of his young children, Dudley and Mary, died within two weeks of each other of diphtheria. I read about Ira's journey back to the US with his wife Jennie, with their surviving children—Grace and Royal—and his work back in Morgan Park, the elite Chicago enclave where Enoch and Louise would soon move. I read about the birth of Ira's daughter Genevieve, his move from Morgan Park to the University of Chicago in Hyde Park, how he worked incredibly exhausting days as a teacher and scholar and then came home and nursed sick children. I read a diary his wife Jennie kept briefly in which she wrote, "Ira has too much to do." *That's an understatement.* I read about Jennie's breast cancer, how it came back, and how she died leaving Ira a lonely widower. I read the story of Jennie's life that Ira wrote as a memorial to her and made into a book. I read about Ira's incredible around-the-world lecture schedule and read with sadness when Ira returned home to a lonely house at Christmas in 1917. "Up early," he wrote, "but no prattle of children to break the silence, no shouts of joy, no surprises to gladden hearts—only the echoes of my own steps and as walks this flat's lonesomeness." He then wandered over to Enoch's house in Morgan Park. I read the history of Thomas Price's life that his son Allen wrote along with the commentary about this history between Enoch's three sons, Allen, Owen, and John. I also read one more of Enoch's diaries, written when he was establishing himself as a lawyer in Chicago and before he and Louise married. Unlike his father, brother, and son, Enoch was not that interested in everydayness as a diary topic. He wrote to figure things out. When he had finally gotten his life settled by going into business for himself with a loan from Ira, and had set a date for his wedding with Louise, more or less, he didn't need to write anymore.

I also figured out not necessarily what led Enoch and his brothers to be such overachievers, but what led them to use Denison University as their collective launching pads for their successful careers. As alluded to earlier, Thomas was responsible for his sons' educations in that he funded

Denison University, then Granville College, several miles from his farm in nearby Newark. In 1853 and 1854 Granville's trustees conceived of a creative way to raise funds for their new school and offered a "perpetual" scholarship to local Baptists and "friends of education in general," which set him up to sponsor a student financially throughout this student's lifetime (Ira Price). Neither Thomas nor Granville College fundraisers would guess that Thomas would have eight sons—no daughters. Eventually Thomas struck a deal with school administrators so that his scholarship endowment would be transferred towards free tuition at the school for all of his sons, five of whom graduated from Denison.

While using the Price family archives for research that was driven with a purpose, which at that point remained for the most part unknown to me, I was also coming down with a bad case of archive fever. Overwhelmed with all of the data that the Price family left behind, I did feel, however, the men's calling to me to bear witness to their lives, another purpose of research that Royster and Kirsch associate with feminist rhetorical methods, and particularly in the archives (140). But, aside from appreciating the small and large choices these men made while making their careers and rearing children, not to mention their compulsion to mediate their experiences through writing, what was the grand narrative and who would care? Carolyn Steedman describes archive fever as a hyper sense of responsibility to the dead that can never possibly be met, and which haunts the archivist after her day is done and she's alone in her hotel room:

You think: these people have left me *the lot*: each washboard and doormat purchased; saucepans, soup tureens, mirrors, newspapers, ounces of cinnamon and dozens of lemons; each ha' penny handed to a poor child. . . Everything. Not a purchase made, not a thing acquired that is not noted and recorded. You think: I could get to hate these people; and then: I can never do these people justice; and finally: I shall never *get it done*. (17-18)

After a day reading Thomas's accounts in the diaries he kept for fifty years, my archive fever was particularly severe as I tossed and turned in my hotel room bed, my brain attempting a synthesis of all the information I had absorbed. Its result is a mini-example of what can happen to us when we do research as embodied people, and witness others' lives, possibly

showcasing a positive result of archive fever, a facet of the “inward journey” of strategic contemplation which can be associated with feminist methods most explicitly as researchers acknowledge connections between their lives and others.’

Thomas’s accounts, as far as I could surmise as a relatively competent bookkeeper of my own accounts, told the story of a farmer with very good financial acumen. (In a written exchange between Thomas’s grandsons John, Owen, and Allen that I happened to read during a later trip to Columbus, these men made similar observations when they too read these diaries, noting that their father, Enoch, was also good with money as was his brother Ira. Also, Ira, it won’t surprise you to learn, considering he wrote a book about his wife’s life, also used his father Thomas’s diaries to write a publishable manuscript about him, a text from which I garnered the story of the perpetual scholarship.) While I wouldn’t go so far as to say that Thomas was talking to me from the grave, the night I pondered the contents of his diaries, and consequently his life, I was able to solve a pressing financial quandary in my own life. I had gotten a small sum of money that I hoped to use wisely and was also considering joining a rather expensive club with an indoor and outdoor pool which interested me as an avid swimmer. I figured the extra money could buoy me so to speak for about two and a half years worth of membership at the club, but then how would I afford it thereafter? So “Thomas,” through osmosis and the lessons I garnered from the diary records about his personal finance, pointed out that I could use the money to pay off my car which would free me up to pay the membership fees for a potentially longer period. That night I literally woke up with a start because of this loud thought: *Pay off your car!* Which I did. This Thomas-inspired economic strategy in fact worked for five years until my car got totaled in an accident, I got re-saddled with car payments, and had to quit the club.

Granville, Ohio, home to Denison University, is also itself a kind of archive. Civic leaders past and present have preserved and polished every nook and cranny of this quaint college town, which is now an affluent outburst of Columbus. There are plaques everywhere. And ghosts. Literally. A blue lady ghost haunts Granville’s Buxton Inn, a building that formerly housed women who attended one of Granville’s earliest women’s colleges. I happened to stay in this inn on, I am not kidding, Halloween. I hadn’t heard about the blue ghost at this point but I didn’t need to. I

had spent time with my share of Granville ghosts already. Having read more of the Price family archive, and having been haunted by several of the Prices whom I met on paper, I was beginning to think I would never get to edit John’s diaries. There was more to do, and so much to do. Why oh why did these Price people write so much? Why didn’t they throw anything away! And, why, for that matter did not the town of Granville? Even dead people were preserved at the Buxton Inn. My work interacting with this place reflects another dimension of strategic contemplation, using physical spaces to engage with deceased research subjects in *their* inevitable absentia, “attend[ing] to the places where past and present meet” (Royster and Kirsch 22), and which again is another way to engage emotionally with a subject through collective lived experience, a feminist value. Engaging with the built and natural environments where our subjects once dwelled intersects with both strategic contemplation methods and another method of self-reflection Royster and Kirsch introduce, “critical imagination,” which helps the researcher speculate about “what might be true” given what can be known or observed (71).

I had also tracked down and talked to John Price’s son, John Jr., who with his sister Emily, gave me copyright to the diary that’s in the Denison archives. With the copyright I could then bring a copy of the diary home, read it more thoroughly and, somewhat as a result, I began to teach portions of John Price’s diary in several different writing classes, which was an appropriate mini-result of my Price family research since I originally had gone to look at Enoch’s diary hoping to teach with it.

John’s diary manuscript has proven to be an important teaching resource for several reasons. First, young people rarely learn about history from the point of view of ordinary individuals. Secondly, I am able to show students, particularly novice students, the relationship between secondary and primary sources when they read portions of John’s diaries along with parts of historian Paula Fass’s book, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*, which catalogues perspectives of young American high school and college students in the 1920s who shared John’s attitudes about scholastics. Contemporary students have been able to see how John’s values and choices were scripted for him. While he had been late with deadlines for school assignments, he met them relatively faithfully when working as a newspaper reporter and editor for the college paper the *Denisonian*, as a features editor for the

yearbook the *Adytum*, as a writer and editor for his fraternity newsletter the *Lambda Deuteron Fiji*, and as the editor of a college humor magazine that he helped to found, the *Flamingo*. Like many of his World War I era peers, John spent much of his time consorting with his peers, drinking, smoking, gambling and attending movies. A young man overly preoccupied with school work would easily be labeled a “grind” during this era (Fass 173), and would likely claim to be “getting by” on tests and other school-sponsored assessment. (Since Price used the phrase “getting by” several times in his diary to describe his studying habits, I eventually titled the manuscript of his edited diary and related documents, *Getting By*.)

Students learn that John’s behavior was pretty typical, and they, mostly the girls, are disgusted that John “bucked” classes nearly every week, spent his allowance on alcohol, lied to his parents, and, when a leader in his fraternity, took part in the hazing of pledges which required these pledges to hike back to campus fifteen miles unaided. Yet readers have admitted that John’s life did not follow popular scripts *exactly*. Upon closer examination, he was less of a slacker than it would appear. He read difficult books for fun, he even plowed through Milton’s *Paradise Lost* when it was assigned to him, and he took his work launching the *Flamingo* very seriously—this set of circumstances suggests that popular or dominant scripts about the past, or about a certain group of people, do not always tell the whole story. John was no “grind,” but he did care a lot about reading and writing. It could even be argued that with all his bravado and bucking, he was, in the era of the 1920s jock hero, a feminist type, considering his passion for indoor pursuits. Discussions inspired by John’s diary materials have encouraged students to be more self-reflective about how the values of *our* time shape our choices and concepts of self, the intersection of the perspective of self and “Other” being perhaps another feminist value. John’s interest in writing, and the many genres he used to chronicle his life at Denison University, has also helped these students consider the many genres they use to communicate and construct their identities, and how they use different kinds of writing and media given the audience. They have learned that habits and communication processes have histories and were not born yesterday. They have also learned why it’s important to withhold judgment about historical people whom they do not know, and about whom they lack

facts, just as they might resist prejudice when encountering people from a different, race, gender or nationality.

When talking to John’s children, John Jr. and Emily, I also learned that he wasn’t all that close to them. He worked nights when an editor as his children were growing up and later in his life he holed himself up in his home office typing his diaries, an endeavor that he undertook, ironically, so that his children could know him better. John also became estranged from his very Victorian parents, first because a short early marriage ended in divorce and later because of his extreme political views as an espoused Communist. John’s obnoxious behavior as a privileged subject chronicled in his college diary materials coupled with only a kind of posthumous vulnerability made it easier for me to use the diary as a resource. I wasn’t all that worried what readers would say or think about John, which made class discussions about the diary more generative than they might have if I was teaching with a beloved heirloom. As a scholar concerned very much with ethics when it comes even to historical subjects, I essentially let my guard down.

The scholastic value of teaching the diary in these several classes influenced a final decision I made when studying the Prices once again in Granville, this time at the Granville Historical Society. When a search for article in the *Granville Times* about the Price family rendered around 10,000 hits, I decided that I would honor the values and pursuits of the Price family on the whole, including Thomas and Ira, by editing and seeking publication of John Price’s Denison University diary collection. Although John was not much like his father, uncle, and grandfather whose stories have their own rich contexts, I decided that John’s lifestyle, and the texts he produced, reflected in part many of the values of his forefathers, particularly the use of writing to mediate experience. Furthermore, John’s texts better translate these values to contemporary audiences as a more modern subject. As it turned out, my knowledge of the Price family history made for a more nuanced analysis of John’s materials when I developed some scholarly framing about it, and beyond this article.

In the midst of making this decision to commence editing John’s diary, I also discovered another very important archive: the Ridge Historical Society in Morgan Park, located in the Chicago neighborhood where John grew up and where Ira once lived before the Morgan Park Baptist

Theological Seminary merged with the University of Chicago and Ira moved to Hyde Park. John's brother Owen bought the Morgan Park family homestead from Enoch and Louise, and it might not surprise readers that Owen had a hand in founding this historical society which keeps its archives in a large house on the "ridge," a ridge which used to be a bank of Lake Michigan long, long ago. Yes, more history. The neighborhood of Morgan Park, like Granville, is another incredibly pleasant place to visit, even if it's a bit more rough around the edges than Granville, more citified. If Granville is a Republican, Morgan Park is a Democrat. This south side neighborhood is nowhere near my friends and relatives who live on the north side of Chicago. The Ridge Historical Society might as well be my summer home by the time I get across town to see these friends and family members, and where I stay. But visiting Morgan Park makes me want to quit my job and spend the rest of my life walking around its bucolic streets thinking about its houses and its past. I understand then why the people who run the Ridge Historical Society are so passionate about the place and its history where, remarkably, Enoch Price is still a celebrity. When Morgan Park was still a village Enoch was its attorney and fought for "home rule." The village was invariably swallowed up, or annexed, by the ever encroaching city of Chicago in 1916 and "home rulers" wanted Morgan Park to remain a separate municipality. Enoch, who might have seen the merger as inevitable, made sure that the village had a high school before Morgan Park was officially annexed by Chicago. The Ridge Historical Society houses, not surprisingly, more of the Price family papers including John's high school diaries.

Strategic contemplation was somewhat built into my method for editing the diary, in that I spent some time with the materials before I made judgments about their meaning, even if this process meant more work. John technically had done a lot of this work for me, by transcribing his diaries and letters, but these typed pages are for the most part not scannable, so I had to retype them. The other problem: there is just too much material. I doubt the average reader would stay engaged with a 500-600 page manuscript that took me, an interested reader, a week to slog through. So I spent about three months retyping the entire manuscript, cutting only a few items from the original. I did most of my editing after I had retyped the entire manuscript, and to ensure that I hadn't carelessly

or ignorantly removed a key detail, which would come in handy when cutting more systematically to highlight or foreground narrative themes or threads. When doing so, retyping the diaries, I therefore reenacted Price's process as an editor who had also transcribed the same work.

Strategic Contemplation: The Inward Journey

Strangely, it wasn't until I had finished typing the manuscript that I became curious or even really knew what John looked like as a young man. I had so much work to do putting the diary in context that I didn't have a chance to look through Denison University yearbooks, having approached the project more or less as a "grind," pursuing results and not pleasure from a scholarly enterprise, aside from my "vacations" in Granville, Columbus and Morgan Park. Had I not been able to fully transcribe the manuscript, there would *be no project* and maybe therefore it was hard for me to enjoy it too much. When I did have a chance to look at these yearbooks during a visit to Granville in August 2009, the project really came alive for me. I engaged more fully in the process of "strategic contemplation" as it can be coordinated with a researcher's "critical imagination," particularly when place stands in for deceased subjects and as researchers use some admitted admiration for their historical subjects, and across time, to make connections that might be regarded as more emotional than scholarly. As I have mentioned, I hope to demonstrate how these emotional connections can actually be useful for meaning making.

Having essentially lived with John Price's collection for several months, I knew the cast of characters featured in the yearbooks—students and teachers alike. I also had the chance to visit John's former fraternity house, the old Phi Gamma House, which is now the Downers-Robbins museum on Granville's main drag. Truth is stranger than fiction. The eccentric former owner, who eventually donated the Greek revival style house to a foundation, had bought the house after the fraternity houses were moved up the campus hill, and built a few additions onto to the back of the house. These additions include a shrine to the nineteenth-century radical feminist Victoria Woodhull, one of the first woman stockbrokers who also ran for president in 1872. I thought John would have appreciated the Woodhull shrine amidst the stodgy historical plaques in conservative and tidy Granville.

I also use photography as a research method. Photos help me remember where I've been and the act of recording through the camera enacts the combined role of intimate witness and detached critical observer when a researcher of historical materials. Photography also helps me hone my "critical imagination," when the material world stands in for my subject who cannot entirely be known. In other research trips to Ohio I had taken photographs of the land and site of the Price family's previous apple orchard, buildings in the town of Granville, the town square in nearby Newark, and the cemetery where John's grandparents are buried.

Armed with photographs from the yearbook, and those supplied for me by Heather, I walked the campus that last August night in Granville, attempting to transport myself back to John's world. Having fully engaged with the history of the campus via John's texts, I was able to get a better lay of the land, particularly the division between the part of campus where female students lived, and the rest of the campus and town where male students were free to live wherever they could find an affordable room. I assessed the proximity of the Phi Gamma Delta house to the women's dorms—about a half mile—deleting, in my imagination, the newer dorms and athletic fields.

While transporting myself back in time with my visual aides on location, I was thinking about the gender divisions set up by the built environment, along with cultural codes, during John's time at Denison. Customary at colleges across the nation, female college students at Denison had strict curfews when they lived in the "Sem," nicknamed for the original female college, the Granville Ladies Seminary, which was a set of dorms—Stone Hall, Burton Hall, and a few cottages. Some of these original buildings still stand at the bottom of a hill, the campus's main topographical setting. The top of Denison's hill was and still is home to the Observatory and the President's house, which I also photographed. Not only could male students live wherever they wanted, they were free to come and go from their residences as they pleased. But young women living in the Sem were not. Even by 1921, young men and women had to "scheme" in order to hang out together. A "schemer" was someone who organized a date not authorized by elders (Chessman 286). A schemer who got caught risked getting "campused." An especially ambitious scheme could result in "campusing" the entire "Sem."

The last of my photographs of the "old" Denison needed to be undertaken in intervals because the battery in my digital camera, which apparently was on its last leg, kept having to be recharged. *Grr*. So I had to walk up the hill to the old campus a few times. Anyone walking up this very steep hill to the dorms and buildings on Denison's campus has immediate solidarity with every Denison student, staff member and faculty member since the beginning of time. Surely none of these people can possibly be overweight. Walking up this hill must burn like 8,000 calories and if you've eaten lunch shortly before your trip up the hill you're ready for dinner by the time you've gotten to the top. At this point, I was actually was experiencing a growing solidarity with John Price himself who, as mentioned, I didn't always like and often was bored with. As I stood at the top of the hill, with time at last to smell the roses—or in this case sit down for a minute—I was thinking about what happens when you spend a lot of time with someone, like say four years of your life, and theirs, albeit not in the same lifetime.

My subconscious or even reluctant bonding with John had actually begun a bit sooner than that August evening when a few months earlier I had completed Nicholas Syrett's book, *The Company He Keeps*, a historical account of the white male collegiate fraternity system in America. The book helped me to sort out the Price family genealogy in context with the burgeoning college Greek system in America. Although Thomas had not been to college, Thomas's involvement with the Granville area literary society paralleled the founding and function of literary societies in American colleges. Fraternities morphed from these societies, as did the Denison chapter of Phi Gamma Delta co-founded by Enoch.

I brought my own context to Syrett's historical analysis that takes readers to the present. I had also been in the Greek system in college and felt restricted by the gender roles assigned to me, which stifled me and my cohorts from informal interaction with male friends whom we were to presumably only interact with when on a "date" in order to pursue an MRS Degree, circa 1958. The days I spent in my sorority house were among the worst of my life. I had been extremely puzzled and hurt by one fraternity man in particular, whom I call Lloyd, and I spent nearly a decade healing from the wounds of his treatment of me when he was also under the influence of "the system" during our four years of college. After reading Syrett's book, and studying the history of American men's college

experience, I could understand that Lloyd, a straight A student, was a type of “grind” at heart who was otherwise pressured to fulfill a prescribed masculine identity marked by rebellion and promiscuity. In the end of his comprehensive analysis of white fraternities, Syrett is quite condemnatory of the behavior and scripts promoted by white fraternities in America, asserting, “The story of fraternities, then, is the story of the men who have most relied upon their whiteness, their maleness, their class status, and their heterosexuality to assure their continued prestige and power” (305). Lloyd indeed had a degree of power over me because of his privileges as an upper middle-class male, and a member of a fraternity who was lauded for his sexual risk taking. Yet his uneven behavior toward me, which at times revealed some cracks in his powerful armor, was likely symptomatic of another kind of ambivalence about the rigid gender roles prescribed to us that made the years I spent in a sorority house so miserable.

Lloyd’s antics, which included romantic liaisons with my sorority sister whom I call Betty, so upset me that at one point I began calling my sorority house “jail.” It took nearly twenty years to consider that Lloyd might have felt trapped while carrying out this drama, too. Sleeping at a sorority house (which was against the rules for men), might have earned Lloyd a badge of honor within his circle, as it did for Betty when hostessing him. But how pleasant could his stay have been? Lloyd couldn’t go to the bathroom on the second floor of the house and he also had to sneak in and out of it. Syrett’s study made me consider, and in a sympathetic way, that Lloyd had struggled, too, in this system. I had also used my diaries when in college to describe this drama starring Lloyd, and reread these diaries over the years to better understand it. Syrett’s book was also published the same month I had finished typing the Price diary. So by coincidence, or grand design, it wasn’t until I was completely done typing up John’s documents that the project became consciously personal for me, and feminist, if following Sklar’s definition of a feminist biographer. My meaning making about John’s life was made in conjunction with insights about my own. More precisely, John Price’s story, and its larger context with the history of the American college Greek system, helped me to be more aware and astute about the scripts shaping my life and those close to me—the exact kind of exercises that I had encouraged my students to engage in when reading John’s diary and related materials in my writing classes.

I could see that both Price and Lloyd struggled to certain degrees as members of the Greek system, but also living in a longstanding part of society that sociologist Michael Kimmell calls, “Guyland.” Here, young men’s behavior can be shaped by a set of codes that might lead them to act against their own interests and, in the process, cause damage to those close to or around them. As Kimmell puts it, “These ‘almost men’ struggle to live up to a definition of masculinity they feel they had no part in creating, and yet from which they feel powerless to escape” (9). When categorizing John and Lloyd as ‘almost men,’ collectively, I could better interpret their motivations and be more sympathetic towards them as subjects. John’s historical college life years and Lloyd’s more recent college life years also bookmark the heyday of the “Animal House” culture within the college Greek system. John was a fraternity member as the college Greek system as we know it expanded when images of the college Greek life became iconic symbols of college culture in the mass media, and when fraternity culture became associated with sexual conquest and exploitation (Syrett 227-228). Partly in response to date rape and alcohol related deaths in fraternity houses, and perhaps as a byproduct of a culture less tolerant of sexism, Lloyd’s fraternity is now one among many that went dry by 2000 (Denizet-Louis, Nixon).

Before beginning the leg work of editing John Price’s diary and letters I also decided I needed to write something “for myself,” and had I put together what writer Dave Eggers might call a “memoir-y kind of thing” (n. page), which happened to entail editing my college diaries and writing essays to introduce their contexts. My goal was to better figure out why I was so hurt and damaged by *my* frat boy relations with Lloyd and why, in the end, I hadn’t enjoyed college life. With a kind of eye on publishing this memoir, I wrote it for a general audience and circulated it to friends to see if what I had to say made any sense. When writing my memoir, and editing my college diaries, I came to the conclusion that I was not able to function healthily with the identity of a sorority girl. Since I was in an elite sorority, this identity was particularly rigidly prescribed. As one scholar of college Greek life has observed, “The elite groups [of the Greek system] have far less freedom to deviate from assigned gender roles and embrace a more traditional conception of masculinity and femininity” (DeSantis 39). It might seem fairly obvious in retrospect, but it had only dawned on me that summer of 2009, how my personal memoir project,

which included editing my diary, was part of a larger enterprise of writing and scholarship which *included* writing about John Price and putting his life into context. What's more, I used some techniques editing John's diary that were inspired by the discoveries I made when editing my own diaries, such as cutting some details to create more narrative tension and limiting narratives threads when imagining a general reader. French scholar Alice Kaplan came to similar conclusions about the value of writing memoir in conjunction with more formal scholarship, a method that might seem to many a lot of work but which might be regarded as a feminist enterprise. The interests shaping her dissertation, which became a book, and her second scholarly book, *The Collaborator*, about a World War II era fascist, Robert Brasillach, were linked to her personal identity, which she describes in her memoir *French Lessons*. Kaplan's father was a lawyer for the Nuremberg trials before his untimely death that led her to France as an escape from a sad house in mourning. When completing a portion of *The Collaborator*, she realized "that [she] was at the end of a trilogy" ("An Interview"). Kaplan's memoir was a scaffold to a scholarly project, in the same way that my memoir featuring Lloyd was a scaffold to my writing about John Price.

Studying the lives of dead people, as it turns out, isn't that much different than trying to figure out our own lives—we don't always fully understand how the many episodes and conflicts in our life add up to a main idea, and even with the help of an expensive therapist, friendly readers, or, in the case of me *and* John Price, a lot of typing and the gift of hindsight. However, during my last minute bonding with John on the hill that August evening as I assessed the logistical constraints of time and destiny that prohibited a forty-one-year-old female college professor from being friends with a twenty-year-old college student, who was on the other hand one hundred ten, I first realized that from a college professor's perspective, John's "getting by" certainly got really old, but from a fellow diarist's perspective, well, I actually got John Price. I had a lot in common with him and he was actually a kindred spirit when considering our collective interest in mediating experience through diary writing, and perhaps to a fault on each of our ends. I considered our nebulous meeting of the minds, if inevitably one sided, since John was dead. Maybe it was no accident that John was not around the day someone figured out what made him tick and perhaps this is how he'd want it or was the only way

he knew. After all, the cultural scripts in John's collegiate life kept him separated from those whom he also had much in common with when alive, such as his fellow female students. Later in his life he was separated psychologically from his parents, and, ultimately, his children. As it turned out he did elicit witnesses to his life, but probably not the ones he imagined when he typed up his diaries. And so my new project, writing about John Price, became fused at last consciously with a longtime project of mine for which I which I knew and cared entirely too much about, but had yet to adopt for scholarly purposes: writing about boys.

Conclusion: Why John Price's Story Matters and the Usefulness of Strategic Contemplation

Arguably, my identity as a diarist drew me to the work of the Price family while my identity as a former member of the college Greek system helped me to make some meaning of John Price's diary materials more specifically. Sorting out some of my longtime interpersonal conflicts helped me better see my subject and my subject helped me better see myself. Having completed my memoir and the editing of John Price's diary, I feel free of the past and its hold on me, a freedom which was enabled foremost by recognizing not only my own vulnerability but that of my subject(s), too—John Price and Lloyd. The legacy of gendered identities among college students also remains a problem for all of us to address. Authors of a recent study of contemporary college men, for example, describe how their subjects have felt beholden to the script of a college man who crams as much partying as he can into four years. Studying and preparing for the future is not considered masculine for these college students, as was the case for John Price nearly 100 years ago (Edwards and Jones). My story and John Price's story belong not just to the two of us; they belong also to a collection of stories that continue to be lived, and continue to be problematic.

Kirsch and Royster encourage researchers to come "out of the shadows" (86) to describe their inward and outward journeys that characterize their research processes, and "call for greater attention to lived, embodied experience because [they] consider it to be a powerful yet often-neglected source of insight, inspiration, and passion" (22). These scholars also, of course, call for rigor among researchers. Researchers need to work hard, and dig deeply, to best identify and articulate how

their personal identities can be sources for knowledge creation. Behar makes similar claims, and asserts, “It is far from easy to locate oneself in one’s text” (13). When writing about the Prices, I certainly was not quick to identify with them, mostly because I couldn’t or wasn’t ready to, and not just because these subjects were men.

Certainly there will be naysayers who will consider any acknowledgment of personal investment in a research subject, or the sharing of personal information in scholarly reports, not to mention writing about boys in diaries, as a form of self-absorption or naval gazing. These readers are trained to “not care” that I got lost running around Lake Minnetonka, that there is a blue lady haunting the Buxton Inn, that Thomas Price helped me afford a swim club or that Lloyd couldn’t go to the bathroom in a sorority house in 1988. These readers just want “the data.” But these readers might consider historian Susan Crane’s argument that the story of history doesn’t necessarily exist outside of individuals because we all share a collective memory. As she puts it, “Historians are always ‘from’ not only their own pasts but also the pasts that they write, insofar as they work on that past in their own lives. Therefore, it is not necessary to strictly segregate the genres of autobiography and history” (1384). Royster and Kirsch also address the influence of collective memory in relationship with strategic contemplation. They claim that the awareness of colliding or conflicting histories between a researcher and her subject, which comes with strategic contemplation, “enhances a researcher’s capacity to ground the analysis within the communities from which it emanates” (86). To apply these concepts to my own inward journey: I was better able to consider John Price as a subject to be taken seriously when I ascertained how our individual lives have intersected with a larger history or collective experience of gendered tensions and divisions among college students, and college students in the American Greek college system in particular. This collective experience included Lloyd’s, and Lloyd is a subject with whom I also struggled to bond with, but needed to, in order to forgive him.

Feminist scholar, Daphne Patai might be the quintessential skeptic of academic memoir when declaring that “academics have reached new heights in the self-important pretense that the world’s ills can be set right merely by making personal disclosures” (A52). Patai’s perspective about scholarly memoir is likely neither exceptional nor outdated. At the

very least, perhaps, and as one answer to the skeptics, the scaffolding of memoir to scholarly projects might be one method for getting novice scholars to engage, and with primary sources particularly. My students align personal experience with primary and secondary sources quite naturally when engaging with John’s materials, while they also consider their own identities as college students and the legacy, as part of the collective, that they may or may not have inevitably inherited. My limited experience in the classroom using John’s diary suggests more opportunities for training young people, and even particularly young men, the value of emotional identification with research subjects that feminist researchers have come to find useful for meaning making. Royster and Kirsch also advocate critical imagination and strategic contemplation as productive classroom methods. Royster, for example, encourages her students to consider scholarly study as ‘a whole body experience’ (97). Finally, and to come back most specifically to my introductory argument, extending feminist research methods so that they might be used to measure scholarship for which men or non-feminist topics are subjects, does seem a logical extension of any productive feminist enterprise with the aims of nurture and inclusion and when considering that collective experience and memory includes actors of each gender. Including men as subjects for feminist projects does not necessarily entail getting our subjects off the hook for poor behavior, but rather acknowledges them as members of our stories, too.

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