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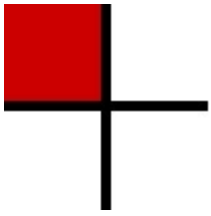
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## Hors d'oeuvre

Campbell Jones and Steffen Böhm

In spite of the fact that it is a liquid, milk should always be regarded as a food and not as a drink. It should be *eaten* rather than *drunk*. That is to say it should be sipped and swallowed slowly. Taken in this way, it coagulates in little fragments in the stomach, and these can be dealt with readily by the digestive juices. On the other hand, if it is gulped down it forms a large indigestible clot in the stomach, and the digestive juices have difficulty in breaking it down. For the same reason, milk is more digestible in the form of broths and porridges because, mixed with carbohydrates, the clot breaks up into fragments more readily. (*Larousse Gastronomique: The Encyclopedia of Food, Wine and Cooking*)

### Restrictive and General Economies of Organization

In the opening pages of *The Accursed Share*, Georges Bataille introduces a distinction between restrictive economy and general economy. The charge is clear: while economics has concerned itself with economic life, this concern has been manifest in relation to a restrictive economy which encompasses only a fraction of life. Against these restrictions Bataille sets out the project of empirical and historical study of the general economy, setting out an 'economics' which would not focus narrowly on production or even consumption of goods and services, but would open itself to all that exceeds that economy and is yet integral to it – waste, pleasure, sex, death, and all the other human activities that *are* life but that do not register under a restrictive conception of the economic subject as *homo oeconomicus*.

Without entering into a general critique of economics, we can see this distinction in even the most banal case of, for example, a child who gets up in the middle of the night to pour a glass of milk. This situation could be analysed in terms of the basic biology and the 'technology' of the body, although economics will not be content with (nor particularly interested in) these bodily functions; economics concerns itself with the circuit of production and consumption and its reproduction (on an ever increasing scale). By contrast, what we can take from Bataille's emphasis on a general economy is that there is a lot more to the economy of milk than assuring a constant flow of liquids from the cow to the refrigerator; there is a lot more to life than economy in this restrictive sense.

Beyond the dirty cup left on the kitchen bench, what of the sheer waste of food in the First World, objectified by the milk and butter mountains of the European Union? Or companies such as Nestlé, which make huge profits selling milk powder to African families who don't have access to clean water? Or the whole way agriculture is done today, the way it has become a global business, the way the global market demands 'fresh' food to be sent around the world in container ships, truck lorries and airplanes? What about the environmental and social costs of the restrictive economy of milk?

But general economy is not just about a cost/benefit analysis of the restrictive economy (although it will obviously include this too). This would itself imply too much restriction. What this 'general' points to is a testing of the limits and boundaries of economy as such. General economy can thus not necessarily be named, because it is at the limit of language; there is something unnameable, invisible and secret about the general economy, something that exceeds our 'normal', restrictive understanding of economy, something that is beyond, yet part of us.

Of course there are no simple dividing lines between the restrictive and the general. If this is not a 'binary' in the normal sense, this framing of the restrictive and the general might still help us to think about 'organization'. To simplify, we might say that the rules of discursive formation in Organization Studies, Organizational Behaviour, Organizational Development, Organizational Psychology and the Sociology of Organization have tended to privilege a restrictive economy of organization.

Against this restrictive economy of organization it might be possible to begin to designate a field of what could be called a 'general economy of organization'. This general economy of organization would not necessarily even mention specific organizations but would be more interested in organization as a basic social and political process. This organization hence both exceeds and makes 'organizations' possible. As a first approximation of the general economy of organization, we might speak of a process of what has been called the 'production of organization', although the risk is that even this is too restrictive. There is no point of generalising the concept of production if this leads us to a vacuous generality, one that is afraid to speak of the specificities of the concrete relations of domination that surround us today. The general economy of organization is, therefore, not simply one that speaks of generalities but one that names, specifies and resists these forces of restriction.

## **Danger**

Restriction brings comfort, of course. The comfort of home. Whenever we leave this comfort, this warmth of home, we risk the greatest of dangers. But is this true? Any sense of comfort that restrictions give us have at least the possibility of being shown up as illusory. Think of the violence of home, the repeated recurrent physical and discursive injury that is, for so many, the normal experience of home. If leaving home is risky, we should never forget that we can incur just the same risk of danger, and even greater ones if we stayed in, and more so if we don't have the option of getting out.

If we wanted to open out towards a general economy of organization then we face these risks. We don't want to stay in; that is for sure. But if we go out then we risk humiliation, misunderstanding, ridicule. Some will say that we are not even talking about organization any more. 'That's not *really* organization theory, is it!' Quite seriously, we don't want this to be the reaction. We *do* want to talk about organization, and even about organizations. But we think that a lot of what is done in the name of organization is too restricted. Hence the need for organization to be opened up, generalised as it were. But for us, a general economy of organization would not fall outside of what might 'properly' be asked of organization, but would, from the inside, test the limits of precisely that proper, restrictive, notion of organization.

There are practical questions here. If we set out our stall in relation to a general economy of organization, how do we know, as editors, what we should allow to be said? What do we publish? Isn't the first rule of democracy that there is no *a priori* disqualification of discourse, that is, that in a democracy, one must be able to say anything? But then, how do we balance this democratic demand for free speech with the obvious risk of letting anything go? Max Weber is clear in this regard: democracy and bureaucracy go hand in hand. The simple formula: no democracy without bureaucracy. And this is the bind that we face as editors who might want to open the question of organization beyond its current state within a restrictive economy. Should we publish anything that is critical, experimental or speculative, in content or in form, of the general economy of organization? The answer to this is obviously negative. But at the same time, we are forced towards a positive answer, insofar as it is our responsibility, the responsibility of the university, to forever engage in exactly this critique, experimentation and speculation.

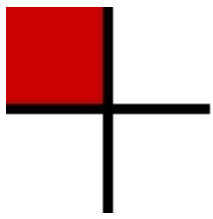
Whenever we say, write or teach something, whenever we leave the house in the morning, there are innumerable dangers we are facing. But we *do* need to leave the house, we can't just stay in all day and watch TV. And in the process of leaving we face the danger that we might run into something unexpected. That's always the danger. We might have just popped out for a bottle of milk, but suddenly encounter something radically Other, perhaps in the form of fluids that we simply cannot comprehend. Unless we have the patience to try to understand. To stop. To listen. To think.

## Gulping It Down...

With *ephemera* we have always tried to pose the question of what is 'normal' in relation to the question of organization; perhaps there has always been something *unheimlich*, uncanny or unhomely, about what we are doing. So, this is not a new beginning, we are applying the formula once again. We might like to think of the pieces in this issue, despite their liquid appearance, as food, rather than drink. That is, the pieces that we have assembled here should not be gulped down for fear that they might form an indigestible clot, something that the digestive juices are not able to deal with. They are all fragments, fractions, pieces, parts; they are all on the 'limit' of organization in a restrictive sense.

To which we might add a further danger. By offering the contributions to this issue as small pieces, they might be all the more easily swallowed up and liquidated by the digestive juices of what we generally know as organization. While these dangers are real, we hope that the various contributions to this issue can, through their content but also their *form*, point to a general economy of organization: of work, of power, of subjects, of resistance; of texture, of fear, of joy, of change, of whispers, of language, of plots, of kinship, of secrets, of bodies, of limits and restriction.

We can say little more by way of a 'general' introduction.



## Other Work: A Dividual Enterprise\*

Per Bäckius

Would it be possible to comprehend contemporary Western societies without the individual? How many institutions, laws, and conventions would not appear utterly meaningless and senseless devoid of it? Doing away with the individual, ‘unthinking’ its concept, type and name – erasing the individual’s entire history – seems to counter reason and common sense. It would probably take the disposition of a madman, an alchemist’s imagination, and a pataphysical squint to carry out such a dubious enterprise. Were anyone, for all that, to succeed we would most likely react with the same kind of loathing and dejection as the narrator in Poe’s story: “This old man, I said at length, is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd. It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds” (Poe, 1996: 262). He refused to be alone, refused to be, or become, individual. A most repulsive felony. Imagination dead imagine. But let’s not get astray...

In reply to the question *Who comes after the subject?* Deleuze made his point clear: there is no use in waiting for a Who to come as a replacement for a particular concept. It is better to find or create the new functions that make the prevalent one inadequate, since “a concept does not die simply when one wants it to, but only when new functions and new fields [of thought] discharge it” (Deleuze, 1991: 94).

In this essay I will try to respond to a call from Heller and Wellbery (1986) in which they stress the need to rethink the concept of the individual; or the need, even, to constantly rethink it. ‘The individual’ has served, they maintain, as a paramount feature in the construction and development of Western societies for the last five centuries.<sup>1</sup> In

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\* An earlier version of this text was presented at the *17th EGOS Colloquium*, Lyon, France, 5-7<sup>th</sup> July 2001.

1 Although, if we follow Morris’ (2000) arguments, we should perhaps add another four hundred years to the individual’s historical importance; the question of when the individual was discovered has been much disputed and will, I’m sure, remain unsettled.

the process, however, the individual has been under steady pressure, in perpetual crisis, and hence under incessant reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> There seem to be no cause for disagreement on any of these instances, so what remains to be asked for are the functions and fields that pose the individual as a problem. And if there is a crisis it would, of course, be nothing but a crisis of thought itself. Hence, I will explore a potential rupture in thinking ‘the individual’.

Within my own field of business and management studies, processes of individualisation commonly result in (as well as them being an effect of) a joint praise, where a clear distinction between academic inquiry and business consultancy is often hard to make. In this context individualisation means empowerment and win-win situations. Workers and employees are to be empowered in the name and image of the entrepreneur, whereas consumers acquire their full potential by way of one-to-one relationships with companies. We are told that our societies bear the emblem of enterprise (Drucker, 1993) and that we ourselves, accordingly, are first and foremost leading entrepreneurial lives (Peters, 1999), attending, perhaps, a curriculum on the strategic development of individuals (Maccoby, 1988). In these circumstances, I suggest, crisis dwells, covert, waylaying in the realm of business ventures. *Just the place for a Snark!*<sup>3</sup>

### First exemplar of a new individual

September 1998. I had invited one of the major figures – an Icon<sup>4</sup> – of the booming e-business to share his experiences of project management with one of my classes at the School of Business. He arrived at the lecture hall a few minutes late, wired to his mobile phone and engaged in conversation. He disconnected and turned to the expectant audience. “Minor crisis at the company”, he excused himself, “I’d better get back there within the hour, so let’s get started”.

In the following hour we learnt about his company (at that time perhaps Sweden’s most successful in their line of trade, at least in terms of increase in stock value, media attention, and attractiveness to venture capital) and how they had managed to get ahead of competition. My business students were intrigued, as they usually are by stories from the real world. But since he did not speak much about projects, my own notebook stayed blank. That is, until he wrapped things up by stating his credo: “What you must be fully aware of to make it in this trade is that we are now dealing with a new individual – a new consumer and a new employee. The new individuals do not take orders and mistrust authority. They are in charge of their own lives and make their own choices. They take crap from no one. You

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2 Cf. Meyer (1986). For Meyer, reconstruction seems to consist of further socialisation in case of ‘explosive’ individuals, and improved means of individualisation in case of an excessively subjugating society.

3 In Lewis Carroll’s famous poem we learn that a Snark is easily recognisable, since all Snarks are Snarks, except some that are Boojums.

4 Icon was also the name of his company.

have to design your business as well as your organisation in accordance with their dispositions otherwise they will leave you. This is the most significant change we are witnessing today. If you were born after 1968 you are a part of all this, you are the new individuals. Unfortunately I am a bit too old for that myself, but I can tell that most of you are in the right age for understanding these changes – the right age for winners.” Applause. As he left for headquarters and some crisis management, I started to realise I was old. Just a few years too old for making it.

When proclaiming the significance of ‘the individual’ there is, of course, not one but numerous concepts involved – a whole family of variable relationships (including the individual, individuality, subject, person, self, self-identity) – and hence a qualification is called for. ‘The individual’, old and new, is and has been functional and important in Western history above all as a *figure of thought*. Figures of thought are mediators, relays, navigators<sup>5</sup> (not to be confused with categories of thought, whether universal or evolutionary, Kantian or Maussian). They operate in-between a plane of immanence of concepts and thought-out discourses, lines of argument, categorisations, and classifications (Cicero knew this) – in other words, they make concepts operative. A figure of thought embodies a bundle of concepts, or, rather, conceptual personae; Marx ‘Revolutionary’ (the absolute becoming of the all-sided individual) and Mill’s ‘Untouchable’ (consummation of the individual in elbowroom) go hand in hand by the same figure. Hence, the figure fits within Deleuze and Guattari’s formula: plane of immanence (the unthought or pre-philosophical plane)<sup>6</sup> – concepts – conceptual personae – /figure of thought/ – plane of organisation (the outthought, enacted and institutionalised), all of which are related to an image<sup>7</sup>, a vision of a world and a people inhabiting it (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Like a plane of immanence, figures of thought are non-philosophical, but in a different sense. Figures are habitual. For instance, companies are generally organised as bureaucracies or as (intentionally) anti-bureaucratic enterprises – out of habit, solely out of habit.

To put up with the very strength of this mediator, this habitual figure of the individual, seems to demand a different habit – that is, if one wants to set off on a survey or exploration at all – a ‘Faustrollian’ habit, perhaps. In his ‘neo-scientific novel’ Jarry has Dr Faustroll escape the law by embarking on a journey where he “simply moves on at will to another time and/or place.”<sup>8</sup> The good Doctor’s vehicle is a boat – which is a sieve<sup>9</sup> – and he explains its supremacy for his crew of two (the lawman, now held

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5 Cf. Asplund (1979) and Nemerov (1978) for discussions on the workings of a figure of thought.

6 A plane of immanence cannot be thought yet must be thought: “thought as such begins to exhibit snarls, squeals, stammers; it talks in tongues and screams, which leads it to create, or to try to [create concepts].” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 55)

7 This is where Marx and Mill parted most distinctly.

8 Cf. Shattuck (1996: xi)

9 For quite some time I have had the impression that both Deleuze and Guattari were of a pataphysical bent, and it is worth noting that they describe a plane of immanence as a kind of sieve: “The plane of immanence is like a section of chaos and acts like a sieve (1994: 42), and further on “every plane is not only interleaved but holed, letting through the fogs that surround it, and in which the philosopher



hostage; and the navigator, an imaginary baboon called Bosse-de-Nage). “I am all the more convinced of the excellence of my calculations and of its insubmersibility in that, as is my invariable habit, we shall not be navigating on water, but on dry land” (Jarry, 1996: 17). Faustroll’s impossible vessel is at the same time his plane of immanence. A sieve cannot float, yet it must and yet it does. Hence, he is led to create a new concept of the Journey. Or, rather, he revitalises the Lucretian concept of *clinamen* – the infinitesimal swerve, the drifting off-course – in Lord Kelvin’s persona. And aided by this renewed concept of travelling he is able to break away from the commanding figure of the Law, the Law of One mode of existence, of common sense, of One real world. Together the small crew visits fourteen islands in the vicinity of Paris, and each island is invented by Faustroll as to convey different affects and modes of existence. Such is his way of exploring and exploiting. Such is his envisioned world – “he welcomes and explores all forms of existence.”<sup>10</sup> And since long, and out of invariable habit, he is guided by this peculiar figure of thought: pataphysics. Ha ha, said the baboon, and those where the only two human words that it knew. Ha ha, and nothing more.

So, for the lightness of travelling, I have tried to make myself a suitable sieve-boat and to round up a series of different lands, or exemplars, in the neighbourhood of the figure under survey – and for each exemplar a mode of life. And for a crew . . . Snark hunters, solely Snark hunters.

A figure of thought may hold and combine more than one concept, but the former often ends up in combinations with its own kind as well. What Foucault (1994) demonstrates in *The Order of Things* is how the human sciences have been constituted and organised in accordance with its two prominent figures, Man and Individual (adding Society makes sociology). However, such arrangements are rarely peaceful or balanced. On the contrary, they are critical, they tend to break up, recombine, and create new fields for thought and practice. Figures of thought are effective and productive due to their certain vagueness, that is, their capacity to carry a mass of diverse, but adjacent, non-determinant concepts. Thus, their applicability and range of efficacy is next to infinite, but they may at times cart too much and tear apart from within.

## Second exemplar of a figure of thought

Peter Abelard – son of a knight, philosopher, theologian, logician, monk, husband and lover of Heloise – probably knew by heart what it meant to step out of tradition, to be faithful and yet one’s own master, in Medieval Christianity. At least, he prepared three components for a new conceptualisation of the individual (components: faith as *own intention*, faith *in tension with Church*, and *in tension with kin*) on such a presupposition (the unthought of his never completed concept,

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who laid it out is in danger of being the first to lose himself” (ibid: 51). The founder of pataphysics – the science of imaginary solutions – is, of course, Alfred Jarry.

10 Shattuck (1996: x).

immanence).<sup>11</sup> And as he presented his rational analyses of faith and ethics through the unavoidable mediating figure of his time, the *Individual-before-God*, ‘Heloise’ – beloved, kin, conceptual persona – kept haunting his arguments, inserting an irresolvable, ‘pagan’, ambiguity into them. St Bernard disagreed on every point of Abelard’s rationale (it was not for man to reason with the Absolute), except on the centrality of ascertaining and strengthening a proper and true devotion for God’s individuals. Furthermore, he could not stand Abelard’s envisioned form of existence – the Lord’s earthly kingdom populated by pagan philosophers and lovers. For sure, Bernard was victorious in their fierce battle, whilst Peter had to face devastating disgrace and condemnation for sacrilege (which included the burning of his books and manuscripts). But at the same time this situation made visible a fissure in the dominant figure of thought; a significant moment in what Dumont (1985) has described as the transformation of the out-worldly human being, God’s individual. For Dumont, Abelard’s heresy was consummated four centuries later with Calvin: what matters are being in *this* world, *the in-worldly existence of individuals*. For short: the Individual.

Icon didn’t devise the concept of the new individual. Rather, he postulated or declared the incidence of a certain phenomena through an inevitable figure of thought (through a neo-liberalist filter, some would say, but figures mediate ideologies too). And by his rhetoric of novelty, the effect was of quantitative description. There have always been individuals, but the new individual is simply *more* individual than its precursors, and more distinctly chiselled than a fading generation of vague persons.

Two recent and acknowledged scholarly studies contain attempts at conceptualising that which Icon merely stated. Castells (1996-97) and Sennett (1998) both start out by the classic sociological pairing of Individual and Society, just to claim that today these notions and their interrelation need to be reconsidered. Society, from its empirical outlook, does not appear in ways we are accustomed to. They point, in a sense, to a bypassing of its survival units (family, local community, corporation, nation-state), and a dissolving of a social habitus (including approved modes of belonging and caring). Both share a conviction that the most fundamental and critical effect of a coming new social and economic order is a loss of common ground. Flexible capitalism and the rise of a network society are described as abiding a logic of uprooting, which substitutes ‘traditional’ human conditions of relatively stable and accepted value-systems for a ‘new’ inhuman business enterprise of creative destruction. For Sennett this leads to a corrosion of character, while the consequence suggested by Castells is a void or gap between the Net and the Self; a void which is also a contested terrain, with Net and Self in bipolar opposition. On the one hand flexibility and network, global flows of information and capital, supported by purely instrumental values and asocial functionality; and on the other grounding and self-work, a grappling for meaning and identity-building. Both maintain that the Net is a veritable executioner of legitimate and institutionalised identities, providing nothing in its place but the most extreme versions

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11 On Abelard’s importance for the “discovery of the individual”, cf. Morris (2000) and Gurevitch (1997); his relationship with Heloise, Abelard (1974); and his writings on ethics, Luscombe (1971).

of exchangeability and individualisation – an uncommon ground, business as unusual. But when proceeding by the figures of Individual and Society, any crumbling away of the one must necessarily imply a simultaneous mouldering of the other. In the case of highly flexible and individualised network enterprises the paradoxical effect being that individuals may become *less* so. For Castells this would occur in a withdrawal to self, to self-containment, as the common ground for the essentially social individuals diminishes or is bypassed through the Net. And as their scaffoldings in society rust away Sennett's individuals are drained even of self, constituting, as it were, a hollow people. More or less, then? Nietzsche: We are more than the individual. And less.

### Third exemplar of an enterprising individual

Icon's autobiography (Staël von Holstein, 1999) was published about a year after his lecture at the School of Business, just before things were starting to get rough for Internet consultancies. The narrative of *Nothing Can Stop Us Now!*<sup>12</sup> reveals as its subject something like a synthesis of Maccoby's (1988) ideal types of Innovator and Self-Developer. Here work is nothing but a process of individualisation; a stepping out of tradition, commonality, the average; a becoming of the thriving entrepreneur. And its product: the new individual. In 'business literature' (i.e. management and marketing) such idea(l)s are commonplace today. Often futuristic (but the future is always already present) in claims and predicaments these ideas ring the changes of a common theme: the branded individual (individualisation through positioning in a market-game of free agents; Peters, 1999); the liberated individual (through symmetrical enterprising one-to-one; Peppers and Rogers, 1993); and the creative, nomadic individual of 'funky business' (by means of de-normalisation; Nordström and Ridderstråle, 1999). Labour and consumption merge in the One work of becoming a totally fulfilled, whole individual – a distinguished entrepreneur of ones own life. A life, that is, as enterprise (Rose 1998, 1990; Leinberger and Tucker, 1991).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, self-work coincides with net-work since the envisioned world of the business present-futurists is tantamount to Castell's Net – a world inhabited by hyper-functional 'venturers'. But *Nothing Can Stop Us Now!* insists on something else as well, on another direction, another becoming, a different venture. The sole work of individualisation, of standing out, seems to be folded in a much less distinguishable, hazy occupation. In transcending the restraining and determinant conditions of social and professional inertia, Icon finds, or reinvents, himself in the open space of the Net. Broken loose. Free at last. Then there is another curb, limit, wall, partition. On a TV-documentary about the pros and cons of the Internet revolution Icon hinted at it. "How do you keep up with the frantic pace of your business?" the interviewer asked him. "With gastric ulcer, a permanent fear of heart attack, and a very understanding wife."

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12 The title of his autobiography, my translation.

13 In a peculiar way this theme, well rehearsed and repeated, conjures up a typical version of Nietzsche's atypical individual.

Just days after Icon had delivered his speech to my class, a friend of mine gave this stealthy limitation a more elaborate expression: “I have the most tremendous job you can imagine. About a year ago I got appointed Head of R&D. It’s my dream. Great challenge. And great pay too. Very rewarding in every respect. You know, full autonomy, almost at least, and full responsibility of course. I was totally in to it. Focused. I used to be low on self-esteem, as you may recall, but now I grew. I was the king of the world. Ha! I worked a hell of a lot of course, but not as much as others I know of. My family wasn’t too pleased with that part, I can tell you, although they really enjoyed me being so inspired and cheerful. Well, a month ago I snapped. I hit the wall. I thought I’d caught a really serious flu, so a colleague drove me home. Next thing I know I’m at my parents place, in my old room, my old bed. I stayed there for more than week. Just laying there, like a vegetable, a foetus. They fed me like a nestling. Eventually I got out of bed to see my doctor and a shrink too. ‘Burnout’ they said. What the fuck is that anyway? ‘You should have seen the signs, listened to your body’. What was there to see or hear? Whatever it was I feel kind of cleansed. I’m reborn, not in a religious sense, but you know, like a new human being. Anyway, I’m back at work again, but I’m not going back *there* again. Easier said than done, I know.”

As has been pointed out, the question of when the individual was discovered,<sup>14</sup> or when human beings found their individuality, is a controversial one. Was it in ancient Greece, early Christianity, amongst Medieval Schoolmen, or in the Italian Renaissance? Or is the individual, if anything, an invention, the latest creation (Nietzsche, 1978), or the effect of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1980)? Or is it rather non-localisable, outside history, an *a priori* of existence, a given entity? According to Luhmann, however, any further attempts at conceptualising or forming notions of the individual and its individuality are since long rendered futile. After Kant, he maintains, the individual has become appointed as a standard, both empirical and transcendental, “as the subject of the world. Experiencing the world, the individual could claim to have a transcendental source of certainty within himself. He could set out to realize himself by realizing the world within himself [...] The Individual as the subject? This cannot be surpassed” (Luhmann, 1986: 317-318). When the individual becomes subject there is nothing to add. And since the individual is, in a sense, unthinkable, the only ways to move forward are by its ideological offspring (individualism) or by its subjective relatives (the ‘I’, the ‘Self’). For the latter course one could, for example, assert that having individual experiences, and experiences of oneself as a “specific individual” (Mead, 1965), are presupposed occurrences – pre-philosophical – in G.H. Mead’s thinking. They institute a plane of immanence on which Mead creates his concept of the self (the individuals of the plane and of the figure are still by no means identical).

Although expressing it in a more radical vein, Nietzsche too found a dead-end for the individual after Kant. With the language, methods and interests of positive science the rule of individual = subject ends in the numbed equation of individual = standard, average, type. Always recognisable, identifiable, measurable, it becomes a lifeless

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14 A supposedly Western individual, that is.

quantity (Nietzsche, 1997). Thus, when spoken in a 'positive' tongue the individual is betrayed, bereft of its individuality, of life, and turned into a meagre type: 'the individual'. To Nietzsche, an individual was something else, something more and less than a type: atypical, incomparable, immeasurable, excessive, incomprehensible. The courses of the two versions are entwined, though, as they outlive each other, live over and beyond without coinciding (Hamacher, 1986). Yet we always run the risk of "treating ourselves like rigid, invariable, single individuals" (Nietzsche, 1986: §618). This is because the type makes the most commanding figure of thought, but as they grow ever more firm and authoritative, types also tend to become frail and infested with foibles. And just like Abelard found a weak spot in the Individual-before-God, Nietzsche too reached for a suitable battering ram. "In morality" [of life, not of universals or the transcendent], he writes, "man treats himself not as an 'individuum', but as a 'dividuum'" (ibid: §57). A dividual as individual: a division of the singular, dividing the division, individual dividual.<sup>15</sup> This instance should not, in any case, be mistaken for Durkheim's Homo Duplex, human being as duality – individual organism and socialised person.

#### Fourth exemplar of a dividual in other work

Stevenson offers the most beautiful expression of dividual life in Henry Jekyll's full statement of his case.

I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. (Stevenson, 1994: 70)

Tormented by a conflict of social position and desire (duplexity), 'he' came, with the aid of a certain potion, upon the singular stature of Edward Hyde. "He, I say – I cannot say, I" (ibid: 84) A dividual is "that point" one may come upon, but not pass. Yet, it is the outstripping too. It is not a doubling, or a stabilising bipolarity, but an endless *to divide*. Limiting and passing. Points and lines. Wall and wrecking-ball. Stevenson wrought the Captain's straightjacket, more and less.

Just like Jekyll, the Captain of Strindberg's play, *The Father*, is a man of many roles and positions: officer, husband, father, host, alchemist . . . As Strindberg's drama unfolds, however, the span of positions diminishes, and all converge in a single focal point. A doubt of fatherhood turns into obsession as he engages in the One work of becoming father – father of daughters, of officers, of husbandry, of fathers. But, for him, the father-individual is a fatal becoming since its reversal is blocked. In the play's finale he is captured, wholly individualised – rigid, single and invariable – in a straightjacket. Life abandons him, burnt-out, no more and no

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15 Cf. Deleuze (1995). In this text, Deleuze uses the term dividual analogous to Foucault's individual; the latter being a power effect of discipline, the former of control. That is, in quite a different sense than what I am trying to convey here.

less than duplex. And there is no return or escape. This cutting-off of alternate routes comes forth in a previous scene when the Captain accuses his wife of obstructing his mineralogical studies of planet Jupiter. His wife, Laura, retorts: "I was acting from kindness. You were neglecting your duties for this work."<sup>16</sup> In Strindberg's Swedish, though, the second sentence reads like "... du försummade din tjänst för *det andra arbetet*" – you were neglecting your duties for *the other work*. Translations divert, just as the Captain did. The respected officer had inclinations for some dubious enterprise now aborted. It was not the termination of studies, however, nor the straightjacket that effected a breakdown, but the work of becoming fully individual. *Other work* is not alchemy, not a desirable hobby, nor a duplication of work, or working extra. Other work is diversion and defocusing, work's clinamen or off-course. A stray-work that cannot be done and yet is carried out constantly. A mass of work, out of which our habits have us say: now *this* is work, a fine piece of achievement, a stimulating hobby, a dull but good day's practice, a pointless drag; but *that* (we can barely even say *that*) is something . . . else, elsewhere. A dividual in other work, then, is an imaginary navigator-baboon sitting on one's shoulders, saying *ha ha* in any conceivable language. It is not laughter, "*ha ha* is a ditched gap in a wall at the end of a garden path, an armed pit or military well into which chrome steel bridges may collapse."<sup>17</sup> And all lines are open for becoming individual dividual. More and less a life.<sup>18</sup>

I look up, reach over my head, fumble, and stumble – where is my companion now? Cicero: Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit.<sup>19</sup>

Is the individual unthinkable today, as Luhmann suggests? And are the only ways to proceed by the individual's offspring and relatives? The latter route is the one taken by Rose (1998, 1990). He has set out to show how the 20<sup>th</sup> century was converted into a century of the self. Aided, supported and directed by psychology (and other 'psy's') humans have turned toward and become immersed in themselves.<sup>20</sup> The business literature, referred to above, also play's a crucial part in this transformation, with the call of workplaces and job centres being "Become whole, become what you want, become yourself: the individual is to become, as it were, an entrepreneur of itself" (Rose, 1998: 158).<sup>21</sup> We are, in a sense, obliged to be ourselves, or, rather, more than what we already are. And we should constantly work on our growth, choose it, burn for

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16 Strindberg (1991: 56) translated by Meyer.

17 This is part of Dr Faustroll's analysis of Bosse-de-Nage's monosyllabic uttering (Jarry, 1996:76).

18 It should come as no surprise that today there is a remedy on sale for dividuals. Individual or dividual, the choice is ours! Cf. Optimum Self, <http://www.optimumself.com/individualartichel> (visited 2002-03-01).

19 "He departed, withdrew, rushed off, broke away."

20 The effect of this inwardness being what Lasch (1978) has called the culture of narcissism. The new individual could be described as a highly expansive version of Lasch' narcissist.

21 Cf. Gordon (1986) for a very similar point on proper conduct, especially pp. 314-315.

and be burnt by it (this is the proper meaning of being branded). But we are still in the guise of individuals, rather than selves. The new individuals are forever more than they used to be. They are not well-rounded but expansive. Current discourses and practices of enterprise produce, or command, an ever-expanding individual with one sole occupation – the work of perpetual self-fulfilment. And when proponents of a new economic order, a ‘new economy’, announce the return or liberation of the individual, they essentially point, not to its emancipation or reappearance (as if the individual had been missing, or had not been free enough), but to an image of the world: the Net populated by Entrepreneurs; the latter being an attempt at obliterating the worker and the consumer, its greatest danger.

Will the individual as figure of thought hold for this image, with its exclusion of a duplex worker/consumer? Or will it crack (but how could anyone tell, since this figures mediating powers would have us deny such an occurrence for ages)? Are the Net and the Entrepreneur the functions that will fracture the individual by strengthening it (the typification of the atypical), and hence open up a passage for new planes, concepts, figures, and envisioned worlds? Were there to be such a passage, it would certainly be a suitable working space for another craftsman: “the middle-man, the undertaker constantly grasping for the in-between-being, the intermezzo: *the entre-preneur* (from the Latin *inter*, between, and *prehendere*, to seize, grasp, capture)” (Bay and Bäckius, 2000: 79). Consumer and worker might even partake in a cracking up from the inside, in committing a breach, as revitalised concepts or by a final rattle. “And now, horror of horrors! it is the “workman” himself who has become dangerous; the whole world is swarming with “dangerous individuals”, and behind them follows the danger of dangers – the individuum!” (Nietzsche, 1997: §173). The individuum . . . which for Nietzsche is also a dividium, a stealthy, clandestine *entre-preneur*. Ha ha – wall and wrecking-ball.

### Fifth exemplar of Chance

Neither individual nor self, just a gardener caring for plants, trees, and flowers. Chance carries no papers, has no record and hence no typical existence. He changes at the speed of a dial on the remote control. He is the man on TV; the man on TV is he. In the Old Man’s garden, “Chance could start to wander, never knowing whether he was going forward or backward, unsure whether he was ahead or behind his previous steps.”<sup>22</sup> But as the Old Man dies and Chance is forced to leave his house for the outside world, he too gets directions in life. Strolling behind and ahead of himself he is a moving potentiality, pure chance. And it so happens that a minor accident arrests his walk, and he ends up being cared for by a nobility of industry. The Rand’s name him (Chance, the gardener) Chauncey Gardiner – he is individualised. They admire and become overwhelmed by his gardening wisdom – he is attributed an innovator-self destined to revitalise the political scene by means of a vivid garden imagery. Chauncey appears as a saviour, a creative destructor of American politics, a full-fledged entrepreneur in an inert economy, an astonishing TV-star. He is the ideal type of the

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22 All quotations for this exemplar are, of course, from Jerzy Kosinski’s *Being There*.

Innovator/Self-Developer. Everybody wants him – he is the perfect individual. Branded, liberated, and funky. But then there is a crisis. As some dark-suits gang up in running Chauncey for president, Chance becomes “bewildered. He reflected and saw the withered image of Chauncey Gardiner: it was cut by the stroke of a stick through a stagnant pool of rainwater. His own image was gone as well.” He steps outside the enormous house of Rand’s and into their garden. “Not a thought lifted itself from Chance’s brain. Peace filled his chest.” Calmly wandering ahead and behind.

Chance too would be a crisis of the individual, a splinter in a well-known figure of thought. A rupture, and a healing, and a breaking. He is a dividual individual, an entrepreneur with a monkey on his shoulders, content with doing other work as well, ready to welcome and explore all forms of existence. Just like Faustroll.

As the horrid hunt is coming to a close, the crew’s wavering voices disclose:

*For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.*

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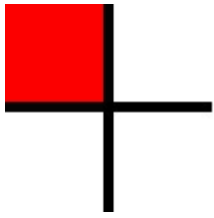
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## In the Space of Whispers

Monika Bakke

...she springs inexhaustibly from the touching together (of her lips)...<sup>1</sup>

The space of whispers is very narrow or even tight because in a whisper a voice is almost glued to the lips. Whispers are as much auditory as tactile. Entering their space is possible through gentleness, attention and sensitivity if only whisper is at all directed to anybody. Whispers create the most gentle kind of auditive environment which according to Wolfgang Welsch is particularly needed because “an auditive culture would intensify our awareness of other people and nature; it would be capable of learning, rather than merely issuing decrees; entanglements and network – that is, the thought forms which we will in future need – lie far nearer to it from the start than do the conventional logical incisions; it would on the whole be full of understanding, reserved, symbiotic, receptive, open, tolerant...”<sup>2</sup>

There is another kind of whisper than the social kind, that is a whisper to oneself or for oneself: in a secret, in an asylum, in a dream, in a prayer, and near death. This kind of whisper dwells on the edge of the material world, or, as one could say, in a weak field of its presence. Whispers simultaneously give evidence of both being and disappearing. But the most peculiar kind of whisper is the one which we can only whisper about; it has neither an author nor is it directed to a specific receiver. It is especially taboo because it comes from the invisible and dangerous, chaotic and uncontrollable, evoking fear because associated with deception, madness, and seduction. A woman hearing such whispers and whispering it out is mad, but historically she is the one who once was an oracle or a medium. She is a sister of the Sirens, no less dangerous than they were.

We all learn whispers from a mother. She affectionately whispers to her child even when the umbilical cord has been cut. Mother’s whisper in relation to her unborn child is tactile and soft and it stands in absolute opposition to annunciation which comes from

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1 Luce Irigaray (1991) *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 105.

2 Wolfgang Welsch (1997) *Undoing Aesthetics*. London. Sage, p. 151.

the father. Father's voice, being either direct or heard through an (angelic) agency, is always strong and single. It cannot be mistaken for anything else, and cannot disappear into an oblivion of everyday noise. But later, mother's whisper is usually lost and not transformed into a vibrating voice of a father because the difference between whisper and a full voice is not a matter of volume. Voice is setting a structure and a distance, while whispers put in touch also in a strict sense of this word. As Luce Irigaray suggests, through speaking women can touch each other all over at the same time. "In all senses."<sup>3</sup> But sometimes a woman must withdraw alone into whispers, and doomed to the enclosure of her own world, she becomes more sensitive to the whispers of the world. But these whispers are not always understandable even for her because they are fragmentary and prone to get lost and discontinue. For a woman the most important thing is that they exist. Sometimes it is enough. They never stop but they can only stop being heard.

The space of whispers is traditionally a space of femininity: rich in meaning, dark, and fluidic. It is intimate because located closest to the body which makes it fragrant and tactile. It has neither a permanent shape, nor constancy and clarity so usually it is marginalized but also often invaded and transformed. Whispers are soundless and not returning in echo, so on the one hand are easy to hide and dismiss, but on the other hand their space is difficult to penetrate, dangerous, and unpredictable for those who do not inhabit it. Men are far less comfortable in there than women so they feel a need to sublimate fluidic whisper into something visual and solid. In the following text I will present two examples of two gender-related strategies of dealing with the space of whispers.

## Two Lips

A Polish artist Izabella Gustowska (b. 1946) in a video installation entitled 'In a Whisper' has proposed an interesting representation of the feminine space created by whispers. In this case vision is obscured because the installation is presented in a dark room where the only light is provided by numerous small monitors showing the image of whispering women's lips. The sound which densely fills the space turns out to be completely illegible. One part of the installation consists of small case-like metal objects hiding the image of lips, while in the second part of the installation lips (as well as the monitors) are fully exposed because the cases are made out of clear material (plexiglas) and situated on a transparent table. Transparent material multiplies the effect and gives the impression of levitation. We encounter a specific line of symmetry here which divides the hidden lips from the exposed ones.

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3 Luce Irigaray (1985) *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 209.

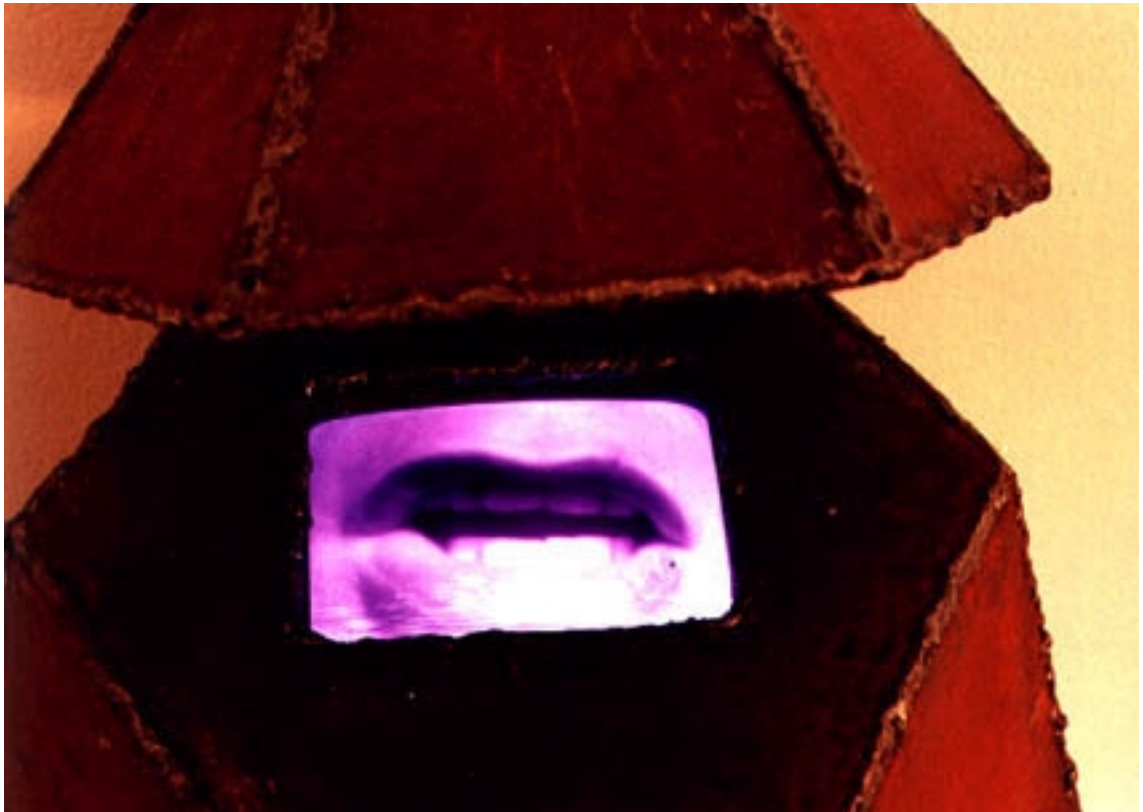


Luce Irigaray, by her famous metaphor of ‘two lips’ in a constant contact, turns our attention to specificity of female sexuality and to a predominance of the tactile. “First of all – Irigaray says – the tangible is received, perceived prior to the dichotomies of active and passive. It is received like a bath that affects without and within, in fluidity. It is never completely situated in the visible.”<sup>4</sup> So that touch can escape the hierarchical order and a division for the one touching and the one being touched. Similarly whispers create such nonhierarchical space, with no audible domination. Moreover, whisper like a fluid “mixes with bodies of a like state, sometimes dilutes itself in them in an almost homogeneous manner, which makes the distinction between one and the other problematical and furthermore that it is already diffuse ‘in itself’, which disconcerts any attempt at static identification.”<sup>5</sup>

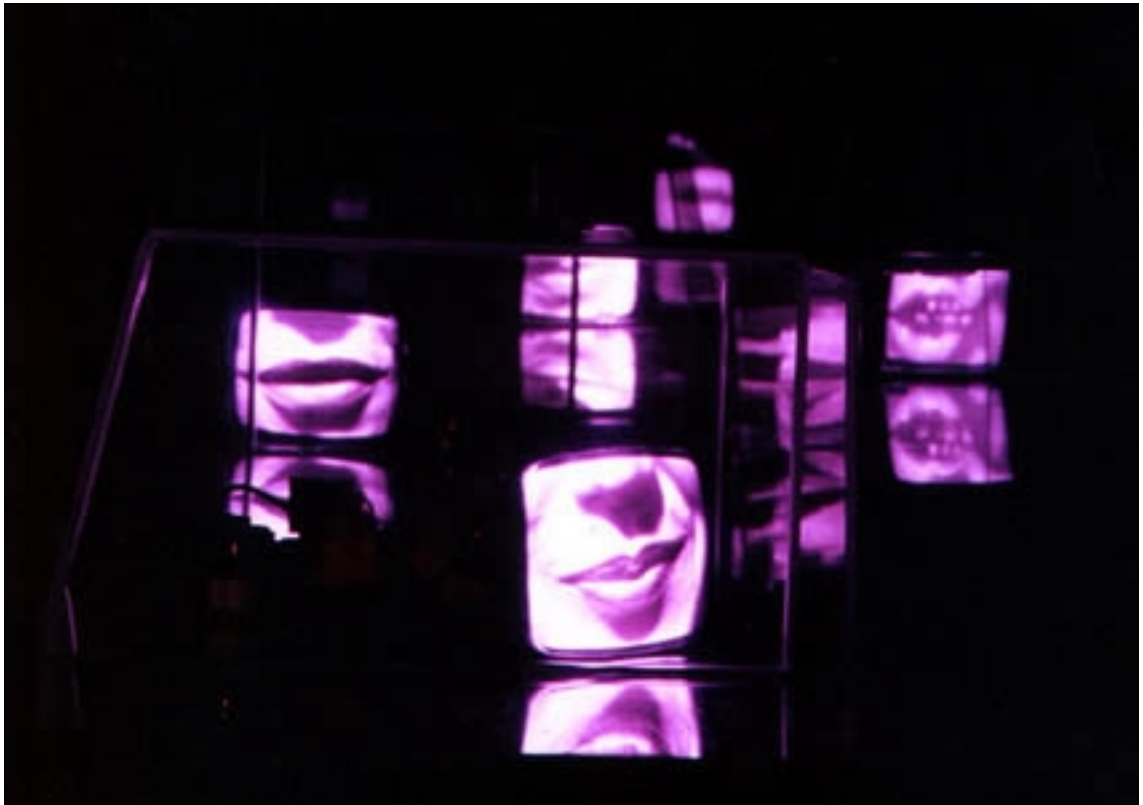
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4 Luce Irigaray (1993) *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 164.

5 Luce Irigaray (1985) *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 111.



In Western culture lips symbolize soul, invention, and the source of speech, of truth, of life, but also lovers and sex. The connection with ‘the lips below’ (Irigaray’s term for labia) is rather clear here. In Gustowska’s installation, we find a representation of both ‘the below’ and ‘the above’ lips. Both kinds of lips are treated like ‘hidden’ treasures enclosed in cases although their enclosure can serve as a form of exposition as well (e.g. the clear cases). The intrigue of the whispering lips cannot be resolved by understanding the uttered words because its complexity is based on bodily sensations and pleasure of audible and tactile effects. Moreover, lips themselves in some way escape the viewer either because they participate in the illusory effect of multiplication, or because they are imprisoned in metal cases.



'In a whisper...' belongs to a big series of works entitled 'Singing Rooms' for which a question about constructing a feminine space by audible means is fundamental. These works are very private in character, they are arranged as small spaces individually marked by sounds, lights, and objects. They reveal a nonhierarchical coexistence of dreams, emotions, memories and expectations. Gustowska often uses her own childhood memory as well as memorabilia, and brings them (sounds, objects, colors) up to the surface of contemporary visuality. At first glance we could make an easy conclusion about this work following Bergson's idea that there cannot be a reflection which is not based on memory, but actually the experience of Gustowska's work leads rather towards a reflection that we are always already leaning towards something unexpected. This orientation towards the future is not a cause and effect based on continuation of the past, but it comes from our intuition and imagination. Although discovering one's future is as dangerous as discovering one's past.

### **Audibility Lost**

As I have suggested so far, a feminine construction of a space of whispers is being done clearly from a perspective of the insider, that is someone who bodily (also in a tactile sense) feels at home there. A masculine way of constructing a space of whispers is totally different because it proceeds from the position of the outsider. The latter builds a view (strictly in a visual sense) distancing himself from touch, carefully listening in, and

empathy. A good example of such construction we can find in a painting by a Polish artist Jacek Malczewski (1854-1929) entitled 'Whispers' (also known as 'Painter and His Muse'). Here whispers' source is also a woman (a Muse) but the whispers themselves seem to be a kind of energy sublimated by man into a creative visual activity. As Irigaray points out "investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than any other sense, the eye objectifies and it masters. It sets at a distance, and maintains a distance. In our culture the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations."<sup>6</sup> In Malczewski's painting whispers are not dispersed, mixing, or spilled but drawn towards a man who becomes a kind of an audible drain. He gets hold of whispers and transforms them into a visual object. They appear to him as a flow of sexual energy which he sublimates into an object of visual pleasure. Man listens to whispers for himself and not for them. He is not an Odysseus wandering into a dangerous audible space, but like a drain he gathers the chaotic flow together giving it a form. Already in his act of listening, whispers are transformed into solids and visualized as a woman's body discretely veiled by a clear fabric which only underlines her nakedness and her erotic appeal. The Muse, leaning over the man's body, whispers something directly into his ear. Her physical closeness is apparent as her face touches man's hair. The whisperer and whispers are probably the source of his desire, but also confusion and maybe even surprise. They are strange and their space is uninhabitable, hence they are to be either invaded or abandoned.

In a masculine representation whispers equal allure, deception, maybe even a trap. It is a feminine domain which despite its weakness and dispersion has an ability to take over and control a masculine imagination. But actually because it is bodily and shapeless at the same time, it maintains its power. The Muse leans over offering a whisper, a touch, a fragrance and closeness of her body. It seems to be an invitation and a promise of pleasure which unfortunately cannot be satisfactory for both a man and a woman. There is no fulfillment because there is no compromise on how they enjoy. A Muse-woman represents memory of a distant and forgotten past that is forgotten whispers which cannot be represented. She is a close cousin of the Sirens who produce a vibrating sound but no words to be deciphered. Although in the opinion of Renata Salecl there is a fundamental difference between them because "only Muses provide memory, since they enable their listeners to forget the trauma of life, while the Sirens put listeners in touch with what Lacan calls the knowledge in the real, that knowledge which the listeners do not want to know anything about. Inspired by the memory that the Muses provide, their listeners are to create works of art, while those who hear the knowledge offered by the Sirens's song immediately die."<sup>7</sup>

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6 Irigaray quoted in Martin Jay (1993) *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 439.

7 Renata Salecl (1997) 'The Sirens of Feminine *Jouissance*', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 9(1): 17.





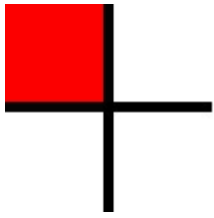
Whispers in Malczewski's painting are represented in the 'mechanics of solids'. Not only have they an author (a Muse), but also they have a specific receiver. So that whispers are not phantoms or madness devouring a wandering sailor lost in the abyss of the chaotic sea. They are frozen into a female body inviting a gaze. A painter, even on a quest for adventure, does it only in the frame of the symbolic culture which he represents and where he rules. But he no longer remembers the lesson to be learned from Orpheus, who, wanting to see, lost the beloved woman forever. Her faintly whispered farewell was not only a refusal to man but also to living in his world. But as a whisperer Euridice never died, she only died for him in order to be more with herself and for herself.<sup>8</sup> But how would the story go, if only Orpheus could have listened to her steps, to her whispers on the way, all along?

Is then an auditive culture possible with the gaze of Orpheus? According to David Tomas "ambient sonic spaces tend to give rise to ephemeral and fragmentary histories in a sense that they are composed of surpluses; that is, acoustic fallout from physical activity, systemic or accidental impacts, and frictions of human bodies, objects, and processes."<sup>9</sup> Whispers, I think, have been actually marginalized as frictions of the lips, and as such with other "sounds that seduce and entice, ... will lead the acoustic body to a sonic well, into a sensory hole that disappears in the direction of an originative sonic delirium, a sonic unconscious that lies beyond the descriptive powers of history."<sup>10</sup> Western culture is certainly not an auditive one, and it has never been, but Tomas wants to convince us that we should finally change turning to the sonic space, make this unpopular choice, and start listening, that is, "accept sounds that envelope and swirl around the body".<sup>11</sup> Whispers will never be one and always many, ephemeral and so transparent that invisible. The Western culture has been refusing to hear them, even if it is obvious that they are around. "And there is no need to knock, just listen to hear the music. With very small ears."<sup>12</sup>

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- 8 A particularly interesting interpretation of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice can be found in Rainer Mairia Rilke's poem *Orpheus. Euridice. Hermes*. Orpheus tries to hear her steps but cannot do it hearing only his own ones, and Euridice is actually not interested in leaving her own life in death, where she is many, as drops of rain and skattered hair.
- 9 David Tomas (1996) *Transcultural Space and Transcultural Beings*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, p. 105.
- 10 David Tomas, *Transcultural Space*...p.136.
- 11 David Tomas, *Transcultural Space*...p.136.
- 12 Luce Irigaray (1991) *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 37.



## Cyberflesh (Dis)Orders: Prostheses of The Organized Body

A. Gargett

In the future, where is your soul? Stolen, vaporized in nanotechnics. The ultramodern condition slams a hyper-heated critique into vision, telecommercialized retinas lazer-fed on multimedia fallout from an imploded future, image-jammed brains with repeated psycho-killer experiments in non-consensual wetware alteration; crazed AI's, replicants, terminators, cyberviruses...apocalypse market overdrive. Why wait for revelations? Tomorrow has already been cremated. A techno-nihilist scream on fast-feed-forward into micro-processed damnation: meat zombies, snuff-sex-industry, artificial personality projections, flat-lining, software ghosts, cyberimmortalism.

Cybernetics reveals an organism cross-cut by inorganic life – bacterial communication, viral infection, and entire ecologies of replicating patterns which subvert even the most perverse notions of what it is to be 'having sex'. Reproduction melts into replication and loses its hold on the pleasuredome. Climax distributes itself across the plane and the experience becomes a plateau.

Even in the absence of full simstim, technical cybersex is well advanced: the hardware is fetishized, the software is porn, and vast proportions of the telecommunications system are consumed by erotica. But these are only the most overt – and maybe least interesting – examples of a general degeneration/disintegration of 'natural' sex. As hard and wetwares collapse onto soft, far stranger mutations rouse the sexual scene. The simulation of sex converges with the deregulation of the entire sexual economy, the corrosion of its links with reproduction, and the collapse of its specificity: sex disperses into drugs, dance/trance; androgyny, hermaphroditism, and transsexualism become increasingly perceptible; paraphilia, body engineering, queer sex, and what Foucault calls "the slow motions of pleasure and pain" of S&M – already "high technology sex" (Califia, 1993: 175) – proliferate.

The body needs to be repositioned from the psycho realm of the biological to the cyber zone of the interface and extension – from genetic containment to electronic extrusion. Can we re-evaluate the body without resorting to outmoded Platonic and Cartesian metaphysics? The obsession with self's sexual difference, and the symbolic begins to subside in cyber-systems that monitor, map and modify the body. Notions of species evolution and gender distinction are remapped and reconfigured in alternate hybridities

of human-machine. Invading technology eliminates skin as a significant site, an adequate interface, or a barrier between public space and physiological tracts. The significance of the cyber may well reside in the act of the body shedding its skin. And as humans increasingly operate with surrogate bodies in remote spaces they function with increasingly intelligent and interactive images. The possibility of autonomous images generates an unexpected outcome of human-machine symbiosis. The posthuman may well be manifested in the intelligent like form of autonomous images.

All this occurs in a world whose stability depends on its ability to confine communication to terms of individuated organisms' patrilineal transmission. Laws and genes share a one-way line, the unilateral ROM by which the Judeo-Christian tradition hands itself down through the generations. This is the one-parent family of man, for which even Mother Nature was conceived by God, the high fashion supermodel, perfectly formed, without whom matters would be in chaos. Humanism is the ultimate rear-view mirrorism, and the mirror still reflects the image of God. The project, to specularize and to speculate, to supervise and oversee. God and man converse on a closed circuit of sources and ends, one and the same, man to man. Creation and procreation. The go forth and multiply from which patriarchal culture takes its cue.

The immaculate conception of the world has always been subject to uncertainties which underlie all paternity claims. But it is only now, as material intelligence begins to break through the smooth formal screens of this trip, that the patriarchal confidence trick is undermined. He never will know whether or not they were fakes, neither her orgasms nor his paternity. All that is new about his insecurity is that it now begins to be felt. How does God know he is the father? Matter doesn't bother asking: as self-organizing processes attack from within, it's no longer a question, but a tactical matter, a tactile takeover, a material event.

The terminology of computer-mediated communication implies an increasing sense of distance and alienating isolation, and the corporate hype enthuses about a new sense of interpersonal interaction. But the keystrokes of users on the Net connect them to a vast distributed plane composed not merely of computers, users and telephone lines, but all the zeros and ones of machine code, the switches of electronic circuitry, fluctuating waves of neurochemical activity, hormonal energy, thoughts, desires...

In spite or perhaps even because of the impersonality of the screen, the digital zone facilitates unprecedented levels of spontaneous affection, intimacy, and informality, exposing the extent to which older media, especially what continues to be called 'real life' come complete with numerous inhibitions, barriers, and obstacles side-stepped by the immaterial systems of the Net.

"Inside the library's research department, the construct cunt inserted a sub-programme into that part of the video network. The sub-programme altered certain core custodial commands so that she could retrieve the code. The code said: get rid of meaning. Your mind is a nightmare that has been eating you: Now eat your mind" (Acker, 1988: 78).

The boundaries of perception might well be imposing, but they are also far from fixed. The History of Technology is also a process of micro-engineering, which continually changes perception itself. And in addition to dreams of cyber-immortality, the machines

of the digital revolution have initiated extensive narrative engagement with notions of cyborgs, replicants, and theories of posthuman, inhuman and extrahuman entities which are confusing and complicating orthodox Western conceptions of what it is to be a human being. Intelligent life can no longer be monopolized. In conjunction with ideas of immateriality the body is complicating, replicating, and escaping its formal organization, the organized organs which modernity has taken for normality. This new malleability is everywhere.

While the notion that technologies are prostheses, expanding existing organs and fulfilling desires, continue to legitimize vast swathes of technical development, the digital machines of the early twenty-first century are not add-on parts, which serve to augment an existing human form. Quite beyond their own perceptions and control, bodies are continually engineered by the processes in which they are engaged.

Even television screens were windows onto what Marshall McLuhan called “the extreme and pervasive tactility of the new electric environment,” an emergent network of televisual telecommunications which plunges us into “a mesh of pervasive energy that penetrates our nervous system incessantly” (McLuhan, 1962: 159). Monitors are only avatars of this net; an extraordinary technological stage whose backlit screens compose a pixelated interface with the digital undercurrents, triggering a dim awareness of some kind of actual space behind the screen, someplace you can’t see but you know it is there.

The sampled sounds, processed words, and digitized images of multimedia reconnect the diverse streams of arts into hyperlinked frameworks. What was once face-to-face communication now runs between fingertips strung across the world, and all the elements of neatly ordered, hierarchically arranged systems of knowledge and media find themselves increasingly interconnected and entwined. This is the beginning of a synaesthetic, immersive zone in which all the channels and senses find themselves embroiled in an unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, leaving the author/artist/reader/spectator with no halo of private protection, not even his/her own body for protection anymore.

In the contemporary condition, all notions of artistic genius, authorial authority, originality, and creativity become matters of software engineering. Beats extract themselves from melody; narrative collapses into the cycles and circuits of non-linear text; processed words, sampled music, and digital images repeat the patterns of interlacing threads, the rhythms and speeds of gathering intelligence. On the computer monitor, any change to the image is also a change to the program; any change to the programming brings another image to the screen. Digital fabrications can be endlessly copied without fading into inferiority; patterns can be copied and repeated, replicated folds across a screen. The new softwares have no essence, no authenticity. Just as reproductions and prints are repeatable without detracting from the image of the first one made, digital images complicate the questions of origin and originality, authorship and authority with which Western conceptions of art have been preoccupied.

Cybernetics initiates the emergence of the material complexity, which finally usurps the procreative line. Even at its most modern and authoritarian, cybernetics collapses the

distinction between machine and organism: Norbert Wiener's systems already function regardless of whether their wares are hard, soft, or wet. The fusion of human and machines of Wiener's wartime research do more than contest the species' boundaries: they also rewrite its history. "Biological organisms...become biotic systems, communications devices like others. There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic" (Haraway, 1991: 177-178).

Everything is melting in nature. We think we can see objects, but our vision is slow and partial. Nature is thriving and fading in long inflated respirations, rising and falling in oceanic-wave motion. A mind that opened itself completely to nature without sentimental preoccupations would be glutted by nature's coarse materialism, its relentless superfluidity. Remove the rose-filter of humanism from the gaze and see nature spurning and frothing, its mad spermatic bubbles endlessly spilling out and smashing in an inhuman round of waste, rot and carnage. Nature is a festering hornet's nest of aggression and overkill. This is the chthonian black magic with which we are infected as sexual beings; this is the daemoniac identity that Christianity so inadequately defines as original sin and thinks it can cleanse us of. The procreateness of chthonian nature is a weapon against the tradition of western metaphysics. Nature is a seething excess of being.

Economies, societies, individual organisms, cells: At these and every other scale of organization, the stability of any system depends on its ability to regulate the speeds at which it runs, ensuring that nothing stops too soon, goes too slow, runs too fast, goes too far. And there is always something hunting, trying to break the speed limits necessary to its organized form, tipping over a horizon at which point, even though another, long-term stability may emerge on the other side, it can no longer be said that the system survives. Nothing can guarantee a system's immunity to these runaway effects. Invulnerability would be homeostasis, but also something it attains only at the price of its own demise.

The modern organism is already a replicant, straight off the production line of a discipline which "lays down for each individual his place, his body, his disease and his death, his well-being." Foucault's disciplines extend even to the "ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterizes him, of what belongs to him, of what happens to him" (Foucault, 1977: 197). After this organic and social integrity are fatally intertwined. Modernity is marked by "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of bio-power" (Foucault, 1978: 140), in which "Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence...For the first time in history...biological existence was reflected in political existence" (*ibid.*: 142).

Convinced that all attempts to liberate some supposed authentic sex or sexuality were bound to exacerbate the containment of the bodies they ostensibly wanted to free, Foucault was dismissive of attempts to free and extend orgasmic sex. The "apologia for orgasm made by the Reichians still seems to me to be a way of localising possibilities of pleasure in the sexual," he wrote, going so far as to suggest that "we have to get rid of

sexuality” in order to strip the body from its formal controls, disable the mechanisms of self-protection and security which bind intensity to reproduction. Foucault is scathing about the extent to which such liberatory investments underscore the subjection they ostensibly contest. And the orgasm as a key to self-possession is hardly where his interests lie: like Pat Califa, he is more interested in what she calls the ‘S&M orgasm’, an intensity uncoupled from genital sex and engaged only with the dismantling of selves. This is the cybersexuality to which all sexuality tends: a matter of careful engineering, the setting of scenes, the perfection of touch; the engineering of communication.

“What he had sometimes thought of as the arteries and veins of an immense circulatory system was closer to a sewer. Strange clumps of detritus and trash, some inert and harmless, some toxic when in direct contact, and some actively radiating poison, scrambled along with the useful; and necessary traffic” (Cadigan, 1991: 22).

Dismemberment, countermemory, a new generation has forgotten what its organs were supposed to be doing for their sense of self or the reproduction of the species, and have learned instead to let their bodies learn what they can do without preprogramming desire, to make of one’s body a place for the production of extraordinary polymorphic pleasures, while simultaneously detaching it from a valorization of the genitalia. Forget what it’s for, and learn what it does. Don’t concentrate on orgasm, the means by which sex remains enslaved to teleology and its reproduction. Foucault experiments with decompositions of the body, dismantling of the organism, technical experiments with bondage and release, power and resistance in an S&M matter of a multiplication and burgeoning of bodies and a creation of anarchy within the body, where its hierarchies, its localizations and designations, its organicity, if you will, is in the process of disintegrating.

This is only the beginning of a process which abandons the model of a unified and centralized organism, the organic body, organized with survival as its goal, in favour of a diagram of fluid sex. Flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibres, their continuums and conjunctions of affects, fine segmentation, micropereceptions, have replaced the world of subject. Now there are acentered systems, finite networks of automata in which communication run from any neighbour to any other, and we too are flows of matter and energy.

“Open the so-called body and spread out all its surfaces: not only the skin with each of its folds, wrinkles, scars, with its great velvety planes... but open and spread, expose the labia majora, so also the labia minora with their blue network bathed in mucus, dilate the diaphragm of the anal sphincter...” and on through every organized zone of a body which begins to flatten out into the “immense membrane” of Lyotard’s great ephemeral skin, in touch not only with itself but “the most heterogeneous textures, bone, epithelium, sheets to write on, charged atmospheres, swords, glass cases, peoples, grasses, canvases to pain. All these zones are joined end to end in a band which has no back to it, a Moebius band...” (Lyotard, 1993: 66).

Where is the organism? Was it merely the representative of alienated desire? What grounds do we have to operate the various disjunctions – libidinal/instinctual,

organism/world, libidinal/external – internal? All the tools, walls, surfaces upon which, by which the distinctions functioned have collapsed. Do we even retain the pair constant/intermittent? – only from the perspective of the instincts, that concrete hiatus within the flow of libidinal pulsion, the wall against which they run, some allowed to filter through only to enter labyrinthine alleys whose walls are like the fossilized remains of chronological flow.

Once it loses the reproductive point, sex explodes beyond the human and its proper desires. Every unified body conceals a crowd: human bodies also imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant...a thousand tiny sexes. Inside every solitary living creature is a swarm of non-creature things. Even the most unified of individuals is intimately bound up with networks which take it past its own borderlines, seething with vast populations of inorganic life whose replications disrupt even the most perverse anthropocentric notions of what it is to have either a sex or sex itself.

“[W]hat does she want, she who asks this, in the exasperation and aridity of every piece of her body, the woman-orchestra? Does she want to become her master’s mistress and so forth? Come on! She wants you to die with her, she desires that the exclusive limits be pushed back, sweeping across all the tissues, the immense tactility, the tact of whatever closes up on itself without becoming a box, and of whatever ceaselessly extends beyond itself without becoming a conquest” (Lyotard, 1993: 66).

To explore what bodies can do is no longer a question of liberating sex, of sexual freedom, or authenticity. It is not a matter of remembering ‘herself’ but instead of dismembering the one sex which had been pervasively confining, of making bits of bodies, its parts or particular surfaces throb, intensify, for their own sake and not for the benefit of the entity or organism as a whole. The question of passivity is not the question of slavery, the question of dependency not the plea to be dominated.

Immense tactility, contact, the possibility of communication. Closure without the box: as a circuit, a connection. “What interests the practitioners of S&M is that the relationship is at the same time regulated and open,” writes Foucault: it is a “mixture of rules and openness.” Ceaseless extension: the body hunting its own exit. Becoming “that which is not one”; becoming woman, who has sex organs everywhere. Is this what it is to get out of the meat? Not simply to leave the body, but to go further than the orgasm; to access the exultation of a kind of autonomy of its smallest possibilities of a part of the body.

“Use me,” writes Lyotard, in “a statement of vertiginous simplicity, it is not mystical, but materialist. Let me be your surface and your tissues, you may be my orifices and my palms and my membranes, we could lose ourselves, leave the power and the squalid justification of the dialectic of redemption, we will be dead. And not: let me die by your hand, as Masoch said” (1993: 65).

It is Foucault’s ‘something unnameable,’ ‘useless,’ outside of all the programs of desire. It is the body made totally plastic by pleasure: something that opens itself, that tightens,



that throbs, that beats that gapes. It is as though the guardian over our mental life were put out of action by a drug.

The will and the identity are stripped from the self. What remains is machinic, inhuman, beyond emotion, beyond subjection: the illusion of having no choice, to be used up completely. Foucault describes those involved in the complex activities around S&M as “inventing new possibilities of pleasure with strange parts of their body... it’s a kind of creation, a creative enterprise, which has as one of its main features what I call the desexualization of pleasure.” Beyond their superficial thrills, such experiments are a “matter of a multiplication and burgeoning of bodies,” he writes, “a creation of anarchy within the body, where its hierarchies, its localizations and designations, its organicity, if you will is in the process of disintegrating” while “practices like fist-fucking are practices that one can call devirilizing, or desexualizing. They are in fact extraordinary falsifications of pleasure”; pains taken even to the point at which they too “become sheer ecstasy. Needles through the flesh. The most extraordinary pressure on muscles or connective tissue. The frontier between pain and pleasure has been crossed” (Foucault, 1978: 145, 157).

“Not even suffering on the one hand, pleasure on the other: this dichotomy belongs to the order of the organic body, of the supposed unified instance” (Lyotard, 1993: 65). Now there is a plane, a languorous plateau. The peaks and the troughs have converged on a still sea, a silent ocean. They have found their limit and flattened out. Melting point.

We don’t know what a body can do, which is yet another reason why we have to get rid of sexuality, leave the body to its own devices, strip it away from its formal controls, disable its mechanisms of self-protection and security which bind intensity to pleasure and reproduction.

“That there are other ways, other procedures than masochism, and certainly better ones, is beside the point; it is enough that for some this procedure is suitable for them” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 55). Whatever it takes to access the plane on which one becomes a sex that is not one. Necessity trashes prohibition. The algebra of need; the diagram of speed.

Foucault was in no doubt that certain drugs rivalled the ‘intense pleasures’ of sexual experimentation. Ecstasy and Crack have both been described as ‘better than sex’ while speed and Prozac tend to anorgasmic effect. All engineering of the body has some chemical component. Félix Guattari points out that “certain anorexic, sadomasochistic etc. syndromes function as auto-addictions” because “the body itself secretes its endorphins which, you know, are fifty times more active than the morphines” (1989: 20). If orgasm localizes pleasure, things like pills or cocaine allow you to explode and diffuse it throughout the body; the body becomes the overall site of an overall pleasure. This is the plane on which the self forgets itself, omits to be one.

The embodiment of the subject is for Deleuze a form of bodily materiality, but not of the natural, biological kind. Deleuze rather takes the body as the complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces. The body is not an essence, let alone a biological substance. It is a play of forces, a surface of intensities: pure simulacra

without originals. The body is de-essentialized in conjunction with sexuality and sexed identities. The embodied subject is a term in a process of intersecting forces (affects), spatiotemporal variables that are characterized by their mobility, changeability, and transitory nature. The body is then an interface, a threshold, and a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces. The body is a surface where multiple codes – race/sex/class/age – are inscribed; it is a linguistic construction that capitalizes on energies of a heterogeneous, discontinuous, and unconscious nature. The body is seen as a situated self, as an embodied positioning of the self.

Deleuze and Guattari's 'Body without Organs' is neither a place nor a plane, a scene, or a fantasy; it is a field for the production, circulation, and intensification of desire, the locus of the immanence of desire. Destratification, freeing lines of flight, the production of connections, and the movements of intensities and flows through and beyond the Body without Organs are thus trajectories or tendencies rather than fixed states or final positions. Deleuze and Guattari advocate not a dissolution of identity, a complete destabilization and defamiliarization of identity, but rather microdestatifications, Intensifications of some interactions but not necessarily all: "Staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is that you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 161).

"If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature, and that there is a double reciprocal dependency between them. For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 213).

Becoming-woman involves a series of processes and movements outside of or beyond the fixity of subjectivity and the structure of stable unities. It is an escape from the systems of binary polarization that privilege men at the expense of women. In this sense, even if in no other, Deleuze and Guattari's work is clearly of value to feminist theory.

"It is, of course, indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity...But it is dangerous to confine oneself to such a subject, which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 276).

Becoming-woman does not necessarily have anything to do with "imitating or assuming the female form." Even if it appears to be a simple matter of imitation, simulation is much more than simple mimicry. Becoming-woman is a matter of "emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity, of microfemininity, in other words, that produce in us a molecular woman, create the molecular woman" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 275). As with learning a language, it's a matter of subtly shifting the body around, tapping into new musculatures and nervous systems, picking up on different speeds. But while one is certainly more likely to run into these shifts in the course of trying to make some change.

It is in this sense that everybody finds themselves somewhere in the course of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-woman, more or less but never perfectly self-identified. Becoming-woman means going beyond identity and subjectivity, fragmenting and freeing up lines of flight, 'liberating' a thousand tiny sexes that identity subsumes under the One.

"That's all there was, just the wires," Travis said. "Connecting them directly to each other. Wires, and blood, and piss, and shit. Just the way the hotel maid found them." (Cadigan, 1991: 22).

A new figuration of the feminist subject is according to Donna Haraway, an impersonal mode tuned in to the high-technology reality of the contemporary condition – a way of representing feminist forms of knowledge that are not caught in a mimetic relationship to dominant scientific discourse. This rhizomatic construction implies a new connection between the lived experience and the activity of critical intelligence. The rhizomatic mode is crucial to feminism: it rests on a new interconnection between the lived experience (life) and the activity of the critical/theoretical mind. The centrality of the relationship thought/life in feminism brings it close to Deleuze's attack on the binary logic of the logocentric system. Deleuze proposes to overcome the structure of thought on which the dichotomous oppositions are based, rather than simply reverse the terms of the opposition. This means going in between different discursive fields, passing through diverse spheres of intellectual discourse.

Feminist theory is 'in transit', moving, passing through, creating connections with things which were previously disconnected or seemingly unrelated – this implies the effort to move on to the invention of new ways of relating between notions. This epistemic nomadism works effectively when situated in 'in-between' zones. The significance of Haraway's narrative is her radical redefinition of materialism. Rethinking the subject amounts to rethinking his/her bodily roots. Haraway pursues a feminist line of Foucauldian and Deleuzian conception about bodily materiality – though she adopts the terminology of science and technology rather than that of postmetaphysical philosophy: Her conceptual universe is the high-technology world of 'informatics' and 'cybercommunications'.

In this situation, the question becomes: What counts as human in the posthuman world? How can one rethink the unity of the human subject, without reference to humanistic beliefs, without dualistic oppositions, linking instead body and mind in a new flux of self? What is the view of the self that is operational in the world of techno domination? It is in this framework that Haraway proposes a new figuration for feminist subjectivity: the cyborg. As a hybrid, or body-machine, the cyborg is a connection-making entity; it is a figure of interrelationality and receptivity that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions – human/machine, nature/culture, male/female, Oedipal/non-Oedipal – It is a way of thinking specificity without falling into relativism. The cyborg is Haraway's representation of a generic feminist humanity. Moreover, the body in the cyborg model is neither physical nor mechanical – nor is it only textual. It is rather a counterparadigm for the interaction between the inner and the external reality. It is a reading of what occurs between body and machine, a new powerful replacement of the mind/body debate, the cyborg is a postmetaphysical construct.

What are at stake now are the definition and the political viability of a technological form of materialism as a paradigm for a rhizomatic subjectivity. “[T]he cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics” (Haraway, 1991: 150). A vital moment in Haraway’s cybernetic imagery is the notion of ‘situated knowledges’. Answering implicitly the humanistic accusation that emphasis on multiplicity leads to relativism, Haraway advocates a multifaceted foundational theory and an anti-relativistic acceptance of differences in a historically located semiotic and material subjectivity which seeks connections and articulations in a non-gender-centred and non-ethnocentric perspective. What is emphasized is a network of differences, especially the difference organic/inorganic and human/machine, in opposition to the primacy granted to the binary opposition of masculine to feminine in sexual difference theories. A sort of deessentialized embodied genealogy emerges as the strategy to undo the dualism. The cyborg, as a feminist figuration is an illuminating example of the intersection between feminist theory and Deleuzian lines of thought, in their common attempt to come to terms with the posthuman world.

On the way through the fractal scales a “kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves.” These “begin with and pass through becoming-woman” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 275), which is already a matter of “becoming child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or –mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becoming particles. Fibers lead us” in more ways than one (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 272).

What this may prove is that there is no such thing as ‘being’ human, male or female. Even attempts to remain the same, secure one’s identity, and keep it in line are destined to find themselves in the course of becoming one or the other. Those whose only concern is to secure an existing sexuality find that this too has to be simulated. Or in the many courses and processes of the many becomings which, assembled together, produce the general effect of a sexual identity they can call their own. There is no ‘there’ there either. No one is or has one sex at a time, but teems with sexes and sexualities too fluid, volatile, and numerous to count. If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature. There is nowhere to go, and no way back. It is not possible to be just one sex, or even to have a sexuality when, for every sexual identity, there is always a microscopic transsexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering – men with women, women with men – into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes.

“They ascended lattices of light, levels strobing, a blue flicker....That’ll be it, Case thought.... Wintermute was a simple cube of white light, that very simplicity suggesting extreme complexity.... ‘Doesn’t look much does it?’ the Flatline said. ‘But just you try and touch it’” (Gibson, 1984: 289).

The stomach lurches and churns as it expels more and more of its shrink-wrapped identitarian detritus. The permanent whine of its ferro-concrete intestines sets our ears bleeding as it ingests new fuels – old products. Sticky organs mesh indiscriminately with scrapyards debris forming ephemeral syntaxes of hybrid cyber-circulation.

Multiple personalities emerge in a chopped up, channel-surfing, schizophrenic culture alive with parallel processes and distributed systems, humming with the chatter of unseen voices and susceptible to thousands of remote controls. A telecommunicating, cybernetic culture with its own hidden hands and runaway effects, checks, balances, and with unprecedented fluctuations. A patchwork culture of short-term memories and missing records, conflicting histories and discontinuous samples, strands of the narrative pulled out of time. A volatile, highly strung, and sensitive system, susceptible to opportunistic infections and imperceptible mutations, spontaneous emergences and sudden new lives.

It is by a process of deliberation that the body begins to uncouple itself from its own and external authority; possession and self-possession, control and self-control. Meat learns. There is no such thing as 'being' human. Even attempts to remain the same, secure one's identity, and keep it in line are destined to find themselves in the course of becoming one or another. No one is or has one sex at a time, but teems with sexes and sexualities too fluid, volatile, and numerous to count. If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature. There is nowhere to go, and no way back. It is not possible to be just one sex, or even to have a sexuality when, for every sexual identity, there is always a microscopic transexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering – men with women, women with men – into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes.

The early twenty-first century finds itself aflood, awash, at sea, swamped by an irresistible ocean of molecular activity which can only be surfed, catching a wave like a sample of sound, a few grabbed bytes from the new seascape. From the middle of the island, it almost seemed that the oceanic was taking its revenge, an enormous surge of repressed return, a turning of the tables and the tides. But it is not a simple question of reversing roles, swapping terra firms for fluidity. It is always on the edge, the in-between strands, in the lines between the ocean and the land that the mutations begin to occur and new activities start to emerge. Drops of water, grains of sand, oceans and deserts, the very wet and the very dry, make connections of their own.

Even primitive VR corrodes both objectivity and personality; singularising perspective at the same time it is anonymized. As the access point to an impossible zone – and the navigator within it – 'you' are an avatar (cyberspace nomad): a non-specific involvement site, interlocking intelligence with a context. You ( = ( ( ) ) ) index a box, such as William Gibson's *Case*: a place to be inside the system. "I had learned something (already) in the dead city: You are wherever you are" (Acker, 1988: 211).

Foucault jacks into virtual sex: the cyberspace scene. It would be he considers, "marvellous to have the power, at any hour of day or night, to enter a place equipped with all the comforts and all the possibilities that one might imagine, and to meet there a body at once tangible and fugitive." Not simply because as William Burroughs enthuses, "you can lay Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Isis, Madame Pompadour, or Aphrodite. You can get fucked by Pan, Jesus Christ, Apollo or the Devil himself. Anything you like likes you when you press the buttons" (Burroughs, 1985: 86). You

make the connections, access the zone. Whatever avatar you select for your scene, you cannot resist becoming cyborg as well. Some human locks on, but a replicant stirs. You will be posthuman, whatever it is. Suddenly, it always was. You always were.

Haunting a-life is a-death, the desolated technoplane of climaxed digitalisation process, undifferentiable from its simulation as cataplexy and K-coma. The apprehension of death as time-in-itself=continuum degree-0 is shared by Spinoza, Kant, Freud, Deleuze and Guattari, and Gibson – amongst others. It is nominated variously: substance, pure apperception, death-drive, body-without-organs, cyberspace matrix. Beyond its Oedipal sense as end of the person death is an efficient virtual object inducing convergence. No one there.

While computational serialism articulates a transcendent temporal metric – determined as a hardware specification – parallelism immanentizes time as duration; instantiated in machinic simultaneities. Unlike serial time, which serves as the extrinsic chronological support for algorithmic operations, parallel time is directly functioning during the engineering of coincidences. The non-successive and unsegmented zero of intensive extinction is scaled by machinic singularization, and not by superordinate metronomics.

Life decomposes into filth as it exposes the vicarious death of the universe. Vomit, excrement, and decomposing flesh do not proffer unproblematic solidity or comprehensible form, but rather quasi-evanescent patterns of cohesion. Particles decay, molecules disintegrate, cells die, organisms perish, species become extinct, planets are destroyed and stars burn-out, galaxies explode, until the unfathomable thirst of the entire universe collapses into darkness and ruin. Death, glorious and harsh, sprawls vast beyond all suns, sheltered by the sharp flicker-lip of flame and silence, cold mother of all gods, hers is the deep surrender. If we are to resist nothing – not even nothing – it is necessary that all resistance to death cease. We are made sick by our avidity to survive, and in our sickness is the thread that leads back and nowhere, because we belong to the end of the universe. The convulsion of a dying stars is our syphilitic inheritance. Matter signals to its lost voyagers, telling them that their quest is vain, and that their homeland already lies in ashes behind them.

If there is a conclusion it is zero. Silence. Words continue as something else, as something in any case, or at most; the edge of something – of all things. Yet there is nothing but chaos, even if chaos – alone – is repressed. Unilateral difference. That is why a revolution must be a zenith of competence nucleated upon burning insanity, since anarchy and utter surrender only connect in a religion of death. Thanocracy, anarchy are undifferentiable at zero, and a human being without desperation escapes comprehension. Being created in an image of God, we mean nothing to ourselves, and want only the inhuman.

The ghost of self drifts in the shallows; the fading echo from a clamour of frantic dreams. One swims effortlessly into not-one.

Beyond the judgement of God. Koma-switch decompression washes you in the void-ripples of virgin (retro((desolated-partho((( )))genetic) cyberspace, technopacific theta-waves dissociating monoculture-secular into transtemporalizing ne(ur)o-vooodoo.

Humanism (capitalist patriarchy) is the same thing as our imprisonment. Trapped in the maze, treading the same weary round. Round and round in the garbage. Round and round (God is a scratched record), even when we think we are progressing, knowing more. Round and round, missing the sacred.

Personalism is a trap because to believe that some of what one was holding onto will be taken care of by another being is irreligion.

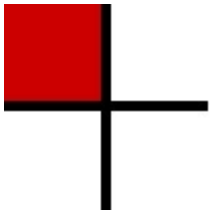
“You made me blow my game,” she said. “Look there, asshole. Seventh level dungeon and the goddam vampires got me.” She passed him a cigarette. “You look pretty strung, man. Where you been?” (Gibson, 1984: 200).

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## Enron Whodunit?

David M. Boje and Grace Ann Rosile

### abstract

Enron will become the most analysed business case in history. Every strategy, organizational behavior, organization theory or organizational development seminar, accounting, finance, and economics classes will also have their Enron case sessions. Case writers will formulate their case materials in ways that press the answer toward their expertise. And in this way the Business College will join in a plot war with the media and government, as we sort out the Enron Whodunit? How do we construct the plot of Enron, select its characters and delineate key events out of many possible chronologies and characters will define how to answer the whodunit? First, we briefly outline our theoretical perspective on plots and chronologies, then move on to the whodunit. We offer a series of ten ‘emplotments’ of the Enron Whodunit. Each plot is rooted in the assignment of blame to a different character or group. Further, no plot stands alone; each is intertextually embedded. We suggest that the interrelationships of the various plots (the metaplot) reveal the dynamics of ‘antenarrative’ story creation.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The analysis of Enron ‘emplotment’ is of political and analytical importance. Politically each plot is a fictive causal narration of selected events, characters, and institutions storied to account for the collapse of America’s seventh largest corporation into bankruptcy. Do we say that Enron characters plot themselves, their corporation, and the history of capitalism? Or, do we as narrators, academics from the outside, write the plots? In this brief note on Enron, we analyze plots that weave together some stories of Enron, while acknowledging that there is a war between how insiders and outsiders plot. Deciding where a plot begins and ends is a significant research problem. Do we limit the plot to corporate agents such as executives, or the Board of Directors? Many analysts limit Enron’s collapse to the ‘exceptional’ acts of a few errant financial managers, others tie it in to institutions as varied as Arthur Andersen, the White House, Business College, and American capitalism. Politically, each stakeholder fashions their plot to remove blame from themselves and cast it upon others. Analytically, a plot

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1 These interwoven plots are drawn from data sets, reports, chronologies, a book, and a few papers available at Boje’s ‘Enron is Metatheatre’ website (<http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/>). Also, at the end of this essay are links to such Enron case aids as a chronology file arranged as acts and scenes, in the Tragedy we frame here as the *Enron Whodunit*.



analysis must deal with four key areas, (1) the difference between plot and chronology, (2) emergent narratives that shift plots over time, (3) the situatedness of any one plot within an entire network of emplotments, and (4) the theatricality of plot performance by various stakeholders.

First, plot is not chronology; it is the causal chain that links events together into a narrative. And plot is highly selective, linking some “events together into a narrative structure” but leaving others on the margin (Boje, 2001a: 108). Paul Ricoeur (1984) in *Time and Narrative*, refers to ‘emPLOTment’ the grasping together of some events from chronology and some time episodes with some characters crafted into a meaningful storyline that (re) configures chronological time into fictive story (Boje, 2001a: 114).

Second, plots are emergent. We take the view that each plot is an emergent ‘antenarrative’, a bet that a story can be told that will catch the public imagination and attract attention (Boje, 2001a). Various stakeholders put forth their plot, hoping it will have political currency. An alternative to this emergent view is that narrative is limited to only wholly formed accounts with beginnings linked by plots to endings.

Third, the plots are intertextual. One plot links to another in networks of ‘inter-plot’ relationships (O’Connor, 2002). This ‘inter-plot’ is defined as an intertextuality between plots, and the analytic task is to trace utterances from one plot responding to and referencing plots posited by other network players (Boje, 2001a). This means that each plot is ensnared both historically and situationally in the acts of producing, distributing, and consuming stories.

Finally, we focus here on the fact that plots are theatrically performed to persuade. As Barry and Elmes (1997) and O’Connor (2002) point out, executives write strategic plots for their companies in ways that persuade employees and investors. At Enron, the theatre included erecting a Hollywood-style stage, where secretaries pretended to do big money trades, while Ken Lay and Jeffrey Skilling fed an eager audience of Wall Street analysts the illusion that the stock price of Enron would continue to rise (Boje, 2002a,b). In retrospect we question the appropriateness of the suspension of disbelief in that emplotment. And business professors, who once celebrated Enron as the hero of risk management, are rewriting their cases (Mangan, 2002). And congressmen and presidents are sending back contributions, and refusing phone calls. In most organizations you never see all the theatre performed; it is occurring simultaneously on different stages. Some scenes conscript as characters or spectators, and some scenes you may only hear about from others. Since there are so many theatre stages, we invoke the term ‘metatheatre’. Metatheatre is defined here as the multiple and contending theatres that constitute organizations. Metatheatre is a multiplicity of formal, informal, front, and back stages, where simultaneous performances are acted out with multiple starring and supporting characters.

Our thesis is that a cast of characters theatrically performs the Enron Whodunit, on local classroom stages, on global stages, in Washington D.C. chambers, and in the Federal court hearings in Houston. Each cast of characters performs a different plot, and some shed one plot for another, as the situation changes. Business college professors and

students in case courses are already performing Enron Whodunit. Here are ten plots (there are more).

**Plot 1: It was Andrew Fastow and his lieutenants**<sup>2</sup>

This Whodunit? plot is limited to Andrew Fastow (former Enron chief financial officer) and his lieutenants. When Enron investments were collapsing in its broadband, retail energy, and water trade markets, Fastow and his lieutenants created off-the-balance-sheet partnerships known as the ‘raptors’ to keep debt off the Enron annual reports and earnings reports. In this way, they hoped to keep the Big 3 rating firms from downgrading Enron stock to junk bond status, which would unleash sell orders and destroy Enron. They apparently hoped to keep a façade of success in play until these markets turned around. They didn’t.

This web of partnerships may have been structured for the additional purpose of allowing Fastow and some insiders to skim money while dressing up the Enron books. When Fastow lieutenant Michael Kopper (former Managing Director of Enron’s Global Equity Markets Group) was arrested, the August 21 2001 SEC filed to freeze and seize 16.6 million from three bank accounts belonging to former CFO Andrew Fastow, his brother, and his wife (Lea), \$4.6 million from an account owned by the Fastow Family Foundation, and \$500,000 owned by a Peter Fastow.<sup>3</sup>

In this plot version, the Enron Board of Directors, and executives Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling, claim to not know about the secret dealings and partnership manipulations. Since the Fastow cast of characters did not disclose details of the transactions, it is argued that the Board and executives, regulators, and Arthur Andersen auditors could not know what was going on. Even the Audit and Compliance Committee of the Enron Board claims not to have known. “Neither former Enron chairman Kenneth Lay nor former Enron chief executive Jeffrey Skilling was mentioned in any of the documents filed with Mr. Kopper’s plea” (Nichols & Mittelstadt, 2002).

**Plot 2: It was Fastow’s bosses: Skilling and Lay**<sup>4</sup>

The Whodunit is expanded to include Fastow’s bosses. In this plot, Jeffrey Skilling and Kenneth Lay are complicit. In response to Plot Option One’s painting of Fastow as the villain, Fastow points the finger of blame at everyone above him. At the Congressional Hearing when Fastow claimed his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, his spokesperson Gordon Andrew said: “Our position remains that Mr. Fastow acted with the full knowledge and approval of Enron’s board of directors, its office of the chairman, which included Mr. Lay and Mr. Skilling, and its internal and external auditors and legal advisers” (Saporito, 2002: 1).

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2 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p1\\_fastow](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p1_fastow)

3 For SEC 2001 actions on Enron see <http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/chronology.htm#aug212002>

4 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p2\\_fastows\\_bosses](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p2_fastows_bosses)

Shifting blame away from Lay, Lay's assistant Watkins testified (Feb 14, 2002 hearing of House Energy and Commerce investigative subcommittee), "I do believe that Skilling and Fastow along with these two respected firms did dupe Lay and the board." The "respected firms" refers to the law firm of Vinson & Elkins, and the accounting/consulting firm, Arthur Andersen.

As the cast of characters grows, each character blames the other for not being forthright in disclosing significant details. The Enron Board blames Arthur Andersen for not making them aware, and the US and UK government agencies are conducting reviews of accounting principles; the White House is also calling for investigation of the accountants. Californians are calling for investigation of how Enron manipulated the California energy crisis by buying energy in-state then selling it to an out-of-state partner, and then reselling it to California for a higher price, oftentimes without actually moving any energy.

### **Plot 3: It was the Domino Effect, ripple effects of Enron caused other corporations and executives to be exposed<sup>5</sup>**

The Whodunit becomes a Domino Theory. We can expand the list of characters to include executives outside of Enron. The expansion of the cast begins with Enron's own board of directors. The Enron Board resists the plot that it too is complicit. For example, Herbert Winokur says, "What happened at Enron has been described as a systemic failure. As it pertains to the board, I see it instead as a cautionary reminder of the limits of a director's role ... key employees whom we thought we knew proved to disappoint us significantly" (*USA Today*, Feb 7, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

In the Domino Theory, first the Enron collapse, and in its wake Arthur Andersen collapse, caused people to begin questioning the veracity of accounting and income statements and partnerships, and a whole series of corporations began to take a dive. The Dominos start to fall. "After recent arrests of WorldCom and Adelphia Communications executives, the Justice Department's Enron task force came under pressure to speed its year-long investigation into Enron, the largest case of alleged financial fraud" (Iwata, Knox, O'Donnell & Dugas, 2002). There is growing and long list of corporate executives who, like the Enron executives, were cashing in their stock options, even as their corporations were failing, leaving ordinary investors and employees holding the bag (Gimein, 2002: 64-65):

- Phil Anschutz, Director of Qwest Communications, sold stock worth \$1.57 billion
- Ted Waitt, CEO of Gateway, sold stock worth \$1.10 billion
- Henry Samueli, CTO of Broadcom, sold stock worth \$810 million
- Henry Nicholas, CEO of Boradcom, sold stock worth \$799 million
- John Moores, Chairman of Peregrine Systems, sold stock worth \$646 million.

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5 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p3\\_Domino\\_theory](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p3_Domino_theory)

6 The USA Today Article is available at <http://www.usatoday.com/money/energy/enron/2002-02-08-hearings.htm>; for more on Herbert Winokur see [http://www.house.gov/commerce\\_democrats/press/107ltr132.htm](http://www.house.gov/commerce_democrats/press/107ltr132.htm)

- Gary Winnick, Chairman of Global Crossing, sold stock worth \$508 million
- Steve Case, Chairman of AOL Time Warner, sold stock worth \$475 million

#### **Plot 4: It is the White House; this is Enrongate<sup>7</sup>**

The Whodunit extends complicity to the White House, Enrongate. The Enrongate plot surfaced for a short while, then went dormant (Boje, 2002a). In this plot, the cast of characters would include the Bush administration. Lay was Bush's largest financial contributor. Five Bush administration officials worked for Enron.

Jeffrey Skilling accuses the government of complicity (Congressional Hearing transcripts). And Kenneth Lay, if ever forced to testify, would likely be asked a critical question: "When did President Bush know?" For now, prosecution of Lay is not on the government's radar. In plot two, the antenarrative is constructed, that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to prove that Kenneth Lay had any knowledge of fraudulent raptor partnerships. For now the mainstream media and the political establishment are holding to plot two (an exception is the *New York Times*, in its editorial of August 22, 2002). But the dam is cracking.

Boje's dad (Daniel) kept calling after Bush was elected president and until Daniel died on March 12, 2001. He believed that the Bush administration was deeply linked to the Oil industry (Boje, 2002a). The oil industry gave \$1.7 million for Bush and \$133,710 for Gore.<sup>8</sup> Since 1990, Enron (and executives) contributed \$5.8 million (75% went to Republicans).<sup>9</sup>

#### **Plot 5: It was all three Presidents (Bush Sr., Clinton, & Bush Jr.)<sup>10</sup>**

The Whodunit is expanded historically to include the administrations of the last three presidents with ties to Enron. This would mean the Enron/administrative characters of the George Bush Sr., Bill Clinton, and George Bush Jr. presidencies. Five members of Bush's Administration used to work for Enron:

- Bush Economic Adviser, Lawrence Lindsey was an Enron consultant
- U.S. Trade Representative, Robert Zoellick was an Enron Advisory Board Member
- Secretary of the Army, Thomas White was a former Enron executive
- James Baker, Chief of Staff to President Bush worked for Enron
- Robert Mosbacher, Commerce Secretary, worked for Enron).

In addition, Republican National Committee Chairman, Marc Racicot was an Enron lobbyist. During the 1990s Enron was the superstar character of the New Economy Plot, a plot advanced by Presidents Bush Sr. and then by Clinton, and in the 2000s by Bush

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7 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p4\\_enrongate](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p4_enrongate)

8 See Planet Ark for oil industry figures at <http://www.planetark.org/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=8764>

9 Chicago Times online has an excellent summary of Enron's political contributions <http://images.chron.com/content/news/photos/02/05/15/strat/strat.jpg>. For Chicago Times list of top democratic and republican recipients <http://www.chron.com/content/news/photos/02/01/18/ recip.html>

10 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p5\\_all\\_the\\_presidents](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p5_all_the_presidents)

Jr. (until the great Enron collapse). This plot included Enron's strategy of downsizing and outsourcing employees. Bush Jr. has kept attention on the War on Terrorism; this can be hypothesized as a strategic ('*Wag the Dog*') move by the Bush administration to keep the media firestorm from turning the Enron spectacle into Bush's Enrongate. From January to March (2002) media attention was on Enrongate, and then became divided Arthur Andersen and Afghanistan's invasion, and more recently by Bush's call for war on Iraq.

**Plot 6: It all relates to Afghanistan, and pipelines of ExxonMobil, Texaco, Unocal, BP Amoco and Enron<sup>11</sup>**

The Whodunit is part of Afghanistan pipeline investment and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack. ExxonMobil, Texaco, Unocal, BP Amoco, Shell (see 7 Sisters of Oil below) plus Enron, all invested billions in bribes to heads of state in Kazakhstan to secure equity rights in the huge oil reserves in the Afghanistan region (Hersh, 2001; Escobar, 2002). What Enron wanted in Afghanistan was the CentGas (Central Asian Gas) pipeline; Enron did the \$2.5 billion dollar feasibility study (Escobar, 2002). This would not be the first Oil War. This plot is more fully understood in the context of Plot Option Seven, the Seven Sisters, explained next.

**Plot 7: It is a remake of the Seven Sisters from 1911<sup>12</sup>**

The Whodunit extends to the Seven Sisters. This plot looks at the deeply rooted values of the energy industry that took shape in the Robber Barons history of the late 1880s. The plot is that the history of Enron mirrors the history of Standard Oil (except no one from SO was arrested). The Seven Sisters of Oil were (until recent mergers) Exxon, Mobil, Shell, British Petroleum, Gulf, Texaco, & Chevron).

The patterns of predatory corporate behavior, incestuous relations to government, and scandals of the turn of the last century seem to replicate in the turn of this century. As in early 1920s energy industry scandals of government ties to mega corporations (e.g. Teapot Dome in the 1920s), the current Enron megaspectacle scandal has its ties. In the 1880s oil was a new industry to John D. Rockefeller, just as natural gas in the 1980s was a new industry to Kenneth Lay. In 1911 the U.S. government dismembered the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (called Jersey for short). Jersey had become a Trust (a network of 322 interlocking corporate partnerships) controlled by a few executives. The same pattern of cash-for-political-access of Jersey was replicated in Enron, this time with 3500 subsidiaries and partnerships.

In this plot the historical chronology of oil executive predatory practices of the Seven Sisters is linked to the historical patterns of Enron and its predatory practices. We see scandals, legislative reform, and continued charade in this employment. Indeed, in this plot Enron is the Seventh Sister (a vacancy created by merger of ExxonMobil). The plot/frame ratio must be studied; that is, the ideological frames rooted in the last century resurface in the Enron ideological frames. From the outset, Enron claimed to be king of

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11 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p6\\_afhanistan](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p6_afhanistan)

12 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p7\\_seven\\_sisters](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p7_seven_sisters)

the 'New Economy' frame, projecting the image of the youthful free-market revolutionary conquest. This morphed into a sexist 'Cowboy Capitalism' frame, complete with strip tease lunches at the Traveler's Club, and the Playboy issue on the *Women of Enron*. Enron ended as a remake of Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*. Enron gala events "were suitably imperial demonstrations of power with Tiffany glassware as door prizes and waiters standing by at all times with flutes of champagne" (Peraino, Murr and Gesalman, 2002: 27).

In this revised plot line, the Seven Sisters of oil (including Enron) continue to be a world government, the real leaders of the New Economy of deregulated Free Market capitalism. In this plot, the tainted Enron Sister must fall, so the other Sisters can sustain their masquerade, and continue the imperial quest for oil in Alaska and Iraq.

### **Plot 8: It was a failure of the system of Western Capitalism, its checks and balances<sup>13</sup>**

The Whodunit is a crisis of the entire system of western Capitalism. In this plot, capitalism's main institutional characters are cast into the plot, along with select chronological events. Institutional characters would include the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, and 23 agencies of the U.S. government, including Congress, Senate, the White House, the Securities and Exchange Commission, Accounting Associations, and the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (SEEN, 2002).

The problem with the blame the collapsed checks and balances of capitalism is that nobody likes an impersonal story about monopoly and governments (Fetter, 1931: 4). Best to find a few real people to scapegoat, like two executives to lock up from WorldCom on public TV, or arrest Enron's Fastow, or have the president give a fire and brimstone speech about executive malfeasance. In this plot, the financial and accounting manipulation and the Metatheatre facade for employees and investors is central to Western capitalism (see for example, Ben-Ami, 2001; Fetter, 1931). Ben-Ami (2001) argues that capitalism is no longer focused on traditional concepts of profit, but on financially engineered profit; Fetter (1931) asserts that monopoly masquerades as free market; and we contend that capitalism has become theatre (Boje, 2002a,b). In this plot, the gloved hands of invisible capitalists perform a sleight of hand in a game that is rigged to widen the gap of rich and poor.

### **Plot 9: It was the Business College, they taught the gentlemen crooks everything they needed to defraud<sup>14</sup>**

In this emplotment, the Business College becomes a character. All over academia, textbook authors are rewriting their 'Enron is King of the New Economy' textbooks, into cases that explain the Enron Whodunit with Case Notes, Interactive Case materials (like this one). They are motivated therefore to make the Business College out to be a

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13 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p8\\_capitalism\\_system](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p8_capitalism_system)

14 More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p9\\_business\\_college](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p9_business_college)

spectator or innocent bystander to the Enron Metatheatre. Cases written before the collapse provided significant PR value to push for not only investment but also energy deregulation. Before its collapse, Harvard and Darden celebrated Enron's strategic and leadership prowess (e.g. Entrepreneurial Energy HBS 9-700-079; Gas Services HBS 9-294-076; Darden case 'Enron 1986-2001'). Eleven Harvard professors wrote pro-Enron cases. According to Pulley (2002: 1-2) there has been significant 'profiteering' by Harvard in the Enron debacle. At the center of the scandal is the short selling of Enron stock to generate profits for Harvard Corporation in excess of \$50 million, says HarvardWatch (Pulley, 2002). However, it was also us in the Business College that trained the accountants in the technologies and ethics they used. It was us who sent the MBAs to work with Jeffrey Skilling (Harvard B-school) and with Andrew Fastow (Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management). Kenneth Lay got his training at University of Missouri, (master's degree, economics, 1965), and University of Houston (doctorate, economics, 1965). Michael Kopper studied economics and finance at Duke University and the London School of Economics.

The August 2002 Academy of Management annual meetings of over 6000 business professors was marked with lively and sometimes heated debates over the Business School's role in Enron (Mangan, 2002). Are we bottom-line-worshipping Dr. Frankensteins? Or are we instead the students and servants of the powerful corporate elites? Perhaps we are merely ineffectual and irrelevant, written out of the play before it reaches Broadway. If not the Business College and its faculty, then whodunit?

### **Plot 10: It was the greed and hubris of everyone<sup>15</sup>**

Greed is such a simple plot, for those who like to keep their analysis simple (as Nietzsche would say). In this plot Enron is a microcosm of the greed of American Society. Go back to Aristotle (350 BCE) and find a character that is everyone, and call that character Greed. This way no one individual is to blame. Greed is just everywhere. Employees of Enron were greedy for not paying attention to their 401(K) investments. Stock analysts were greedy for not advising clients to stop buying Enron, when a grade school kid could plot the trends. The Big 3 rating firms were greedy for not downgrading Enron to junk bond status until November 28, 2001. The Bankruptcy court was greedy for allowing Enron to sell off most of its assets. It is now argued that business colleges were greedy, focus on maximizing shareholder wealth, and putting financial-wealth of CEO and corporation ahead of the social good. The American public is greedy, which is why international investors are pulling out of our investment markets. They'll be back; they too have hubris. The greed and hubris plot distributes blame to everyone and to no one.

## **Discussion**

We have suggested ten plots (stories), all of which are viable interpretations of Enron, based on our read of published sources. To better understand how these ten plots relate

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<sup>15</sup> More plot information at [http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p10\\_greed](http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/enron/plots.htm#p10_greed)

to each other, we offer the following grid. Table 1 displays the Enron Inter-Plot Network by linking the plots back to their main chronological setting.

Paradigm/ perspective level	INSIDE/EMIC	OUTSIDE/ETIC
<b>MICRO</b>	I. <i>'Villains did it'</i> Plot 1. It was Andrew Fastow and his lieutenants. Plot 2. It was Fastow's bosses: Skilling and Lay. Plot 10. It was the greed and hubris of everyone.	II. <i>'Evil Corporations did it'</i> Plot 3. It was the Domino Effect, ripple effects of Enron caused other corporations & executives to be exposed. Plot 7. Its a remake of the Seven Sisters from 1911.
<b>MACRO</b>	III. <i>'It's the Political System'</i> Plot 4. It is the White House; this is Enrongate Plot 5. It was all three Presidents (Bush Sr., Clinton, & Bush Jr.)	IV. <i>'It's Capitalism'</i> Plot 6. It all relates to Afghanistan, and pipelines of ExxonMobil, Texaco, Unocal, BP Amoco, & Enron. Plot 8. It is a failure of Western Capitalism, of checks and balances Plot 9. It was the Business College, they taught the gentlemen crooks everything they needed to de-fraud.

**Table 1: Enron 'meta-plot' analysis grid**

Each of the quadrants in the grid reflects an assumed position of the characters and of the storyteller in presenting the various emplotments (stories). The dimensions of the grid were chosen for two primary purposes: first, to highlight the intertextual dimensions of the various plots, and second, to demonstrate 'metaplot.' Looking first at intertextuality, or how one text is related to another, we see the Enron plots entangle and interrelate on the micro-macro dimensions of the same situation. We keep in mind that this dimension is continuous, not dichotomous, and that much of the interest in such dimensions is at the so-called 'border' between the opposing poles. Second, we consider the vantage point of the narrator. Are they describing a social system of which they are a member (emic), or are they standing outside the system to offer a distanced and/or critical viewpoint (etic)? Again, the mid-range of the boundary-spanner is at least as interesting as the extreme positions.

Each of the four quadrants also represents a 'metaplot.' That is, we understand the plot (story) better when we understand who is telling the story, and about whom it is told. Thus, one plot emerges when we consider the perspective of those in the same industry (social group) who are offering a plot/story/critique about whether or not their peers followed the norms of that social group. A different plot necessarily emerges when someone outside the industry (social group) offers a plot/story/critique based on the application of standards and values imposed from outside that social group. The quadrants allow us to thematically group plots according to the following four answers to the Enron Whodunit:

- I. 'Villains did it'
- II. 'Evil Corporations did it'
- III. 'It's the Political System'
- IV. 'It's Capitalism'



Why use Metaplot analysis? The Metaplot framework gives us the generic categories of plots, within which context we can locate the multiplicity of simultaneous individual plotlines, and resist reductionist pressures to identify 'the' story. Further, the grid helps to clarify the intertextuality among plots. Enron's plots are intertextual to all the other plots in the historical chronology. And Enron strategic plots for itself are not unopposed. Next we will offer some examples of how the Meta-Plot Grid Analysis can highlight this intertextuality of plots.

It is easy to see how Quadrant I (Villains did it) leads us into Quadrant II (Evil corporations did it). A key actor expanding our cast of characters is Sherron Watkins. After Watkins blamed first a few executives (Fastow & Skilling, in particular), she then included the accountants and lawyers, so as to keep the Whodunit away from Kenneth Lay.<sup>16</sup>

Plot Two features the dramatic plot device of the whistleblower. Sherron Watkins plays the superheroine to advance the spectacle theatre illusion that there were no whistleblowers before August of 2001. In other plots, she is last in a long line of whistleblowers, who were first ignored and then reassigned when they spoke their concerns about the hidden plots into the ears of Enron executives. These other players' bids for the role of whistleblower extended back to the 1987 Valhalla Rogue Traders scandal (Boje, 2002a), and through the Chewco and LJM partnerships (known as the 'raptors'). Such historical revisionism is quite obvious when you read SEEN (2002) or the foreign press coverage of Enron in India and Dominican Republic.

The cast of characters in Plot Two expands to sustain a strategically antenarrated ambiguity that includes Enron Management (Fastow, Skilling, & Lay) and other top Enron employees, the Audit and Compliance Committee of the Enron Board, Enron's in-house counsel (i.e. Kristina Mordaunt), Enron's law firm Vinson & Elkins, and Enron's auditors Arthur Andersen (e.g. partner Duncan). This plot is also known as the House of Cards scenario. However, the scandal did not stay in-house. As increasing attention focused on Enron's auditor Arthur Andersen, a chain of other corporations became implicated. This led to Plot Three's Domino Effect.

Plot Seven has an inter-plot relation to plots one and two. Lay, Skilling, and Fastow (and company) are gentlemen crooks reincarnated from last century, who cleverly disguise themselves as executives trained in Business College professional ethics. We see Frank Fetter's (1931) book *The Masquerade of Monopoly* has much to do with what we see as the dramaturgy of the *Theatres of Capitalism*. Fetter says, for example, that talented regulators and accountants "have not always understood exactly the economic nature of the masquerader whose identity they were concealing" (1931: 5) and that the executives and chairpersons seem to wear magic caps "of invisibility so that even those who were paying artificially enhanced prices usually did not know just what was being done to them" (1931: 4). These executives are "endowed with a hypnotic power that deluded the spectator" (*ibid.*). This suggests an inter-plot relation between plots 1 and 2 (executives done it), to the monopolies (plot 5), to the spectacle of capitalism itself (plot

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16 See chronology, Oct 30, 2001 at <http://cbae.nmsu.edu/~dboje/enron/chronology.htm#oct302001>

6). Protecting the White House (plot 4) from being the next domino to fall is the nightmare of the Bush administration.

Enron also has many ties to academia. Robert Jaedicke, a former accounting professor and dean of Stanford Business School (1983-1990) led the audit-and-compliance committee of Enron's Board of Directors (Mangan, 2002: A15). HarvardWatch has charged that Harvard's reputation has been compromised by "unethical alliances and quid-pro-quo agreements among its scholars and Enron." Herbert (Pug) Winokur, a member of Enron's Board of Directors (since 1985), and a member of Enron's Board's Finance Committee (that oversaw raptor partnerships), was also a member of the Harvard Corporation and the Harvard University's governing board. Harvard Corporation earned over \$50 million through the short selling of Enron stock.

Harvard's Professor Ghemawat wrote an Enron case study (Enron: Entrepreneurial Energy) in 2000, while he was earning \$50,000 as a member of Enron's Board of Advisors (Mangan, 2002: A14). He says the paycheck did not influence the case, "which doesn't mention his tie to the company" (*ibid.*).

## Conclusions

Our point is quite simple. Enron is Metatheatre on a network of stages, and on each there is a different plot performed. Enron stakeholders accomplish their respective theatre to persuade and seduce employees, investors, and students into the willing suspension of disbelief. It is theatrical persuasion that sells us a narrative emplotment of cause and effect. The multiple plots of Enron are revised with each new historical situation, and each emergent antenarrative bet. We have moved out of business as sociotechnical economic design and into what we call *Theatres of Capitalism*. We live in what Debord (1967) calls the *Society of the Spectacle* and what our friends Firat and Dholakia call the *Political Economy of Theatres of Consumption* (1998). In retrospect, we can see the theatrical illusion that portrayed Enron as a \$70 billion dollar corporation and the 7th largest corporation in America.

Politically, this is history being written by those who wield the sword, the dominant institutions of society (e.g. State, Academy, Business College, Corporations). They write and re-write history to re-legitimate their own performances. A few WorldCom executives are led off the well-lit stage in handcuffs; Andrew Fastow and some lieutenants at Enron have their assets frozen. Little people do not write history; they are re-socialized into the dominant historical narrative through such acts of theatre. Aristotle had it right: theatre is a cathartic moment. It is a way for us to stay safely in our role as spectators, and to purge the tragic flaw from ourselves while attention is directed to the characters on the stage. Those characters each attempt to manipulate the plot for their own benefit. That is why it is very important to look closely at the multiplicity of Enron plots, at what is being performed for our consumption. No plot stands alone; each is an answer to a previous emplotment by some contrary stakeholders. 'Don't blame the Board, blame the accountants'; 'don't blame the

executives, blame the lawyers'; 'don't blame the Business College, blame the system'. And so it goes. Despite this flux and shift, there are some lessons being drawn.

First, to the extent that corporate theatrics seduce us into comfortably passive roles as spectators, we must acknowledge our own complicity in the Enron plots. A spectator is potentially an actor, and we always have the choice to become 'spectators' (in Boal's terms) to change the dynamics of the drama. But which drama do we seek to address? The meta-plot analysis suggests that at the minimum, more than one emplotment must be considered.

Capitalism will need to undergo a reformation that goes beyond the Spectacle of Plots 1, 2 & 3, and even beyond the presidential plots 4 & 5. A wider emplotment of corporate institutions, such as 6 & 7 is needed. But to get the deeper changes, 8 & 9 (systems of training in capitalism) will need to change before 10 changes. Ultimately, the resolution of the dramatic problem of Enron Whodunit? interrelated emplotments of Corporation, State, and Education, lies in reforms to the Metatheatre of Capitalism. Some reforms of 401(k), executive stock options, reporting transparency, and separation of audit from consulting have begun.

There is a moral to our story of the multiple Enron plots: it is impossible to separate out narrative method from the political choices that come into play when we choose what characters and events to select and say 'that one there is the plot of Enron.' We suggest that while Enron will be the most analysed business case, it will also be perhaps the most difficult. First, selecting any one plot means ignoring micro for macro, or insider for outsider (or vice versa). Second, we are spectators to ways a network of a thousand or more event connections gets reduced in the public discourse to a few fashionable causal assertions, and how these get widely distributed for mass consumption. And while we remain spectators to the theatrical drama, we can do little to stop it. Third, we have noted that emplotment is more than narrative, it is theatrical. And business is increasingly theatrical. In sum, our contribution is to lift the ideological veil, and trace the shifting emplotments, and call into question any one-plot reductionism. We seek to recover the antenarrative circumstances of causal assertion by tracing shifting intertextual and inter-plot linkages.

So Whodunit? It depends upon your favorite plot. Our personal view is that it takes an entire village to raise an Enron and reforming a system suspended in theatre means rewriting the entire play. The play's last scene remains to be written. There are new emplotments being authored and performed as we close these curtains.

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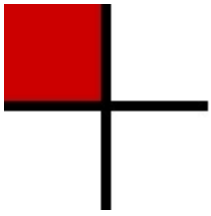
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## Movements of Theory and Practice\*

Steffen Böhm

### abstract

In spite of Lenin's claim that "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" it has become increasingly fashionable to argue against theory and celebrate practice. This can be clearly observed in an academic field such as organisation studies which is characterised by increasing pressures to be less theoretically abstract and more practically relevant for private and public management. In this paper I will defend theory against the attacks from 'common sense' practice by developing the concept of theoretical practice, which highlights the close interconnectedness between theory and practice but also leaves room for their relative autonomy from each other. This theoretical conception is practiced by closely engaging with the so-called 'movement' of anti-capitalist protesters and globalisation critics whose most recent event was the European Social Forum (ESF) that took place in Florence, Italy, in November 2002. I will argue that in relation to theory and practice the ESF points towards three notions: first, protest for radical social change is a theoretical practice; second, the theoretical practice of radical collective protest can be the source of joy; and third, theoretical practice is characterised by movements between multiplicity and unity. Overall then this paper is a call for the practice of theory in organisation studies (and in life in general), a theory that aims at interrogating and concretely effecting social organisation and contributes to a project of radical change.

### The Rule of Total War

The year 2002 is coming to a close. Two years after the millennial turn all the hopes and utopias that were originally connected to this memorable date seem to have vanished; instead the world appears to be in a permanent state of undeclared (civil) war: Washington, New York, Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine, Bali, Columbia, Kashmir, Congo, Nepal...it is impossible to name all places of recent or current war atrocities and human catastrophes. Despite the now famous claim that history has ended after the fall of the 'iron curtain' and state socialism (Fukuyama, 1992), wherever we look the world is in turmoil; or, as Walter Benjamin says, we live in a permanent state of emergency: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live

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is *not the exception but the rule*” (1999a: 244, my emphasis), as the only difference between the politics of peace and the conduct of war is the intensity of the means employed. It is no wonder really why the historical heroes we celebrate are usually military leaders – and today they have reincarnated as politicians who declare themselves to be leaders of global security forces<sup>1</sup> that fight for ‘human rights’, ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest, these security forces are not strictly national armies anymore, which fight in a war that is declared against a sovereign state. Instead they are ‘internal’ police forces that fight ‘global terrorism’ in every corner of Empire, which for Hardt and Negri is a theoretical concept that points to the global, boundary-less regime that rules over the entire ‘civilised’ world (2000: xiv). Empire is the global State that has appropriated the means of war and developed it into the defining organising principle for the social as such:

The State apparatus appropriates the war machine, subordinates it to its ‘political’ aims, and gives it war as its direct object. And it is one and the same historical tendency that causes State to evolve from a triple point of view: going from figures of encastment to forms of appropriation proper, going from limited war to so-called total war, and transforming the relation between aim and object. The factors that make State war total war are closely connected to capitalism: it has to do with the investment of constant capital in equipment, industry, and the war economy, and the investment of variable capital in the population in its physical and mental aspects (both as warmaker and as victim of war). Total war is not only war of annihilation but arises when annihilation takes as its ‘center’ not only the enemy army, or the enemy State, but the entire population and its economy. The fact that this double investment can be made only under prior conditions of limited war illustrates the irresistible character of the capitalist tendency to develop total war. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 420-421)

The irony is that this ‘total war’,<sup>2</sup> this complete tyranny, which has as its ‘centre’ the social or even life as such, as Foucault points out,<sup>3</sup> is ‘sold’ to us as a war for ‘freedom’. In other words, when the United States and its allies invade one country after the other,

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1 As I write this, NATO is holding its annual meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, with 12,000 policemen guarding the governmental leaders of the Northern Atlantic military alliance. It is said that about 4,000 protesters will be demonstrating against NATO – see [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org) for reports on these protests. Besides Bush’s main concern to form an international alliance for his war against Iraq, on top of the agenda will be the creation of a rapid security force that can be mobilised to intervene in any conflict around the world within twenty-four hours. The European Union, too, has plans for a similar rapid deployment force.

2 My usage of the concept of ‘total war’ is quite different from a popular understanding that sees war, in the tradition of Carl von Clausewitz, as a “duel on a larger scale” with the “maximum use of physical force” (1984: 87). In this view then war is a duel between two parties; it is a decision about who is your friend and who your enemy. In contrast to this my understanding of ‘total war’ is based on the idea that today, in times of Empire and the War on Terrorism, the enemy is everywhere and everybody; hence ‘total war’ is in fact a civil war in the sense that it is a war from *within* the social, *against* the social.

3 Foucault writes: “Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. And through a turn that closes the circle, as the technology of wars has caused them to tend increasingly toward all-out destruction, the decision that initiates them and the one that terminates them are in fact increasingly informed by the naked question of survival” (1998: 137).

when Israeli tanks flatten Palestinian cities and refugee camps, when Russian forces bombard Chechnian houses, we are told that these are pre-emptive strikes that aim to prevent terrorist 'evil-doers' to threaten global 'peace' and the 'freedom' of our people. That the former enemies of the Cold War sit, in this regard, in the same boat is not surprising, but proves the point of Hannah Arendt (1963) when she says that already the arms race of the Cold War was nothing else but 'total war' against the social, whether in the East or the West. In this light today's multiple 'War on Terrorism', which has become a term to justify pretty much all of Empire's military and political actions, is merely the continuation of the logic of total 'cold' war and its supplement with a 'hot' component and some new enemies. This is to say that today's global political and military constellation can hardly be described as 'new', in the sense that the 'total war' we are experiencing is a new phenomenon. No, as Deleuze and Guattari as well as Arendt suggest, 'total war' is intrinsic to the capitalist system, it is its main organisational principle. Therefore, the "catastrophe is not what threatens to occur at any given moment but what is given at any given moment" (Benjamin, 1989, I.2: 683). In other words, the main threat the world faces today is not the catastrophe of another '9/11', another 'Bali', or any other atrocity of global terrorism, but the catastrophe of the socio-economic relations of Empire itself. Put differently, "that things just go on is the catastrophe" (*ibid.*); the catastrophe is that barely a year after the war against Afghanistan and a decade after the first Gulf War the next war against Iraq is looming; the catastrophe is that societies allow people like Bush, Blair and Berlusconi to be their leaders; the catastrophe is that the US' 'defence' budget is bigger than the military budgets of the next 25 governments put together; the catastrophe is that neo-liberal programmes dominate socio-economic agendas around the world... and we could continue this list of catastrophes that we are facing today. But these catastrophes are rarely presented in the media or represented by the political caste system of what we call and celebrate as parliamentary democracy, a system that for many is now anything but democratic, but disengaged, self-serving, non-active and corrupt.

## Responding

How do we respond to these catastrophes? Should we hope for a change of the attitude of the 'system', namely that it comes to its mind again and makes war disappear from the political agenda?

Is it too much to read into the current rather hopeless confusion of issues and arguments a hopeful indication that a profound change in international relations may be about to occur, namely, the disappearance of war from the scene of politics even without a radical transformation of international relations and without an inner change of men's hearts and minds? Could it not be that our present perplexity in this matter indicates our lack of preparedness for a disappearance of war, our inability to think in terms of foreign policy without having in mind this "continuation with other means" as its last resort? (Arendt, 1963: 4)

As Arendt in her days, I am pessimistic about the possibility of a 'reform' of international social relations and our preparedness, as Arendt calls it, for a disappearance of war. So again, how do we respond to these catastrophes? What does one do, as worker, academic or student, asks Luis Aragon, "in the face of certain very

simple, elemental facts: that workers are staring down the barrels of cannons aimed at them by police, that war is threatening, and that fascism is already enthroned” (cited in Benjamin, 1999b: 464)?

Do we respond to these catastrophes with silence, because “where violence rules absolutely...everything and everybody must fall silent” (Arendt, 1963: 9)? Or do we respond with ‘postmodern’ cynical denial, as, for example, Jean Baudrillard (1995) so famously is said to have done when he claimed that the Gulf War of 1991 did not take place? Or perhaps a certain left melancholic response is appropriate? Wark, for example, who reviewed Baudrillard’s *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, can report on a typical ‘moral’ response to Baudrillard: “One of my colleagues launches into a tirade about how immoral it is for Baudrillard to claim the war did not ‘take place’ when so many people got killed there. The other attacks Baudrillard for talking about ‘simulacra’, as if war had disappeared into a virtual realm when clearly war is proof positive that real things still happen in the real world” (Wark, 1995). Wark soon found out after the little exchange with his colleagues that they had never even read Baudrillard’s book in question.<sup>4</sup> By not reading ‘the real thing’ and just responding to or rather mimicking popular (media) discourse they thus re-produced the ‘immoral’ simulacra they accused Baudrillard of producing in the first place.

As response to this little episode (at least) two questions seem appropriate: First, in our judgement of war catastrophes, or in thought in general, should we really rely on traditional categories of morality, the very same categories that are used by Western politicians and military leaders to justify these wars in the first place? Second, what happened to academia, or thought in general, when we are increasingly called to respond, and we are happy to follow this call, without having read anything, without having even started to think? Whatever happened to *reading*? Should we really continue to caricature the theories of so-called postmodern writers such as Baudrillard, for example, by making extravagant claims about their ‘relativistic’, ‘immoral’ and ‘apolitical’ writing without actually having read them in detail? In other words, should

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4 It is partly these non-readers that Baudrillard targets when he entitles his book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, even though he obviously does *not* say that the Gulf War did not take place. What he does argue is that the war did not take place the way it was reported, on CNN and all the other hundreds of news channels and programmes. The Gulf War was one of the first globally staged media events. Literally overnight CNN was catapulted into a global media conglomerate that turned death and war into entertainment. Thus what Baudrillard meant was that the media had such a grip on the event of the Gulf War that it was first and foremost recognised by the Western ‘couch-potatoes’ as media event, as TV show, as image play, rather than as a distinct ‘place’ or ‘location’ where thousands of people actually died or lived through the horrors of their lives. In this sense the Gulf War was a non-place (Augé, 1995), because the war was won through ‘virtual’ images that were ‘sold’ to the American public and the international allies. But these overexposed CNN war images did not exist in a political vacuum; they were not value-free somehow. Instead these images were the products of particular socio-economic relations that were ‘chosen’ for particular political ends. These ‘virtual’ products were success stories of bombs hitting military targets, heroic US American soldiers and a quick military victory. But did we see images of the thousands of people who died on both sides; and since that war, have we seen equally overexposed images of the suffering Iraqi civilian population exploited by Saddam and disadvantaged by the UN embargo (see, for example, Pilger, 2002); have we seen detailed reports about the mysterious illnesses that are said to have killed many Gulf War veterans in the US and Britain? These are the questions Baudrillard asks, explicitly and implicitly.



we, in academia and elsewhere, continue to pay so little attention to reading and theory as such? It seems to me that these questions are absolutely central in our search for answers, answers to the ‘total war’ of Empire, answers to the catastrophes of our time. These answers are, undoubtedly, of immense complexity, yet what we can often observe is the dominance of ‘practical’, ‘down-to-earth’, ‘common sense’ or even ‘moral’ responses to this complexity: for example, ‘we need to find practical and unbureaucratic ways of helping the poor and starving’, or, ‘we should all support charities that are active in third-world development projects’. Are these ‘practical’ responses, which seem so obvious, adequate responses? Or even more generally, is the most obvious and practical response also the best one? What is the task of theory when we are called to respond? And what is the role of academia, which is supposed to be the place of thought and theory, in a world of obviousness and practicalities? The task of responding is then, for me, a question of the relationship between theory and practice. In this paper I will interrogate this question by critically engaging with the apparent celebration of practice and the mood against theory that I see to be dominating contemporary discourses. What seems urgent to me then is a conception of the relationship between theory and practice that does not privilege either, and, by keeping room for a relative autonomy of theory, as practice, is able to intervene in contemporary discourses and practices by showing their limitations and offering radical alternatives for the organisation of the social.

## Fetishising Practice

With the general expansion of capitalist modes of organising the social, the production of knowledge, too, has been increasingly put under the command of the technics of capital. At least since Marx’s and also Foucault’s work on the interdependency of power and knowledge, it is not novel to claim that the technical apparatus of capital does not only produce material goods, i.e. commodities, which we can consume in supermarkets, but also immaterial knowledges, which produce and reproduce the social as such. In this sense academia and the university cannot be seen as independent realms of thought, theory and knowledge, but as practice that is fully embedded in the wider social relations of capitalist production. To appropriate a term from knowledge management, a field of academic and business practices that has been at the forefront of ‘bridging the gap between theory and practice’, one could say that the university is a ‘techknowledgy’<sup>5</sup> of capital; that is, the knowledge produced on university compounds cannot stand outside the technics of the dominant social relations of production. In this sense the university may be seen, says Steve Fuller, as a corporate-sponsored training centre where the ‘cutting edge’ is increasingly defined not by theory-driven academic qualifications but by “those who possess non-academic, specifically entrepreneurial, forms of knowledge” (2000: 84).<sup>6</sup> In other words, the ‘hero’ of the academic (student) is

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5 In their international Knowledge Management bestseller *Working Knowledge* Davenport and Prusak, who both have a long track record of work in both academia and business consultancy, assert that, even though knowledge management is clearly much more than just technology management, technology and knowledge have merged to form ‘techknowledgy’ (1998: 123).

6 We should note here that in the same passage Fuller seems to suggest that contemporary neo-liberal programmes of universities have developed partly because attentions have been diverted from

often no longer the philosopher (in business schools one is lucky if a student can name at least one), but the highly successful business consultant<sup>7</sup> or entrepreneur, like, for example, Richard Branson, the hero of English 'entrepreneurism'. It is also Branson who shows the way in terms of the 'new production of knowledge': recently his business empire Virgin entered the 'academic market' with a series of books<sup>8</sup> aimed at small and medium-sized companies, co-produced and co-branded by Warwick Business School – a 'win-win-situation' for the two brands of Virgin and Warwick. But this is only the logical continuation of the business school model, which has stood at the forefront of turning academics into service providers for businesses, whether in the private or public sector.

It is the Virgin/Warwick private/public partnership that Gibbons *et al.* seem to have in mind when they, in their internationally influential research manifesto *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994), argue that, as traditional disciplinary university knowledge ('Mode 1') is not able to reflect the complexities of the new world anymore, knowledge should be increasingly produced by tearing down boundaries between disciplines as well as between theory and practice: "Mode 2 knowledge production is characterised by closer interaction between scientific, technological and industrial modes of knowledge production...The spread of Mode 2 knowledge production...and of market differentiation...is being driven by the intensification of international competition" (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994: 68). However, this apparently 'holistic' approach, this transdisciplinarity, is not value-free: "Another important precondition is to have access to such knowledge and expertise, being able to reconfigure it in novel ways and offer it for sale" (*ibid.*: 111). For Gibbons *et al.* then knowledge is produced for a *specific* purpose: for sale. Knowledge is here always already a 'techknowledgy', a knowledge that is embedded in particular socio-technical relations of capital and geared towards the production of surplus value. Thus for Gibbons *et al.* the value of transdisciplinary academic knowledge is its potential economic opportunity, its surplus value, which should be realised by making it available to practice. What we therefore get here is a relationship between theory and practice that is clearly dominated by the specific practice realm of the commodity. It is the knowledge commodity that should be produced at universities as efficiently and effectively as possible. Hence the vision for the university seems to be the fast-food-for-thought outlet, strategically located at motorway-junctions, airports, in city centres as well as out-of-town shopping centres.

However, the fetishisation of practice, which, as I have argued above, is closely connected to the fetishisation of the 'techknowledgy' commodity, is even a problem of writers who clearly follow a critical social research agenda – writers that I feel have

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military to business agendas after the end of the Cold War. He writes: "[I]f total war no longer seems likely and 'the market' gets its way, the credentials monopoly currently enjoyed by universities may be punctured by corporate-sponsored training centres" (2000: 84). Fuller does not seem to understand, however, that 'total war' is not only very likely but in fact is the defining organisational principle of capitalism, of which the university is part and parcel of. (See also my earlier discussion on 'total war'.)

7 See Böhm (2002) on the consultant as fetish and the fetishes of consultants.

8 Part of the Virgin/WBS book series are: Barrow (2001), Barry (2002), Craven (2001), Cumming (2001), Dickinson (2001), Wolff (2001).

something important to say about the organisation of our society, but somehow fall into the same ‘practice trap’ as the ones who just have dollar-signs in their eyes. That writers who I feel intellectually close to end up in the same ‘practice boat’ as the Gibbons/Virgin/Warwick public/private partnership – this is what really concerns me. But let me be more specific by talking about Martin Parker’s new book *Against Management*.

## Against Theory

To make this clear right at the beginning: I think Parker’s book (2002a) is a very important contribution and should be compulsory reading for every student of management, business and organisation. There is no question that I’m generally very sympathetic to Parker’s playful attack *against* contemporary modes of managerialism and his tentative argument *for* a different organisation of the social. However, what I do have an issue with is his lax treatment of theory and his indirect privileging of practice. In his review of Naomi Klein’s *No Logo*<sup>9</sup>, the international bestseller that aims to expose the role of branding and image in contemporary modes of globalisation as well as discuss strategies of resistance against these, Parker makes the distinction between theory, which he seems to equate with thought and reason, and Theory (i.e. with a capital ‘T’), which for him signifies academic high theory that is produced in the ivory tower and thus disconnected from the practical problems on the ‘ground’. He celebrates Klein’s book for its non-Theoretical argumentation line, as her newspaper-style of writing is supposedly able to reach a much wider audience and therefore have a much bigger impact on people in general and the anti-capitalism movement in particular. Therefore Parker asks:

[W]hat Theory do you need to throw a brick through the windows of a McDonalds’s? Who is most relevant in taking aim at corporate capitalism – Marx, Althusser or Deleuze? Who cares, outside the seminar room? Of course we all need theory (with a small ‘t’) to recognize a brick and a window, but do we need a Theory to connect them? (2002a: 162)

Just as Phil Hancock admitted in a recent discussion group contribution,<sup>10</sup> I cannot believe that Parker actually means this. Is he serious when he says that we do not need Theories (to continue his algebraic language) to connect our thoughts? Is he serious when he suggests that it is enough for us to make distinctions between bricks and windows and that this would be enough for us to be well equipped in our struggle against capitalist hegemony? For me this is not only naïve and childish but dangerous, because in the end what Parker celebrates here are the everyday practices of *capitalist reality*, which he is elsewhere keen to critically question. And when he puts all his faith in the (non-Theoretical) brick-thrower he also builds all his hope on the ‘good’ and the ‘common sense’ in the, from him unquestioned, human it seems. This sounds dangerously close to Conservative political strategies of the eighties and early nineties when ‘back to basics’ and ‘common sense’ were high in fashion with Thatcher, Major,

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9 Parker’s review of *No Logo* appeared first in *Organization* (Parker, 2002c).

10 See posts to the SCOS discussion group at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk) on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002 and thereafter.

Reagan and Bush. Is it not our task, as academic or non-academic, to question ‘the common sense’, the everyday practices, the subjectivities that are produced by social relations of capital rather than fetishistically celebrating them? Do we not have a serious problem if we put practice in charge of its own cure? (Because if practice aims to stop or go beyond itself, it must use itself, and thus it aims to stop itself in the same way that a disease is cured when it is allowed to choose its own treatment, it only thrives!)

And one feels even more perplexed about Parker’s anti-Theory ramble when one looks into his other new, and in my view equally important, book, *Utopia and Organization*, in which he is keen to interest us again for utopian thought, for the not yet, for distant futures. Is Theory not something similar: an abstract idea about the not yet, the impossible, the virtual? As Parker as well as numerous other contributors to his book point out, the word ‘utopia’ comes from the Greek *outopia*, which means both ‘good place’ and ‘non-place’. Hence utopia can be understood as the imagined good place that is not locatable in a specific time and place: it is nowhere, a pure speculation about a future time and place, a future human. Is this not exactly what Theory potentially does (in its radical form, that is in its radical practice): it abstractly speculates and imagines differences?

To be fair, I do not think that Parker would necessarily have a problem with what I have written so far. In my view the main target of his critique is actually not Theory, as in abstract theory as such, but the Theory that is done within the specific institutional realities and social relations that characterise academia today. He writes:

[T]he relationship between ‘critical’ practice and academic careers is one that does not go away. For academics to defensively respond by claiming something about the occupational specificity of their practice, or claim that they laid the groundworks for this kind of cultural critique in the first place, is to duck the issue....If academics continue to play their endless glass bead game in which ‘theory’ is incorporated within ‘Theory’ they are doomed to relative irrelevance in the bigger games that shape all our lives....Can any academic who is seriously concerned with grand words like ‘emancipation’ and ‘justice’ afford to ignore issues of readership and effect? What is the point in being a revolutionary, or even a reformist, if no one can hear you? (2002a: 163)

Seen in this way I can only support Parker’s view that there *is* a serious question about the way academia and academic Theory work today. As he points out in his chapter on Critical Management Studies (CMS), Theory, for example in the clothes of the CMS project, is too often a self-serving, detached academic practice that can be consumed as fashion and brand and also sold on. But what difference have CMS Theories made on ‘the ground’, in the daily practices of people, Parker asks? His answer is not very encouraging: not a lot!<sup>11</sup> He therefore laments the fact that CMS, as Theory, has not

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11 Parker’s judgement on whether CMS has made an impact on the so-called ground obviously depends on a definition of ‘the ground’ that is, in my view, very problematic, because it is based on a crude binary conception of the relationship between theory and practice. If we understand theory and CMS as practice, we cannot deny that CMS has made a huge impact on the way management is thought about, studied and taught. So rather than calling for ‘practical application’ of the CMS agenda, is it not also our task to critically interrogate and change CMS practices as such? It seems to be often forgotten that the task of the researcher, academic, theoretician, is not to change practices ‘out there’, or even, change the world. Let us start in our own back yard; let us start with the practice of CMS, let us start with the way theory is done today.

been able to 'reach out' enough to other constituencies than academia, constituencies that, for example, are concerned with practices of anti-globalisation protests, labour movements and feminist, gay and lesbian activism (2002a: 131). In this sense it is maybe not Theory as such that is the problem here. Instead we must look *specifically* at how CMS Theory is practiced and institutionalised; we must realise the difficulty of being critical against something on which one is economically dependent in the first place, or, as Parker puts it, that CMS finds it difficult to "bite the hand that feeds it" (*ibid.*). In other words, maybe Theory should not be stamped as irrelevant as such; instead we need to critically interrogate the way Theory is produced within certain social relations of power and knowledge. To approach Theory in this way would, in my view, be a much more fruitful task than simply disregarding Theory altogether and indirectly celebrating non-theoretical, practice-oriented, populist approaches to writing and researching.

## Theoretical Practice

What I have tried to show so far, admittedly in a rather tentative and even polemical way, is that in contemporary academic discourses we can either note a fetishisation of practice or a certain mood against theory. In the face of the concerns which I started this paper off with, namely that of the rule of total war against the social, I wonder whether these attacks against theory can be regarded as 'adequate' responses to the challenges of our times. I have serious doubts. In the following then I would like to develop an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice that attempts to argue for three things: first, neither theory nor practice should be privileged; second, both theory and practice are recognised to be relatively autonomous from each other; third, action brings theory and practice together in a way that, as theoretical practice, it potentially enables radical change. In other words, what I think is needed is a conception of practice that includes theory and equally a conception of theory that includes practice, because in the end what is important is not theory or practice but the mobilisation of action to bring about radical change. As Lenin says: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (1970: 138). What we need to resist then, in my view, is the currently "fashionable preaching" for "the narrowest forms of practical activity" (*ibid.*) and against theory, which Lenin already warned us about hundred years ago. At a time at which Lenin seems to have long gone out of fashion, his monuments overthrown and state socialism has died, it seems odd to remind ourselves of a man's politics that must be regarded as absolutely alien to our times of New Labour and its populist<sup>12</sup> programme of 'total opportunism', i.e. pragmatism, and 'The Third Way'. But maybe it is Lenin's alien politics that can help us to imagine a difference to the

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12 'Populist' and 'popular' must not be confused here. In fact it seems to become increasingly difficult to say whether a government is popular or not; elections, at least, do not seem to be representative anymore. John Pilger (2002) reports, for example, that the second New Labour 'landslide' (in last UK elections in 2001) represented the lowest vote for a UK government since records began (this means that only about 25 per cent of the UK electorate voted for the current New Labour government). Pilger calls this a gross misrepresentation of the people in the UK.

alienating politics of our times, help us to learn from the traditions of progressive theory and help us to see that we need *both* a concrete practical politics and abstract theory.<sup>13</sup>

For Louis Althusser the fetishisation of practice, or pragmatism, is about the acceptance or even celebration of the ‘face-value’ of ‘real’ objects: ‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating!’ In fact, for him this is what constitutes the question of ideology as such, as the ‘truth’ of the pudding is taken for granted and not questioned. Hence for pragmatism the practical experience of the real object, i.e. the pudding, is seen in harmony with our knowledge of that object.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating! So what! We are interested in the *mechanism* that ensures that it really is a pudding we are eating and not a poached baby elephant, though we *think* we are eating our daily pudding! Proof by repetition for hundreds of thousands of years of the social practice of humanity...! So what! For hundreds of thousands of years this ‘repetition’ has produced, for example, ‘truths’ such as the resurrection of Christ, the Virginity of Mary, all the ‘truths’ of religion, all the prejudices of human ‘spontaneity’, i.e., all the *established* ‘obviousness’ of ideology, from the most to the least respectable! Not to speak of the trap laid jointly by idealism and pragmatism in the complicity of their action (which obeys *the same rules*). (Althusser in Althusser and Balibar, 1979: 57, emphasis in original)

The ‘common sense’ practice of eating the pudding therefore does not prove anything. Hence when pragmatists celebrate practice, which supposedly is ‘real’ because it ‘gets its hands dirty’, they just produce a mirror image<sup>14</sup> to theory, as Althusser points out (*ibid.*). In other words, as practice is established as the dualistic opposite to theory, the ‘common sense’ experience of practice is generalised and therefore fetishised: ‘This is how we do things around here’, or, ‘This is how we have been doing it for ages’. But what does this ‘repetition’ of historical practices prove? Truth? This is, in my view, the basic problem of certain ‘left melancholic’ responses, which I have already made some gestures about in the above. By referring to historical ‘truths’ and basing their critiques on traditional conceptualisations of, for example, ‘nature’, ‘morality’ or ‘humanity’, they often celebrate historical practices that, in my view, need to be critically interrogated in the first place. In other words, we need to see practices as *distinct* practices:

There can be no scientific conception of practice without a precise distinction between the distinct practices and a new conception of the relations between theory and practice. We can assert the primacy of practice theoretically by showing that all the levels of social existence are the sites of distinct practices: economic practice, political practice, ideological practice, technical practice and scientific (or theoretical) practice. We think the content of these different practices by thinking their peculiar structure, which, in all these cases, is the structure of a production; by thinking what distinguishes between these different structures, i.e., the different natures of the objects to which

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13 I am clearly influenced here by Žižek’s (2002) recent attempt to reintroduce Lenin to the political agenda of the Left.

14 It is this mirror image, which I think defines the basic problem of the recently ‘successful’ *reflexive* methodology of Alvesson and other ‘critical management’ scholars (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). Here too a dualism between theory and practice is maintained that, supposedly, can only be overcome by reflexive agency, some kind of ‘critical common sense’. But as I have already pointed out above, the image produced by a mirror is endless. Therefore a mirror put in charge of its own cure can only lead to its own fetishisation: the classic problem of narcissism.

they apply, of their means of production and of the relations within which they produce... (*ibid.*: 58)

In other words, it is not our task to celebrate apparently natural practices of social existence, but to study their distinctiveness: study how these practices are *produced* within historical and therefore *distinct* socio-economic relations. But this studying is and cannot be done from a distant theory:

We have to let the concrete practical experiences intervene our theoretical practice. We have to let these experiences invade our bodies in the form of objects of experiences, or even speculative experiments, they are thought objects, ideas and concepts whose emergence contribute in their combination to the overthrow of our established, dare I say, ideological, theoretical base on which our lives is defined. (*ibid.*: 60)

In Althusser's view then, studying and researching, that is doing theory, is a very bodily experience: we have to let these practical experiences enter our bodies so that they transform our bodies, our thoughts, our theoretical base – things we have taken for granted. But does this not privilege practice in the sense that it is prior to theory? According to Althusser (*ibid.*: 58-59) the answer to this question is two-fold: first, 'knowledge' (even though it might be very rudimentary and steeped in ideology) must be regarded as always already present in even the most 'primitive' practices; second, what we commonly call 'theory', or even 'Theory', must itself be regarded as practice.<sup>15</sup> "This practice is theoretical; it is distinguished from the other, non-theoretical practices, by the type of object (raw material) which it transforms; by the type of means of production it sets to work, by the type of object it produces (knowledge)" (*ibid.*: 59). Hence we can say: theoretical practice, or what we might call 'theory', is a distinct practice that is different from other non-theoretical practices, yet it not only transforms itself but also other practices by producing knowledges. Equally, practical theory, or what we might call 'practice', is a distinct theory that is different from other non-practical theories, yet it not only transforms itself but also other theories by producing experiences. In other words, practice is transformed through the practice of theory and theory is transformed through the practice of practice.<sup>16</sup>

What Althusser therefore poses to us is a conception that does not privilege either theory or practice and that leaves room for their relative autonomy from each other. This relative autonomy, however, does not mean that theory is supposed to hide in the ivory towers of academia and that practice is a fetishisation of the 'common sense'. On the contrary, both theory and practice should be understood as event, which is the coming together of desires, imaginations, powers, knowledges, theoretical practices and practical theories in an explosive 'moment of danger', as Benjamin calls it, a moment

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15 This reminds us again of Parker's distinction between 'theory' and 'Theory', which I have discussed above. However, in contrary to Althusser, Parker is very reluctant to see 'Theory' as practice itself, as for him abstract Theory is too distant from the concrete practices/theory on the 'grounds' of reality.

16 This 'practice of practice' may sound a bit awkward, but what I attempt to highlight here is that, in my view, the practice of theory is itself transformed through other practices. For example, the ESF practice clearly has had an important influence on the way I practice theory. However, this does not mean that I am now doing theory *for* the ESF practice; instead the ESF practice has done something *to* my practice and I hope this experience will allow me to do something *to* the ESF practice as well as *to* the study of organisation and management, as theoretical practice.

where radical action becomes possible. Therefore, when we talk about the ‘autonomy’ of either practice or theory, then this does not allude to some sort of foundationalist ‘outside’, which separates theory and practice, but instead must be understood as call for distinct practices of theory and distinct theories of practice that both contribute to an agenda of ontological speculation and radical social change.

## Resisting Subjectivities

One might be a little perplexed about the fact that, even though I clearly set out to write about ‘the movement’ and the European Social Forum (ESF), so far this text has not yet referred to these themes. Instead I have tried to carefully go over the problematic of the relationship between theory and practice. Yet, despite this ‘theoretical’ treatise I would claim that, right from the beginning of this text, I have always already been writing not just *about* but simply *writing* ‘the movement’ and the ‘practical’ event of the European Social Forum. In other words, the above discussion of the relationship between theory and practice did not aim to ‘prepare’ the specific engagement with ‘the movement’ and the ESF, but it was a theoretical practice itself, a *doing*, an action: it was an action of a self, as academic writer, who is exploring the possibilities of what *I can do*, what I can contribute, to the writing of the event of the European Social Forum. In this sense, it is my response: to the catastrophes of our time, to the total war that is waged against the social, to the possibilities of a different world. However, this *abstractum*, this theoretical reflection about the relationship between theory and practice, should not prevent us from the necessary and important task of engaging with the specificities of ‘the movement’ and the event of the ESF; this is what I will be concerned with for the remainder of this paper.

Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 the first European Social Forum (ESF), which considers itself to be a regional meeting of the World Social Forum (WSF)<sup>17</sup>, took place in Florence, Italy. Its motto was ‘Another World is Possible’. Up to sixty thousand people<sup>18</sup> gathered in numerous workshops, seminars and conferences to discuss strategies of opposition and civil disobedience against neo-liberal globalisation agendas and a European order based on corporate power, but also alternative ways of organising the social.<sup>19</sup> The forum, which sees itself as a dialogical space for the great

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17 The World Social Forum (WSF) has taken place twice in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to coincide with and form an opposition to the World Economic Forum, a yearly meeting of leaders from the world of politics, global business, science and culture that has taken place in Davos, Switzerland, and New York.

18 Khalfa (2002) reports of the following numbers: “There were around 32,000 paying participants, twice as many as at Porto Allegro 1 and more than at Porto Allegro 2 (30,000). There were almost 60,000 participants on the Friday. According to police estimates, around 500,000 people took part in the demonstration, twice as many as at the demonstration organised during the Council of Europe meeting in Barcelona. The presence of delegations from other European countries was not purely symbolic: more than 3,000 from France, 1,500 Spaniards, Greeks, Britons and Germans, 500 Belgians, 300 Hungarians 150 Poles and Swedes, 70 Russians.”

19 To immediately contextualise and introduce my discussion I have included here the full Call of the European Social Movements published at the ESF website after the forum had finished: “We have



variety of movements that have been protesting in Seattle, Prague, Nice, Genoa and other cities and regions around the world against neo-liberal capitalism in recent years, culminated in a peaceful mass demonstration against war and capitalist hegemony on November 9<sup>th</sup>, at which between five hundred thousand and one million people took part.<sup>20</sup> The ‘official’ purpose of the demonstration was to protest against a new Gulf War against Iraq, but the target for the protesters was clearly a much wider one: the ‘total war’ of global capitalism against the social, which is the sum of the multiple military wars fought around the world in the name of freedom, democracy, human rights and the new global world order, the multiple economic wars of global corporations (and the IMF and World Bank) against local economies in every corner of the world, the multiple political wars of neo-liberalism, pragmatism, and ‘The Third Way’ against the commons and public spheres, the multiple communicational and propaganda wars by global media conglomerates and the political caste system against the people – in short: the ESF and the massive demonstration were manifestations against the multiple wars staged by Empire in literally every sphere of social activity around the world, wars that produce particular subjectivities, a particular social, a particular world.

There has always been resistance to this ‘total war’ of capitalism against the social. It is one of the fundamental lessons we have learnt from Marx and also Foucault (among others), namely that struggles and antagonisms are part and parcel of social formation

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come together from the social and citizens movements from all the regions of Europe, East and West, North and South. We have come together through a long process: the demonstrations of Amsterdam, Seattle, Prague, Nice, Genoa, Brusseles, Barcelona, the big mobilisations against the neoliberalism as well as the general strikes for the defense of social rights and all the mobilisations against war, show the will to build an other Europe. At the global level we recognise the Charter of Principles of WSF and the call of social movements of Porto Alegre. We have gathered in Florence to express our opposition to a European order based on corporate power and neoliberalism. This market model leads to constant attacks on the conditions and rights of workers, social inequalities and oppression of women and ethnic minorities, and social exclusion of the unemployed and migrants. It leads to environmental degradation, privatisation and job insecurity. It drives powerful countries to try and dominate the economies of weaker countries, often to deny them real self-determination. Once more it is leading to war. We have come together to strengthen and enlarge our alliances because the construction of another Europe and another world is now urgent. We seek to create a world of equality, social rights and respect for diversity, a world in which education, fair jobs, healthcare and housing are rights for all, with the right to consume safe foods produced by farmers and peasants, a world without poverty, without sexism, without racism, and without homophobia. A world that puts people before profits. A world without war. We have come together to discuss alternatives but we must continue to enlarge our networks and to plan the campaigns and struggles that together can make this different future possible. Great movements and struggles have begun across Europe: the European social movements are representing a new and concrete possibility to build up another Europe for another world. We commit ourselves to enlarge our networks for the next year in the following mobilisations and campaigns: Against neoliberalism; Against war; Against racism; Against sexism and homophobia; For rights and ‘another Europe’” (Call of the European Social Movements, 12-11-2002 [<http://www.fse-esf.org>]).

20 The estimates of how many people actually took part in the demonstrations in Florence vary from 500,000 (an Italian Police figure) to 1,000,000 (a figure suggested by the organisers of the European Social Forum). Whatever the figure it certainly was the biggest demo I have been part of since 1989 – and demonstrations were big in those days.

processes, such as capitalism. In other words, where there is power, there is resistance.<sup>21</sup> As many writers have argued, the specific formation processes of capitalist power have changed significantly over the past hundred years. For example, through the discussion of their concept of Empire Hardt and Negri show how capitalist modes of organising the social are increasingly dependent on decentralised communication networks that *control* rather than discipline subjectivities. In other words, “the network as the organizational model of production” (2000: 295) has, not necessarily replaced, but extended disciplinary modes of organising the social that were characterised by institutions like the prison, the school, the hospital, and, above all, the nation state and its parliamentary democracy and party representational system. Empire then is a concept that helps us to think about how institutions, like the prison or the school, have been transformed in a world that is increasingly characterised by global information and communication flows. For Hardt and Negri then Empire is not an ‘Orwellian’ state where everything and everybody is subsumed into one totality, but a dynamic ‘system’ of “radical contingency and precariousness”, a system that is characterised by “the unforeseeability of the sequences of events – sequences that are always more brief or more compact temporally and thus ever less controllable” (2000: 60-61).<sup>22</sup>

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- 21 But let us not repeat the same liberal non-sense that seems to be in fashion in certain academic circles these days, namely that power is everywhere and therefore resistance is everywhere. What a non-productive statement! Of course, power and resistance are everywhere, but there are *distinctions* and *specific* formations of regimes of power and resistance that need to be analysed and critiqued...but here we are already again in the realm of a plea for theory as political action.
- 22 This dynamism, however, is not value-free. As Hardt and Negri (2000) show, the processes of accumulation of Empire are immanently connected to capital. This is to say that the value production within Empire cannot be disconnected from the value production mechanism of capital. Another way to put this is that the immaterial knowledge work (that produce the informational and communicational flows), which Empire so obviously is dependent on, produces knowledge that is always already a knowledge of Imperial capital. What we call knowledge today is thus restricted to particular meanings of political security and military measures, financial profit and loss accounts and the transfer of information that is always already coded by Empire. In other words, what we can know, see and say about Empire, this world, this life, is, according to Hardt and Negri, always already part of the power/knowledge regime that produces Empire. This leads them to claim that ‘there is no more outside’ of that very power/knowledge apparatus, which is to say that there is no more metaphysical, representational or transcendental position from where we can claim a knowledge of truth and on which basis we can critique this world. A different way to say ‘there is no more outside’ is to say that the Imperial power/knowledge regime acts as biopower in the sense that it informs the entirety of life. ‘Biopower’, a concept that Hardt and Negri take up from Michel Foucault, is a power that organises life from its insides, from the interior of Empire, as it were; it controls and organises our subjectivities and bodies; it wages ‘in-formational’ wars of all kinds against its own population – biopower thus concerns the (violent) production and re-production of life itself. As a point of critique one could argue that Hardt and Negri’s claim that ‘there is no more outside’ (and in fact their whole concept of Empire) is somewhat generalising too much. As I asked above: is it not our task to analyse and critique the specificities of the way Empire produces the social and is it not the case that different people have different positions within the Imperial apparatus? By en large Hardt and Negri offer a detailed analysis of the production processes of what they call Empire, but often they also make unnecessarily general and unspecific claims that they cannot substantiate. (But maybe this is the nature of their speculative philosophy; maybe by being general in their claims they always already invoke the universal that is at the same time the particular and the concrete; maybe their critique cannot be substantiated because it is beyond what we traditionally conceive as substance.)

In their view Empire should, in the first instance, be celebrated for this dynamism: it produces breaks with traditional organisational apparatuses, which opens up possibilities for the production of new subjectivities. This is the possibility of Empire, as global, open, liberal, quasi-democratic regime: however 'fascistic' and war-ridden it is, it potentially connects forces in a way that enables the production of new subjectivities, which exist *both within and against* Empire; in short, it makes new figures of resistance possible. The embracing of this new figuration of struggle, the embracing of the production of new subjectivities, is the task of the multitude, which, for Hardt and Negri, is a concept that points to both the multiplicity of productive subjectivities as well as their productive commonality and unity. In their view the multitude "is a productive force that sustains Empire and at the same time the force that calls for and makes necessary its destruction" (2000: 61). In other words, the multitude is the network of multiple subjectivities within Empire that 'produce value', i.e. the proletariat of the world. But this proletariat is not just the blue or white collar worker who labours, day in and day out in the factories of capital; instead it is a 'we' that comprises all spheres of contemporary capitalist production.<sup>23</sup> For Hardt and Negri then this 'we' has to embrace the possibilities of the 'openness' of Empire and develop itself into a globalised political subject. However, this 'we' is not an abstract 'thing': instead it points directly to each individual subjectivity. As Deleuze writes in response to his reading of Foucault:

What are the new types of struggle, which are transversal and immediate rather than centralized and mediatized? What are the 'intellectual's' new functions, which are specific or 'particular' rather than universal? What are the new modes of subjectivation, which tend to have no identity? This is the triple root of the questions: *What can I do, What do I know, What am I?*... What is our light and what is our language, that is to say, our 'truth' today? What powers must we confront, and what is our capacity for resistance, today when we can no longer be content to say that the old struggles are no longer worth anything? And do we not perhaps above all bear witness to and even participate in the 'production of a new subjectivity'? Do not the changes in capitalism find an unexpected 'encounter' in the slow emergence of a new Self as a centre of resistance? Each time there is social change, is there not a movement of subjective reconversion, with its ambiguities but also its potential? (Deleuze, 1988: 115)

To repeat the questions that Foucault and Deleuze pose to us: *What can I do, What do I know, What am I?* These questions are not the result of some kind of narcissistic preoccupation with the Self. Instead they point to the radical questing of subjectivity as

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23 'We' is the real but also imagined collectivity, or what Hardt and Negri call the 'multitude', which is not localisable in one specific nameable group. This relates to their claim that 'there is no more outside', which also means that it is impossible to reduce class struggle to a struggle between the capitalist, the one who owns the means of production, and 'blue collar' worker who has to sell his or her labour power in order to produce surplus value for the capitalist. Hardt and Negri's point is that the concept of production must be seen much wider than the traditional industrialist meaning suggests. For them production also encompasses information and communication flows and affects, for example; so their proletariat also comprises hospital and tourism workers, the unemployed, immigrants, students etc. There is no space here to go into the details of this discussion, but when Hardt and Negri talk about the multitude they have the proletariat in mind which comprises all multiple subjectivities that are subsumed under Empire. In fact this was the theme of a seminar at the ESF entitled 'Struggles, classes, multitudes and resistance', at which self-named Marxists scholars defended Marx categories of class struggle against Hardt and Negri's concepts of the multitude and Empire... but I will have to say more about this below.

such; it is a critical interrogation and transformation of the specific production processes that make up our Selves; it is a questing of the 'I' that is always already politically and economically related to the 'we' of the multitude. For me this questing of our Selves, our subjectivities, is the ultimate terrain for theory as practice and practice as theory. In other words, what both theory and practice, as relatively autonomous activities, need to radically put into question and resist is the organisation of the social as such – this is the task of organisation studies, as theoretical practice...and, in my view, it is a 'joyful task'.

## The Joy of Collective Protest

Last year when the globalisation critics returned from Genoa, where, in response to the G8 summit, massive anti-capitalism protests and a counter-summit were staged, they were shocked, angry and frustrated. The reason was the absolute brutality with which the police operated against the protesters, which resulted in the death of Carlo Giuliani who was killed on Friday, 20th July; he was shot twice, and his body was then driven over by a police van.<sup>24</sup> This left a heavy mark especially on the Italian movement. The horrible events of 9/11, too, seemed to paralyse the protest movement for several months; it was as if 9/11 'disorganised' 'the movement', made it less united, hesitant – and all for obvious reasons. In this regard the European Social Forum can be seen as an important milestone for the re-forming of 'the movement' and the re-forming of its agenda in opposition to the ideology of the 'war against terrorism' currently staged and 'total war' in general.

When I returned from the ESF I felt a 'paralysis' of a different kind: of joy, astonishment and happiness; it was as if I could not quite believe what had happened to me; I suddenly felt "a sense of possibility, a blast of fresh air, oxygen rushing to the brain", as Naomi Klein describes the feeling of taking part in cooperative mass protests in her new book, *Fences and Windows*. And I was not alone in this feeling: one could see the joy and happiness in people's faces in Florence; upon their return many people reported in Internet discussion groups and alternative news websites about the success of the ESF and the sense of possibility and joy they feel.<sup>25</sup>

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24 The methods employed by the police in Genoa were beyond belief in many respects. Despite almost complete silence of the mainstream media regarding the atrocities of the Italian state against protesters, independent media organisations have gathered a lot of evidence against the police; for a collection of some of this evidence see <http://www.urban75.org/genoa>. One of the articles taken from this website quotes from a police confession article: "The main gate opened continuously – tells the police officer – out of the vans came youth while getting a beating. They made them stand against the wall. When they came in they smashed their heads against the wall. They peed on someone, others were beaten if they didn't sing fascist songs. A girl was vomiting blood and the chiefs of the prison police just watched. To the ladies they said that they were going to rape them with their sticks." See also Hislop (2002) who wrote a note for *ephemera*, in which he reports and reflects on the Genoa protests and its reception in the media.

25 See, for example, the reports by members of the ESF-UK-INFO mailing list, which have been overwhelmingly positive about the organisation, achievements and experience of the Florence ESF [<http://lists.southspace.net/listinfo/esf-uk-info>].

Seeing all the joy around in Florence reminded me of Michael Hardt's book *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, in which he talks (with Deleuze and Spinoza) about the joy that comes through participation in the *practice* of collective protest action. He uses the example of the Italian novel *Vogliamo tutto* [We want everything], which is about the story of a FIAT car plant worker in the late 1960s and his involvement in the formation of a radical political movement and the organisation of collective protest actions (see Hardt, 1993: 45-47). As I am writing this, there are hundreds of thousands of FIAT workers and sympathisers on Italian streets again to protest against the announced closure of several FIAT plants and the loss of thousands of jobs. But there is a crucial difference between the protests Hardt writes about and the current actions by FIAT workers: whereas the workers' protest action in *Vogliamo tutto* is a refusal *of* work and thereby a protest against the specific relations of production and against the essence of work as such, the current actions are a refusal *to* work, as protest against the reduction of work, against unemployment. The workers in *Vogliamo tutto* therefore put into question the notion of work as such: "What a joke to celebrate labor day. ...I never understood why work ought to be celebrated", says the 'hero' of the novel.<sup>26</sup> And by questioning work as such, the workers' critique is also "directed precisely at their own essence" (*ibid.*: 45). In other words, their radical protest action is a questing of the specific relations of power and knowledge that produce work and the social: it is the questing of subjectivity as such. As I have already noted above, this, in my view, was also very much the 'spirit' of the ESF: the social forum was a radical questing of one's own subjectivity.

Hardt then insists that the 'hero' of the novel only "gains real power to carry out his destructive project when he begins to recognize his commonality with the other workers." Hardt continues:

The voice of the narrative takes on a continually broader scope, shifting from first person singular to first person plural as the mass of workers begin to recognize what they can do and what they can become...The expansion of the collective expression is matched by an expansion of the will. It is precisely the wealth of the collectively that provides the basis for the violent radicality of critique...The recognition of collective desires goes hand and hand with the development and expansion of collective practice. The workers' strikes build to the point where they spill outside the factory as demonstrations in the streets and violent conflict involving large parts of the city. Finally, this collective destructive expression, this moment of intense violence, opens the possibility of the subsequent joy and creation. (*ibid.*: 46)

In other words, 'real power', as Hardt calls it, can never come through individual radicality alone; it can only come through collective action. Hardt therefore maintains that the "workers' power and their joy lie precisely in the fact that they act together" (*ibid.*: 47), that they form a powerful collectivity and not act alone. This is, in a way, common sense, but not the 'common sense' of neo-liberal agendas against the social and for the promotion of individuality; it is a sense of commonality, community and collectivity.

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26 I wished I would have read this already for my paper-montage on Mayday 2001 entitled '010501'; most certainly I would have included it there.

Hence, when he reads *Vogliamo tutto* two elements are of importance for Hardt: First, the critical protest movement is tight to a broadening movement of the collectivity, which results in the construction and expression of a coherent body of common desire amongst the workers. “As the body of workers expand, their will and power”, as well as their joy, “grow” (*ibid.*: 47). Second, and this point brings us ‘back’ (or is it ‘forward’?) to our discussion of the relationship between theory and practice, for Hardt the workers’ joy and power comes through the *practice* of the workers: “Precisely when the workers ‘actualize’ their critique, when they pass into action in the factory and in the streets, they achieve the constructive moment of joy and creation. The ‘actualisation’ of the workers is a practice of joy” (*ibid.*: 47). Hence joy comes through common action, through the *practice* of a collectivity. But this does not have to be understood as the privileging of practice against theory; if we understand theory as theoretical practice, joy can also come through theory – as practice.

There is no doubt that Hardt’s study of radical collective workers action in *Vogliamo tutto* has influenced the conception of the ‘multitude’, which features strongly in Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*. However, as I have already noted above, the multitude is, for Hardt and Negri, not only a common movement, a movement of united and collective action, it is also very heterogeneous, that is, the multitude consists of multiple and diverse elements that cannot be simply homogenised into ‘the movement’. Therefore the question arises of how we can think the multitude to be something that is both a multiplicity and a unity? This will be my concern for the last section of this paper.

## Multiplicity and Unity

What is it that we refer to when we talk about ‘the movement’? Is there even such a thing as ‘the movement’, is there even an *is* of ‘the movement’? These are the questions that I had in mind when, so far in this paper, I have been reluctant to simply talk about the movement, or the people, or the multitude. Instead I have, perhaps a little awkwardly, used inverted commas to express my doubts about the term of ‘the movement’. I could have launched into a critical reflection on the term ‘the movement’ right at the start of this paper. But, as will become apparent in a moment, the discussion of theory and practice, collective action and the questing of subjectivities were all needed, in my view, to ‘prepare’ the ground for this discussion of what ‘the movement’ actually *is* (or perhaps what it is not).

Commentators on the protests in Seattle, Genoa, Prague and all the other places, as well as the organisers of these events themselves, are always keen to point to the diversity of action groups present at these protests: trades unions, community movements involved in popular education and local development, international solidarity organisations, organisations working against social exclusion, human rights organisations, organisations of environmentalists and ecologists, farmers organisations, economic networks offering social solidarity, youth organisations, migrant organisations, cultural

networks, feminist networks, networks of researchers and lecturers.<sup>27</sup> The Florence ESF, too, highlighted its “respect for diversity”<sup>28</sup> and indeed the different, often opposing, agendas of the groups present at the ESF were clearly felt. Is this diversity not counterproductive to the aim of forming a powerful collectivity? On the contrary; when Hardt and Negri (2000) talk about the multitude they always emphasise its network character, which is to say that it cannot be represented by a hierarchy, it cannot be placed in one centrality from where it speaks and leads: “groups which we thought in objective contradiction to one another...[are] suddenly able to work together” (Hardt, 2002: 117). This is the strength of ‘the movement’, in their view, namely that it continuously seeks to enlarge its networks, to increase its diversity, to include as many people, groups and organisations as possible, despite all their differences, to form a powerful network collectivity both within Empire and in opposition to it. In Klein’s language, the “key to this process is developing a political discourse that is not afraid of diversity, that does not try to cram every political movement into a single model” (2002: 245).

In my view the European Social Forum, and ‘the movement’ in general, still has to go a long way to be truly inclusive and expand its networks beyond the ‘traditional’ Western-European-white-middle-class type of activist and social critic. What about Eastern Europe? In Florence only a handful, in comparison to the masses of course, were present from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc. What about Turkey? In the face of the growing conservative revolt against a possible inclusion of Turkey in the European Union, should it not be our task to reach out to progressive social movement in Turkey and include them in the ESF? What about immigrants? I hardly saw different colours in Florence. This is also what Khalfa (2002) notes: “Even though the subjects of exclusion and immigration were discussed in the conference and the seminars, there were still...too few immigrants present”. Hardt (2002) makes a similar point in his response to the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre in January 2002: in his view ‘the movement’ is not yet global enough. For example, there were very few faces from Asia and Africa in Porto Alegre. Furthermore Hardt maintains that the voices who were the ‘loudest’ at the WSF (e.g. The French leadership of ATTAC) were actually arguing for the strengthening of national institutions as response to globalisation and the erosion of national socio-economic politics. In Hardt’s eyes this is a dangerous position to hold, as national interests would always interfere with the need to continuously broadening the network of global resistance against Empire in terms of geography and diversity.

A point of critique that has been advanced at Hardt (and Negri) is that they do not sufficiently acknowledge the powerful effects of resistance that can be produced by ‘traditional’ representational politics at the level of the party and the nation. Mertens (2002), for example, maintains that the network is not and cannot be everything. In his view ‘old-style’ governmentalities, party and national representational politics, can be still important in the struggle against neo-liberal formations of power. He points out, for example, that the 2002 WSF could have never taken place without the regional

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27 These are the type of organisations and groups that the call for participation at the second European Social Forum in Paris plans to address.

28 See the Call of the European Social Movements in footnote 14.

municipal government in Porto Alegre (which is led by the PT party, which has recently won the national elections in Brazil). Equally the Florence ESF would not have been as brilliant an event as it was without the generous financial and organisational support by the mayor of Florence and the regional government. Thus the fact that the ESF event was as well organised as it was, must be mainly attributed to the efforts of local party politics,<sup>29</sup> which Hardt and Negri often seem to dismiss when they talk about ‘the network’, or ‘the multitude’. This is largely a self-made problem of Hardt and Negri themselves, as their description of the concept of ‘the multitude’ and ‘the network’ often remains sketchy, highly abstract and non-specific. But then, perhaps as point of defence, as I have noted above, *Empire* is a theoretical practice that does not aim to ‘bridge the gap between theory and practice’ but develop concepts, which put that very gap into question and help to transform it.

The realisation that ‘the movement’ is so obviously diverse and multiple, should not prevent us though from the analysis of its organisational specificities and its specific voices and agendas. This is what Hardt has in mind when he, in his reflections of the 2002 WSF, questions the politics of the French leadership of ATTAC, for example. Similarly we should not let the joy and happiness that we felt at and after the Florence event make us blind towards the organisational specificities of the 2002 ESF. Therefore let me offer a few words of caution here, caution that is supposed to be entirely productive rather than dismissive. As I have already noted above, the exclusions of, for example, Eastern Europe and immigrants, were clearly felt at the Forum. Another exclusion that was clearly apparent in Florence was the absence of theory; that is, theoretical practice. As far as I could see there was just one relatively small seminar entitled ‘Struggle, Classes, Multitude and Resistance’, which was organised by a network of European Marxist journals that were eager to defend ‘traditional’ Marxist categories against ‘newcomers’ such as Hardt and Negri. The sophistication and diversity of this debate was appalling, so there is clearly the need, in my view, to include more theoretical practices at the 2003 ESF, which is able to develop concepts and critically interrogate ‘the movement’ and its organisation. This is the space I would like to see *ephemera* populating; so I hope we will continue to publish papers that question the processes of resistance against the dominant capitalist hegemony.<sup>30</sup>

What also was very apparent was that the seminars and conferences were clearly dominated by relatively few organisations. First, there was ATTAC, of course, (even though one should note that ATTAC is not a homogeneous organisation, but rather a network of relatively independent regional groups, which often have much more radical views and agendas than the French leadership that seems to have much more traditional political ambitions). Second, there was the ‘hidden’ Italian organisational committee, which clearly dominated the agenda of the Forum. Treanor (2002) maintains that the

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29 The city of Florence provided, for example, the forum’s conference locations for free, helped with translations as well as provided free temporary accommodation for literally thousands of people in schools, stadiums and other buildings.

30 Over the past two years *ephemera* has continuously sought to engage with radical protest groups and ‘the movement’ against neo-liberal globalisation agendas. See especially the following papers: Böhm (2001); Catley, Grice and Walton (2002); Hislop (2001); Lenton (2001); Monbiot (2002); and Munro (2002).



organisation of the Florence ESF was an exclusive, semi-democratic, hidden process that was dominated by local and national political power-plays rather than a truly enlarging pan-European movement. He claims that “the ‘organising meetings’ for the ESF in other countries were unreal, they had nothing to say about its structure. The organising committees in Italy made all the major decisions about the ESF – about who to exclude, about censorship, and about co-operation with the sponsors, acceptance of their conditions, about the structure of the ESF, and its agenda” (2002). This leads Treanor to call for the abolition of the ESF, as it has, and he shows this too, financial links to business and governments and is generally an undemocratic movement. This is strong language from someone who we cannot be sure about his own background. However, his claims about the ESF, in my view, have to be taken seriously.

Currently there are efforts under way to organise the second ESF, which will take place in Paris/Saint-Denis in November 2003. To prepare this event the first organisation meeting took place in Paris in December 2002. As far as I could see this was an open meeting, that is, everybody was invited to participate. What was discussed at this meeting was, for example, the ‘Proposal to create a European organisational structure’<sup>31</sup>. There is, unfortunately, no space here to engage with this proposal in any detail, and this is also beyond the scope of this paper. What I have sought to discuss and argue for was perhaps of more general nature, namely that even though, in my view, it is certainly the case that the ESF organisation currently lacks an open, democratic and transparent process that is fully inclusive and encourages participation from all spheres of society, we do not have to be as pessimistic as Treanor and call for its abolition; this is a purely destructive move that does not engage with the process productively. In contrast, and this is what I have tried to practice with this paper, it is our task to make ourselves heard and try to influence this process of mobilisation and organisation of the ESF and ‘the movement’ in general. We have to get involved, which for me means to think and write about ‘the movement’. Because getting involved (theoretically) means to change the multiplicity of ‘the movement’, change its practice, expand its networks and therefore make it more united.

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31 The second European Social Forum will take place between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2003 in Paris/Saint-Denis. On December 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held in Paris to kick-off the organisation of the ESF. The first major concern is the creation of a European-wide organisation and mobilisation structure. The French Mobilisation Committee decided on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October the following: “To guarantee its success, we propose to set up structures that are as *united* as possible to prepare the event. This will allow us to bring together all the social movements, networks, associations and organisations supportive of this proposal, of the project and of the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum. We are addressing our call to the following social organisations and movements: trades unions, community movements involved in popular education and local development, international solidarity organisations, organisations working against social exclusion, human rights organisations, organisations of environmentalists and ecologists, farmers organisations economic networks offering social solidarity, youth organisations, migrant organisations, cultural networks, feminist networks, networks of researchers and lecturers. In order to create the most representative structures possible to carry out the preparations, both at a European and an individual country level, we need to bring together the continental networks of the diverse movements, as well as the National Mobilisation Committees.” (French Mobilisation Committee for the ESF 2003: their full ‘Proposal to create a European organisational structure’ was posted to the ESF-UK-INFO mailing list at <http://lists.southspace.net/listinfo/esf-uk-info>).

## Conclusions

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx engages theoretically and practically with the specific revolutionary situation of his time, namely the 1848-1851 period in which the hopeful French proletarian uprising was crushed, its agenda taken up and in the process corrupted by the bourgeoisie and a caricature of a man, Louis Bonaparte, is lifted into the top job of the republic. Marx analyses the events of this period in all of its concreteness. However, the purpose of his theoretical practices is not only to study the specificities of the 1848-1851 events, but to draw more wider conclusions for the organisation of struggle and proletarian revolutions. Today we would be well advised to follow his example and analyse the current constellation of social formations and the specific organisation of what I have called here ‘the movement’, which is nothing else but the global proletarian multitude of resistance against globally integrated capitalism, or Empire. It is not enough to just take part in ‘the movement’, it is our task, as critics, as readers of theory, to practically engage and critique ‘the movement’, its organisation, its agendas. These theoretical practices of critique cannot, however, rely on concepts, categories, and agendas of the past, because this would force us back into a defunct era, as Marx says:

A whole people, believing itself to have acquired a powerful revolutionary thrust, is suddenly forced back into a defunct era; and so that there is no mistake about the reversion, the old dates rise again, the old chronology, the old names, the old edicts, which had long declined to mere antiquarian interest, and the old functionaries, who had seemed long decayed. (Marx, 1852/2002: 21)

It is important that these words come directly from Marx, because he is the first who would advise us to question his ideas, concepts and theories. But this critique of Marx is not simply a getting rid of him, or a forgetting, but it is ‘usage’ of Marx and his theories to construct concepts that are valid today. It is our task to continuously question ourselves and develop concepts that can positively intervene in today’s constellation of struggle:

Proletarian revolutions...engage in perpetual self-criticism, always stopping in their own tracks; they return to what is apparently complete in order to begin it anew, and deride with savage brutality the inadequacies, weak points and pitiful aspects of their first attempts; they seem to strike down their adversary, only to have him draw new powers from the earth and rise against them once more with the strength of a giant; again and again they draw back from the prodigious scope of their own aims, until a situation is created which makes impossible any reversion, and circumstances themselves cry out: There’s no time like the present! (Marx, 1852/2002: 22-23)

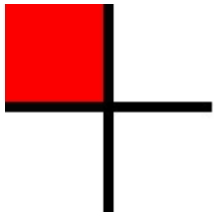
It is this perpetual self-criticism of ‘the movement’, which theory, as practice, can contribute to. This was the starting point of this paper: How can we conceptualise theory as a practice that can directly and indirectly intervene, critique and engage with contemporary modes of organisation, in short, how can theory be relevant? In my view this is the question all scholars need to ask themselves, also in organisation studies, which too often is narrowly concerned to study organisational entities and institutions of capital without seeing the wider processes of social formation that are characterised by struggle and antagonisms. Organisation is about the organisation of the social. As scholars of organisation we therefore cannot ignore social relations of power and knowledge, we cannot ignore issues of imperial globalisation, we cannot ignore ‘the

movement', we cannot ignore the struggles to organise this world differently. But today "we lack creation. We lack resistance to the present" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 108). It is therefore the task of theory to help "to define the conditions in which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live" (Foucault, 1992: 10); it is the task of theory to create concepts, because "the creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 108). Thought needs to be relevant again, but not in a way that fetishises practice; thought needs to be a radical practice itself. It needs to help, within a network of other practices, to imagine a different future for the social, different organisational principles. Only if theory, as practice, lives up to this challenge it can be part of the struggles of the social for a different world.

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## Kinship That Matters

Joanna Brewis

**review of:**

Judith Butler (2000) *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press. (HB: pp. 103, £14.50, ISBN: 0-231-11894-5)

Reading Judith Butler's work has always been challenging for me but *Antigone's Claim* proved particularly tricky. Unlike the texts of hers which I have consulted in the past, it deals with unfamiliar subject matter, not least a Sophocles play which I have never seen performed nor read myself, indeed one of whose existence I remained cheerfully ignorant until starting to read this book. Then there is the literature to which Butler refers – Hegel, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss and Irigaray in the main – some of which I have a glancing familiarity with, but much I do not know at all. Moreover, at times I found the argument somewhat fragmented or difficult to follow – it was not always clear how Butler had moved from one point to another and there is also a fair amount of repetition.

Then again, having established my radical unsuitability as a reviewer of this highly complex book, what I (think I) understood of it was both useful and insightful, especially the points at which the argument is grounded by reference to empirical example. Butler begins by telling us that she initially turned to Antigone, whom she analyses here solely in terms of her appearance in three of Sophocles' plays (*Antigone* in the main, but also *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*), because of her belief that Antigone might potentially serve as a figure of feminist resistance to the State, standing as she is often taken to do for kinship and the sphere of the family. Thus she is perhaps significant, Butler remarks, as a putative anti-authoritarian counter to "contemporary efforts to recast political opposition as legal plaint and to seek the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of feminist claims" (p.1).

However, it quickly becomes apparent that the argument here is to develop in a very different direction. That is to say, Butler in fact takes issue with the various influential arguments – Lacanian psychoanalysis most particularly – which position Antigone on the side of the pre-social and pre-political, on the side of kinship and the incest taboo. It

is kinship – in the sense that “a mother is someone with whom a son and daughter do not have sexual relations, a mother is someone who only has sexual relations with the father, etc.” (p.18) – that Lacan identifies as enabling language (‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’, ‘they’ etc.), signification (each term only has meaning in relation to other terms) and therefore cultural intelligibility. Thus he casts it as the very precondition of an orderly and psychically healthy social domain, in which certain relationships (and not others) are possible, liveable and understandable, in which certain relationships ‘matter’. Antigone, then, exists outside of the *polis*, but the *polis* could not exist without her – it is the kinship relations that she symbolizes which make the *polis* possible. So we meet our first stumbling block in terms of the claim that Antigone somehow stands, irrevocably and unambiguously, for kinship – as Butler points out, “every interpretive effort to cast a character [in the play] as a representative of kinship or the state tends to falter and lose coherence and stability” because of the apparently “essential relationship” between the two domains (p.5).

It might be useful at this point for readers who, like me, are not familiar with *Antigone* to provide a crude summary of the play. Antigone is the daughter of the incestuous marriage between Oedipus and his mother Jocasta, as documented by Sophocles in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. One of her brothers, Polyneices, has led an army against the Theban regime of a second brother, Eteocles, in order to reclaim what he feels is his rightful heritage. Both are killed in the ensuing conflict. The King of Thebes, Creon (also Antigone’s uncle), decrees that Eteocles is entitled to full burial rites as a war hero but that Polyneices as a traitor against the kingdom is not to be accorded a proper funeral – “indeed, [he] wants the body left bare, dishonored and ravaged” (p.7). Antigone defies Creon by insisting on burying Polyneices, but when her crime is discovered he sentences her to death by starvation. The story then becomes yet more unremittingly tragic as Creon’s son Haemon, to whom Antigone has been promised in marriage, realizes what his father has done and takes his own life. Eurydice, Creon’s wife, then repeats her son’s actions and the play closes with Creon asking likewise to be put to death, as he has effectively murdered his wife and his son.

What this very brief outline does not reveal, however, is that Antigone is a profoundly ambiguous character. Apart from the aforementioned argument that kinship stands in much of the existing analysis of the play as the conditions of possibility of a social domain, as Butler suggests she is also difficult to claim as a pure symbol of kinship because she is first and foremost the offspring of an incestuous bond such that her father is her half-brother, and she is also in love with Polyneices. And, if kinship is taken as structuring gender relations, Antigone is said to assume ‘manly’ qualities not least in her verbally defiant interaction with Creon – indeed to ‘unman’ him. Likewise, she seems to step into the place previously occupied by Polyneices in her defiance of Creon, which “situates her as the one who may substitute for [Polyneices] and, hence, replaces and territorializes him. She assumes manhood through vanquishing manhood, but she vanquishes it only by idealizing it” (p.11). Moreover, Antigone resists Creon in language which is borrowed from the very sphere he is said to represent, that of the universal authority of the state: “Her agency emerges precisely through her refusal to honor his command, and yet the language of this refusal assimilates the very terms of the sovereignty that she refuses. He expects that his word will govern her deeds, and she speaks back to him, countering his sovereign speech act by asserting her own

sovereignty” (p.11). It is also true to say that Antigone’s original crime is in itself scarcely representative of “the sanctity of kinship, for[, although] it is for her brother or, at least, in his name, that she is willing to defy the law”, she is categorical on the point that she would not have done this for other members of her family, her future children or husband, say (pp.9-10). On the other hand, this can also be interpreted (and Butler does so later), as Antigone condensing her grief for the many dead or rejected members of her family into the figure of Polyneices – here again we see kinship positions sliding into each other. Finally, her very name can be translated as anti-kinship/family/generation (*gonē* in the original Greek).

Butler employs this ambiguity in Antigone’s character to subsequently pursue the theme which ties the text together – the question of whether the symbolic power of kinship, of the Law-of-the-Father (Lacan, 1979), of the mommy-daddy-me triangle (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984), is in fact culturally universal, immutable and indisputable, such that only certain forms of kinship have ever ‘mattered’ and will ever ‘matter’. Alternatively, is it possible to conceive of the many emergent forms of relationship between parents and children and indeed non-blood relations in these times of divorce, remarriage, exile, migration, displacement, multiple or single parenting, step-, gay and ‘blended’ families as equally if not more legitimate, healthy and functional types of kinship without recourse to conventional family structures? For structural psychoanalysis, the answer is a definitive no – because “[t]he symbolic is precisely what sets limits to any and all utopian efforts to reconfigure and relive kinship relations at some distance from the oedipal scene” (p.20). In other words, if, for example, there are two men or two women parenting children, this then implies that “some primary division of gendered roles organizes their psychic places within the scene, so that the empirical contingency of two same-gendered parents is nevertheless straightened out by the presocial psychic place of the Mother and Father into which they enter” (p.69). Psychoanalytic theory has also been employed to argue against gay marriage, gay adoption and lesbian parenting lest this fails to happen – to the extent that this last has been predicted to contribute to autism in children because of the “paternal gap” it entails (p.70). But Butler errs in the opposite direction. Although she never answers the question she poses herself – whether the *morés* that control (il)legitimate forms of kinship may be substantially and significantly altered – she raises it as a possibility on the basis of the uncertainties and elisions represented by the fictional Antigone, a figure so closely allied with classic kinship patterns and yet simultaneously destabilizing of them in other ways. Thus Antigone, like the new forms of kinship to which Butler alludes, is unthinkable without a degree of horror under conditions of cultural intelligibility which rely on the resolution of the oedipal drama. Antigone therefore permits us, so Butler argues, to ask which kinship arrangements should be seen as legitimate, because she refuses to acknowledge any law that does not acknowledge her love for Polyneices and her grief at his death – she lives “the equivocations that unravel the purity and universality of those structuralist rules” (p.18). Apart from anything else, as Butler’s Foucauldian formula also asserts, the taboo on sexual relations with the closest members of one’s family always and already (re)produces the Other of incest itself “as a necessary specter of social dissolution, a specter without which social bonds cannot emerge” (p.67). It is much more than simply prohibitive – and what is significant here is that the incestuous ‘perversity’ which the law of kinship necessarily gives rise to appears in the play itself

in the language of precisely that law “and makes its claim ... in the sphere of legitimate kinship that depends on its exclusion or pathologization” (p.68).

Another important argument which Butler offers here is her suggestion that psychoanalysis itself tends to the tautological in its insistence on the law of kinship. She suggests that the very claim that this is immutable, incontestable and indisputable is a reifying claim, in the sense that those who adhere to the law in this way wish to ensure “a limit to the social, the subversive, the possibility of agency and change, a limit that we cling to, symptomatically, as the final defeat of our own power”. In taking the law as universal, these theorists, she asserts, attribute “the very force to the law that the law itself is said to exercise” (p.21). Thus, she implies, it is a moot point as to whether it is the law itself, or the power it has been discursively constructed as possessing, that so thoroughly and seemingly irremediably informs our kinship structures and thus our social practices. In other words, “does the structuralist law report on the curse that is upon kinship or does it deliver that curse?” (p.66).

For Butler, then, kinship, like gender and sex as discussed in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), “secures the conditions of intelligibility by which life becomes livable, [but] by which life also becomes condemned and foreclosed” (p.23). She therefore wishes to challenge the relationship between kinship and “reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility”, in defiance of those who “seek to make normative versions of kinship essential to the working of culture and the logic of things ... who, from terror, savor the final authority of those taboos that stabilize social structure as timeless truth, without then ever asking, what happened to the heirs of Oedipus?” (p.24-25). Butler refuses the Lacanian analysis of Antigone that has her dying purely because her desire for her brother is symbolically insupportable within kinship, preferring instead to ask how and in what ways her story allows us to rethink the very terms of ‘liveability’. She ends, provocatively and importantly, by suggesting that, if kinship is “the precondition of the human, then Antigone is the occasion for a new field of the human...the one that happens when the less than human speaks as human, when gender is displaced, and kinship founders on its own founding laws” (p.82).

In terms of what all of this means for those of us engaged in the study of organization, it is my contention that Butler’s argument allows for a reappraisal of kinship (as well as sex and gender) as a pervasive system (or organization) within which roles, behaviours, relationships and desires are included/excluded, ordered and circumscribed. Moving away from the Lacanian assumption that oedipal kinship structures are and indeed must be culturally universal also entails considering what might come to stand in their place, or at least to complement them: in other words, what new forms of kinship organization (including those where no blood ties are involved) might then become liveable, functional, possible? Antigone’s ‘excesses’ in this regard both mirror and foreshadow the ‘excesses’ of the non-traditional kinship network: they point to the reasons why,

despite [US] government efforts to label fatherless families as dysfunctional, those black urban kinship arrangements constituted by mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and friends who work together to raise children and reproduce the material conditions of life are extremely functional and would be seriously misdescribed if measured against an Anglo-American standard of familial normalcy. (p.73, following Carol Stack)



In addition, and although I have to admit to being particularly drawn to the discussion of forms of organization beyond the production of goods and services, outside the sphere of employment/education/government, to discussion which allows insights from organization studies to inform other disciplines as opposed to the reverse scenario necessarily or always being the case, it is also true to say that a reconsideration and critique of this kind potentially has much to offer the study of organizations in the more conventional sense. The analysis of gender and sex in this context might very well be served in an interesting and fruitful way by, for example, reading the drama which unfolds in *Antigone* as if it were set in a contemporary workplace – imagining Creon as autocratic (father-)manager, Antigone as defiant employee, Polyneices and Eteocles as members of warring organizational factions, in conflict over organizational territory, conflating the incest in the story with nepotism or sexual favouritism, foregrounding the trope of family in organizational relations and so on.

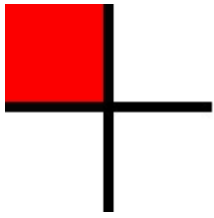
Consequently, although *Antigone's Claim* is frustrating and impenetrable at times, and despite the fact that it raises many more questions than it answers, it serves eventually to open up the kind of critical space with which we are familiar from Butler's other work. The text therefore provides an important resource by which to begin to think through what kinship (and other forms of organization), freed from the oedipal stranglehold, might potentially come to mean in the twenty-first century.

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## Of Language, Limits, and Secrets

Christian De Cock and Christina Volkmann

**review of:**

Samuel Weber (2001) *Institution and Interpretation*, expanded edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press (pp. 275; PB, £13.95, ISBN 0-8047-3119-5; HB, £45, ISBN 0-8047-3118-7)

Michael Taussig (1999) *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (pp. 311; PB, £14.95, ISBN 0-8047-3200-0; HB, £40, ISBN 0-8047-3199-3)

To set us on our way, an epigraph:

The limit is not outside language, it is the outside *of* language. It is made up of visions and auditions that are not of language, but which language alone makes possible. There is also a painting and a music characteristic of writing, like the effects of colors and sonorities that rise up above words. It is through words, between words, that one sees and hears. Beckett spoke of 'drilling holes' in language in order to see or hear 'what was lurking behind.' One must say of every writer: he is a seer, a hearer, 'ill seen ill said,' she is a colorist, a musician. (Deleuze, 1993/1997, Preface of *Essays Critical and Clinical*)

### Institution and Interpretation

Samuel Weber's *Institution and Interpretation* was first published in 1989 to considerable critical acclaim. Twelve years later six chapters have been added to the original nine. The book comprises a range of essays published between 1980 and 1996, thus giving the reader glimpses both of Weber's intellectual range and of some of the developments/turmoils in the discipline of literary theory. Inevitably, a certain amount of repetition creeps in (e.g. in the use of identical quotes in different essays, in the recurrence of the same key ideas), but at no time did we experience this as inappropriate. Given that this book is a 'slow' book (i.e. one that needs to be read at a leisurely pace in order to follow the various arguments), the repetitions serve as useful anchoring points for the reader. Furthermore, the notion of repetition becomes itself a key reflection point for Weber in the later chapters:

For if there can be a distinctive sense to the human, something that is by no means certain or assured, then it cannot lie in the direction of unity, totality, and autonomy. It must consist, rather, in the opening *of* and *toward heterogeneity*. Nothing else was and is at stake in the rethinking of repetition that runs from Kierkegaard to Deleuze and Derrida. (p.252, emphasis in original)<sup>1</sup>

Weber works from a handful of key authors and texts that underpin virtually all of the essays published in this collection. These are Nietzsche (especially *The Genealogy of Morals*), Derrida, Kant (especially *The Critique of Judgement*), and Freud. In the earlier essays Saussure and Peirce feature prominently, in the later ones Weber explores the works of Heidegger and Kierkegaard in ever greater detail. The critical engagement with these thinkers' ideas and concepts is refreshing in an age where theoretical concepts and frameworks quickly become *substitutes* for real thinking.<sup>2</sup> An example of Weber's careful treatment is his discussion of "Peirce's '*pragmaticism*' – so named to distinguish it from the theories of William James [*pragmatism*], considered by Peirce as psychologistic" (p.13). For an audience more familiar with writings in organization studies, where one is quick to pillage words and phrases from key thinkers as theoretical back-up or intellectual veneer, Weber's painstaking way of proceeding may at first seem somewhat irritating ('let's get to the key point here!') but ultimately stands out as an example of how to improve the intellectual practices of the field. As Weber puts it: "The less one worries about one's use of language, the more one is subjected to its effects" (p.221). Weber's technique, if one can call it that, is exemplified in his close reading of key texts in their original language (be they French, German, or Danish) and then pointing out subtleties in the original texts that got lost in the 'official translations'.<sup>3</sup> Two examples:

The translation of *Selbstüberwindung* as 'self discipline' involves a shift in emphasis that is symptomatic of the redefinition of interpretation at work in this text. 'Self-discipline' suggests a voluntary, deliberate activity of the conscious self, establishing a measure of control over its

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- 1 One author Weber does not consider but who immediately comes to mind in this context is Jorge Luis Borges. In a recently published collection of his essays (Borges, 2000), one can find the same phrases, paragraphs and even whole pages recurring (to the point it almost becomes a game to spot identical paragraphs and pages – we counted well over a dozen). These repetitions are part of Borges' lifelong fascination with the way old elements can be reassembled, by chance or design, to create new variations, or something that appears exactly the same but now acquires a different interpretation, thus continuously breaking open any totality (viz. Borges' famous story of Pierre Menard, see e.g. De Cock (2000: 597-599). An outstanding example can be found in one of his longest and most famous essays, 'A New Refutation of Time,' (originally published in 1947) which not only cites the same paragraphs from Bishop Berkeley twice, but also reproduces a whole section from an essay published in 1936 – 'A History of Eternity.' Interestingly the two essays were translated by two different translators, which leads to the rather quixotic (dare we say Borgesian) result that the fragments of texts which are identical in the Spanish original are subtly different again in the English collection. Žižek, whose work we will use to structure our discussion (Žižek as a spectral presence as it were), also unashamedly reassembles sentences and paragraphs used across a range of recent books (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d).
  - 2 Žižek, for example, offers a withering critique of how the notion of totalitarianism, far from being an effective theoretical concept, has become a kind of stopgap: "instead of enabling us to think, forcing us to acquire a new insight into the historical reality it describes, it relieves us of the duty to think, or even actively *prevents* us from thinking" (2001a: 3).
  - 3 Iser's (2000) reminder of what interpretation has always been – an act of translation – is pertinent here.

unruly impulses. While this is by no means entirely foreign to the *Selbstüberwindung*, it is also far from exhausting the word's connotations. (on Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, p.79-80)

Much of what goes on in this seminal text is, I believe, largely incomprehensible if one does not refer back to the meaning of the Danish word that is used: *Gjentagelse* [translated as repetition]... the failure of his efforts to determine whether or not repetition 'is possible', remains unintelligible if one relies only on translations... To 'repeat,' therefore, as in *Gjentagelse*, is 'to take again'. The promise of repetition is that through it, the subject will be able to 'take again,' to recover, to reappropriate what is lost through the passage of time, and, ultimately, through finitude. (on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling/ Repetition*, p.246-247)

Needless to say that the reviewers feel somewhat humbled. We are only modestly read in what Weber considers seminal texts (thus making it exceedingly difficult to follow his arguments on several occasions), and even if we had read all these classics we would have missed out on significant subtleties because we would not have read them in the language they were first published in. This realisation will inevitably colour our review of this challenging book.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, we quickly realised it would be rather futile to apply a checklist approach, ticking off the key arguments/ideas of each chapter as we rapidly progress through the book's pages and then to try and provide some overarching conclusion. Such a superficial analysis would be futile precisely because the particular, the unexpected, and the unpredictable form such a key part of Weber's project (and of the Humanities itself he argues). On the final page of the book he suggests:

A task for the humanities would be to rethink not just the human but everything connected with it *not*, as hitherto, strictly from the perspective of the universal, the concept, but from that of the exception; which is to say, from the perspective of what refuses to fit in, what resists assimilation, but what, in so doing, reveals the enabling limits of all system, synthesis, and self-containment. (p.252)

We have chosen to structure our review around a discussion of some anxieties that permeate the field of literary studies, and we will explore how Weber's reflections on these can enrich current debates in the field of organization studies. At the very least it should be of some comfort to organizational scholars that they share similar anxieties with literary theorists/critics. The lack of objectivity (Weber considers it to be *constitutive*) in the study of literature confronts the field with the problem of its legitimation, and hence, with its status as, and in regard to, institution(s). As long as founding conventions concerning the nature of its object – 'literature' – were generally accepted as unproblematic, the thorny problem of the field's relation to that particular object could be safely ignored. However, in recent decades interpretations of literary texts could no longer be necessarily "certified as inhabiting the discipline of literary studies or even the institution of academic America." No longer were the debates and resulting polemics necessarily

comprehensible in terms of any *given* institution or set of interpretive assumptions. Indeed, the results may not be *comprehensible* at all, which is not to say that they are necessarily worthless or gibberish, but rather that they may call for a new practice of interpretation, in which

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4 A quote from a young Borges reading James Joyce comes to mind here: "Be what it may, I will always esteem and adore the divine genius of this Gentleman, taking from him what I understand with humility and admiring with veneration what I am unable to understand" (Borges, 2000: 15).

‘understanding’ or ‘comprehension’ are no longer supreme categories or absolute values. (p.38, emphasis in original)

By the 1990s the “community of interpretation” to which theorists like Fish and Eco so strongly appeal was no longer simply a unified, undivided community, ‘within’ which the diversity of individual interpretations took (their) place. The “sets of institutional assumptions” had themselves become “the objects of dispute” (p.35-36).

For Weber a return to a definable, delimitable set of commonly held assumptions, although superficially attractive, is no longer a viable option. His perspective is most clearly articulated in his critique of what he calls “the professionalist paradigm of knowledge”, a notion closely associated with a “productivist model of research and development”:

The regulative idea of this paradigm is that of the absolute autonomy of the individual discipline, construed as a self-contained body of investigative procedures and of knowledge held to be universally valid within the confines of an unproblematized field. (p.147)

Whilst this critique finds its origin in Weber’s home discipline of literary theory, it unfolds into a questioning of the very notion of the University:

The university, itself divided into more or less isolated, self-contained departments, was the embodiment of that kind of limited universality that characterized the cognitive model of professionalism... Indeed, the very notion of academic ‘seriousness’ came increasingly to exclude reflection upon the relation of one ‘field’ to another, and concomitantly, reflection upon the historical process by which individual disciplines established their boundaries. (p.32)

Weber’s critique is particularly pertinent to the discipline of organization studies<sup>5</sup> which, in reaction to a modest opening up to a body of writing rooted in the distinctive pre-occupations of Continental European philosophy in the late 1980s, witnessed a concerted effort (e.g. Pfeffer, 1993, Tranfield and Starkey, 1998) to re-establish “the need for consensus and credibility with external stakeholders and also as defence against other disciplines” (Hardy, 2002: 16).<sup>6</sup> Frost, in an amusing aphorism worth quoting at some length, aptly captures the desire among organizational scientists for a kind of magical return to a state of ‘innocence’:

As organizational scientists, we invest large amounts of intellectual and emotional capital to learn and eventually master the models and practices that form our craft. The wells of knowledge we come to call our own are often comfortable and comforting and it is not surprising that when, unexpectedly, we are brought face to face with different and perhaps more expansive ‘oceans’ of knowledge we experience disorientation and get a headache. Seeing the other scholar’s ocean can threaten our sense of confidence in what we think we know. We may become afraid. We can no longer be so precise or so certain about the world we describe and try to explain... [but then] We

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5 Or OMT, Organization and Management Theory, in its North American version.

6 Hardy, in a refreshingly short piece, denounces “the obsession with consensus and convergence that characterizes much of the work carried out by the Academy of Management” (2002: 17). de Rond, too, offers an alternative, but unfortunately as yet marginal, vision where organizational scholars “actively look, possibly outside of the discipline, for theories of heterogeneity - theories that accept variety and, by implication, complexity as ontological... that are tolerant to variety in methodology and that are not constrained by prediction or necessarily have to be fully fledged... Perhaps it is only thus that we may help humanize one of the most important spheres of life” (2002: 43).

slip the experience into our unconsciousness. And when we awake we are back in our own comfortable well. We have not changed our perspective or allowed ourselves to open to other models and practices. (2002: 21)

A large part of *Institution and Interpretation* is taken up by Weber's attempts to make sense of<sup>7</sup> and move beyond this desire to establish "impenetrable frontiers and unshakeable foundations",<sup>8</sup> supplanting it "by a more practical, strategic approach involving an effort to extend or otherwise put into play what could be described as enabling limits" (p.x). Weber's preferred way of exploring these limits is by revealing the strategic nature of apparently objective, denotative language of academic discourse; and demonstrating how this discourse entails, necessarily but implicitly, a precise series of prescriptive 'speech acts', involving injunctions and commands.<sup>9</sup> The traditional production and transmission of knowledge has always involved the effort to overcome uncertainty and to provide security, and the way of achieving these objectives was by "providing a *model of unification* legitimating the *political containment* of conflictual diversity, whether that of social relations or that involved in historical transformations" (p.238). The re-definition of controversial issues in less explosive, less conflict-laden ways has precisely been part of the constitutive project of professionalism, Weber argues. This has meant the effort to transfer and relocate conflictual issues in space whose borders seem naturally given ('you are an interpretivist, I am a functionalist, let's do some paradigm bridging!'). For Weber, the polemical character of scientific inquiry is not merely a result of the struggle to supplant previous theories (something which he considers an important enough aspect) but also fundamental to the process of *experimentation* (engaging with the subject matter) itself. This experimentation is characterised by uncertainty, uncertainty being symptomatic of something very essential in the way language works:

Words are determined only by their being referred to other words, which in turn must be referred to yet other marks, usages, contexts, and the like. This process is intrinsically endless, and yet in order for it to function at all we must *arrest* it. The fact that we do this (most of the time without a second thought) and that our lives are generally organized precisely in order to defend against such arresting second thoughts does not change the basic operation: namely, that even in the most prosaic use of language, we must in a certain sense *split our minds* in order to *think* at all, in order

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- 7 Thus accounting for "the fact that the desire for identity, unity, and totality should have proven so much more resilient than either Foucault or Barthes expected..." (p.xvi).
- 8 Zald's perspective, incidentally in a paper *arguing for an opening of organization and management theory towards the humanities*, is typical in this respect: "Organizational studies could be a powerful applied discipline *if the scientific base of the field was strong*. Since it is not, organizational studies follows the ratings, responding not only to academic fads, but to the whims and foibles of academic hucksters and the problem definitions of corporate executives" (1993: 514). In considering one of the youngest academic disciplines, film studies, one can see how the very fact of being/becoming a university discipline, and the concern with frontiers and foundations this involves, leads to sterility: "I was thus able to ask him to address directly the problems of the narrowness and sterility of the university discipline that had promised so much a generation before...If the creation of a separate discipline of film studies has enabled the carrying out of vital and important historical work, film theory itself has become less interesting within its new university home" (Colin McCabe, Head of Research at the British Film Institute 1989-98, in the preface to Žižek, 2001c).
- 9 Žižek, in typically flamboyant style, takes issue with the "taming of free radicals": "No less than social life itself, today's 'radical' academia is permeated by unwritten rules and prohibitions although such rules are never explicitly stated, disobedience can have dire consequences" (2001a: 1).

to articulate. We must both refer the defining terms to other marks that can never be fully defined for us and at the same time – but this precisely fractures the Sameness of that Time – we must ‘forget’ this irreducibly undefinable vestige, this set of exclusions that is neither entirely indeterminate nor fully determinable. (p.145, emphasis in original)

It is precisely because scientific activity inevitably entails the effort to determine the indeterminate, it will, by necessity, be an ambivalent and conflictual process. Furthermore, one of the effects of *splitting our minds*, to use Weber’s terminology, is that the objectivised language of experts and scientists can no longer be retranslated into the common language accessible to everyone, into our experience of representable reality. This ‘break-down’ in translation already emerges with Galileo and is brought to the extreme in quantum physics (e.g. Superstrings, Quantum Oscillation, cf. Žižek, 2001c).<sup>10</sup>

At this point it is useful to comment on Weber’s ontological position – something that he only indirectly alludes to. For example, he explores how Charles Sanders Peirce developed notions of the ‘real’, the ‘actual’ or ‘experience’ not as a given state of affairs, but as a violent shock, involving conflict, struggle, and resistance:

[T]he real is that which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something *other* than the mind’s creation” [1.325]. The real is that which insists and resists, which disrupts and unsettles [1.321]... (Peirce as quoted by Weber, p.16)

This ontological position has strong affinities with a Lacanian view, which in recent years has been popularised by Slavoj Žižek:

His lesson is that the experience of an insurmountable obstacle is the positive condition for us, as humans, to perceive something as reality. Reality is ultimately that which resists. (Žižek, 2001a: 226)

The Real (with capital R) resists simple integration into our common reality (symbolisation, integration into our universe). What we usually experience as reality is not the ‘thing itself’, it is always-already symbolised, constituted, structured by symbolic mechanisms.<sup>11</sup> Yet, symbolisation ultimately always fails, it never succeeds in

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10 This puts an interesting spin on the recurrent lament in the field of organization studies about the ‘translation’ of organizational research into the common language of organizational actors. Recent studies by Boland *et al.* (2001) and Mohrman *et al.* (2001) suggest that the typical way of presenting academic information (through objective, declarative knowledge) is a relatively ineffective way of getting knowledge to ‘take’ in practitioner settings. There have been various presidential addresses at the Academy of Management over the past decade addressing the translation of academic knowledge into practical action (e.g. Hambrick, 1994; Huff, 2000; Mowday, 1997). The message seems to be that organizational researchers must bridge the many disciplinary and ideological islands in the academic community in order to ‘see the whole system’ that they are studying and so better inform organizational action and organizational design decisions.

11 This modality is that of reality as (symbolic) fiction, “reality as really made up” as Taussig has it in *Defacement* (e.g. p.259); a reality that necessarily has to pose as natural so we can ‘get along’ with our everyday lives. The well-known sense of unreality we experience in the presence of certain phenomena can be located at this level; it indicates that the object has lost its place in the symbolic universe (Žižek, 1991). This “sense of unreality” is to be distinguished from a symbolic reality “deprived of the hard kernel of the Real”, which becomes “a malleable, indefinitely plastic texture

fully covering the Real. What this means is that we cannot ever comprehend the ‘whole’ of reality that we encounter: if we are to be able to endure our encounter with reality some part of it has to be ‘derealised’, experienced as a spectral apparition. There are thus three modalities of the real: we have the “real Real”, the “symbolic real” and the “imaginary real”, the latter being a spectral dimension which shines through our common reality (“the mysterious *je ne sais quoi*, the unfathomable ‘something’ that introduces a self-division into an ordinary object, so that the sublime dimension shines through it”, Žižek, 2001d: 82). This is why distortion and dissimulation, such key themes in Taussig’s book, are in themselves revealing: “what emerges via distortions of the accurate representation of reality is the Real – that is, the trauma around which social reality is structured” (Žižek, 1999: 79).

The crucial point for Weber, as he puts it in a delicate Derridean<sup>12</sup> stance, is that

in this spectral world, choices must still be made and identities established, no matter how provisional, probabilistic, and aleatory these may be. It is the inevitability of such decision making, in a situation marked by irreducible ambiguity, that gives rise to a thinking nourished not only by ambivalence, but also by anxiety. (p.xii)

Even in a non-deterministic epistemology ambiguity will still have to be limited, ‘excluded’, if objects are to be determined – that is, cognized – in any way whatsoever. This leads Weber to introduce the concept of *ambivalent demarcation*. Any selection or delimitation made will necessarily be partial. The partiality, which founds the possibility of cognition and insight, does so only insofar as it ignores/represses its own particularity:

[S]uch cognitive repression does not entail the pure and simple effacement of what is thereby excluded from one’s field of vision or of consciousness: rather, the exclusions persist qua exclusions, and they must be so maintained if they are to delimit what falls within the scope of our determinations. The result, then, is what I have called ambivalent demarcation. The demarcation is ambivalent because it does not merely demarcate one thing by setting it off from another; it also de-marks, that is, defaces the mark it simultaneously inscribes, by placing it in relation to an indeterminable series of other marks, of which we can never be fully conscious or cognizant. (p.145)

Rather than offer a conclusion at this point, we will move on to Taussig’s book in which the above reflections and operations are explored in quite some detail and with admirable skill, thus providing further texture to our own narrative.

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which, precisely, loses the character of ‘reality’, and turns into a fantasmatic effect of discursive practices” (Žižek, 2001a: 166).

12 Derridean in that he avoids the twin pitfalls of naïve realism and direct philosophical foundationalism. Human beings strive compulsively towards a global notion of truth, of a universal and necessary cognition, yet this cognition is simultaneously forever inaccessible to them: “a ‘philosophical foundation’ for our experience is *impossible*, but *necessary* – although all we perceive, understand, articulate, is of course overdetermined by a horizon of pre-understanding, this horizon itself remains ultimately impenetrable” (Žižek, 2001a: 203-204).



## Defacement

Taussig's book takes up many of the themes of Weber's *Institution and Interpretation*, such as the opening toward heterogeneity, the notion of repetition, the full acceptance of ambivalence, and goes on to explore them in complementary ways. *Defacement* is a strangely beautiful book, full of sumptuous yet utterly appropriate language use. Taussig displays here a fine awareness of the possibilities of language, with its referential meaning often clearly subordinated to its performative dimension. In what follows we will introduce an inordinate amount of quotes to convey an impression of this sumptuous writing which forms such an integral part of the author's project. Taussig does not so much try to explain or provide foundations for his key concepts as to engage in a mode of 'truth telling' that slowly unfolds the concepts' complex meaning/function.<sup>13</sup> The writing itself,<sup>14</sup> in its meandering ways, rather than any particular explanation, is the 'message', of this curious book. Taussig clearly intends his position of enunciation to be inscribed in his text, rather than safely exempt from its content: "Rather than pronounce theoretical verdict and encapsulate defacement's mysterious force, I see my task first and foremost to be not its explanation but its *characterization*" (p.1). In this task he is guided by a single sentence from Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*: "Truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it".<sup>15</sup> Thus he regards "the public secret as fated to maintain the verge where the secret is not destroyed through exposure, but subject to a revelation that does justice to it" (p.8). The public secret, defined as a "reconfiguration of repression in which depth becomes surface so as to remain depth" (p.5), and in another version "that which is generally known but cannot be articulated" (p.5), is a notion that has obsessed Taussig for many years. For example, in an earlier book, *Mimesis and Alterity*, he already suggested:

We act and have to act as if mischief were not afoot in the kingdom of the real and that all around the ground lay firm. That is what the public secret, the facticity of the social fact, being a social being is all about. (Taussig, 1993: xvii)

Everything that *Defacement* has to offer in terms of concepts and argument is contained in the eight pages of the prologue, and it is worth quoting Taussig at some length here to give the reader an introduction to the key concepts of the book: *defacement*, *the public secret*, and what Taussig calls after Hegel *the labour of the negative*:

Yet what if the truth is not so much a secret as a *public secret*, as is the case with most important social knowledge, *knowing what not to know*? Then what happens to the inspired act of

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13 Thus Taussig offers yet another example of the well-known phenomenon of traditional forms pushing against their own boundaries "by way of mobilising procedures which, at least from our retrospective view, seem to point towards a new technology that will be able to serve as a more 'natural' and appropriate 'objective correlative' to the life-experience the old forms endeavoured to render with their excessive experimentations" (Žižek, 2001c: 78).

14 In this we also have to include Taussig's judicious use of images, such as Selk'nam drawings in the frontispiece and throughout the book, and photos of the Subcomandante (Sup) Marcos masked and unmasked.

15 The phrase features in the frontispiece and is repeated throughout the book, gathering meaning and significance as the narrative unfolds.

defacement? Does it destroy the secret, or further empower it? For are not shared secrets the basis of our social institutions, the workplace, the market, the family, and the state? Is not such public secrecy the most interesting, the most powerful, the most mischievous and ubiquitous form of socially active knowledge there is... Defacement is like Enlightenment. It brings insides outside, unearthing knowledge, and revealing mystery. As it does this, however, as it spoliates and tears at tegument, it may also animate the thing defaced and the mystery revealed may become more mysterious, indicating the curious magic upon which Enlightenment, in its elimination of magic depends... Defacement works on objects the way jokes work on language, bringing out their inherent magic nowhere more so than when those objects have become routinized and social... (p.2-5, emphasis in original)

Everything is contained in embryonic form in the prologue, but only acquires meaning/texture through an unfolding, by “tracing the edge sideways like a crab scuttling” (p.2), over the remaining 250 or so pages. It is only in witnessing this unfolding that one can start to appreciate Taussig’s tour-de-force. For Taussig, the negativity in the act of defacement is far from negative in its effects, for it lures absence, that of which we would otherwise not know anything, into presence.<sup>16</sup> Taussig’s accounts of defacement do not impute to it the status of an origin, and thus refuse the consolidation of defacement into something that simply can be appropriated: “characterization of defacement can never confront its object head-on, if only because defacement catches us unawares and can only be known unexpectedly, complicit with the violence of daily life” (p.2). Here we can see parallels with Lacan’s *act*, the rupture in the symbolic narrative continuum, the “possibility of new possibilities” (Žižek, 2001d: 101). Just like Freud’s ‘death drive’ or Lacan’s ‘meaning of the phallus’<sup>17</sup>, defacement is not a positive concept with a specific content, but a mere promise of some unspecified knowledge, the designation of a seductive mystery. And yet, this strange notion is crucial in Taussig’s project of re-enchantment:

What begins as poetry becomes dulled through usage and we no longer see that the very facts of our existence are not facts but artifacts. *And it is precisely here* in the very nerve center of this active forgetting that, with its burnings, its savage markings, its cruel and often clever cuttings . . . defacement exerts its curious property of magnifying, not destroying, value, drawing out the sacred from the habitual-mundane, illuminating what Nietzsche saw as metaphoric basis of all existence but effaced by usage, passing into practical illusions of factual truth. *Defacement* puts this habitual operation of *effacement* into reverse... (p.54, emphasis in original)

Taussig’s writing, especially in the first chapter, can be best described as ‘fragmentary’. We are offered little ‘vignette’ reflections and stories, often little more than newspaper cuttings, covering multiple facets of defacement. These include such various topics as Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, corpses, sniffer dogs, the American flag, Tim

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16 Budick and Iser posit in a literary context: “In its undetermined proliferation, negativity speaks for something that is arguably as real as anything else we know, even if it can be located only by carving out a void within what is being said” (1989: xi). Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* where truth-effects are produced through failure, is also of some relevance here. To put it succinctly: one tries to grasp/conceive the object of thought; one fails, missing it, and through these very failures the place of the targeted object is encircled, its contours become discernible.

17 “The impossible fullness at the level of meaning (of the signified) is sustained by the void (the castrating dimension) at the level of the signifier – we encounter the ‘meaning of phallus’ when, apropos of some notion, we enthusiastically feel that ‘this is *it*, the true thing, the true meaning’, although we are never able to explicate *what*, precisely, this meaning *is*” (Žižek, 2001c: 60).

McVeigh (the Oklahoma bomber), and a theoretical reflection on monuments. Enough to leave one's head spinning after a mere twenty pages. But as Horkheimer and Adorno posited in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947/1973), such fragmentary writing has a very serious purpose. Fragmentary writing is premised upon the refusal of the operations that establish rational connections between statements in theoretical discourse (inference, entailment, deduction) and their linguistic representatives (therefore, because, etc.). Historical truth is 'shown' in fragmentary writing, which does not then explicitly aim to demonstrate or to explain. Explanation neutralises the phenomena in question; to explain is to explain away. Taussig suggests that traditional tropes have precisely the effect "of closing down analysis in the name of analysis, diverting attention from the power of the contradiction" (p.198). Indeed, the traditional way of proceeding in the social sciences becomes itself a target for Taussig:

But surely there is a secret, even a 'lubricating corruption,' in all of this, right where there shouldn't be, 'methodology' being designed, so to speak, to be the site of luminescent openness and purity thereof [truth]?... And as for the style of detachment, surely the posture of neutrality is just that, a posture recognized as such, a charade acknowledged as a public secret by one and all... From here stretch endless questions and uncertainty. What passion does one have to muster to become passionless and detached, for instance? How does one switch it on and off and off and on again? Surely this whole approach, which to greater or lesser degree involves us all, requires the most meticulous practice of deception and self-deception, secrecy and public secrecy? (p.75-76)

After the pyrotechnics of the first few pages the book settles into a nice rhythm. The remainder of the chapter mainly explores the process of defacement in connection with the sculpture 'Down by the Lake with Phil and Liz' in Canberra in the mid-1990s.<sup>18</sup> From here on the prospecting becomes more and more detailed, the unfolding more and more complex. In the second chapter we are introduced to the elaborate survey of secret societies that forms the core of this book; Taussig the anthropologist takes over. We are treated to a curious exploration of secrecy in an anarchist Andalusian village in Franco's Spain and in Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*. All the time, Taussig struggles with "an ineffable fusion of surges so conflicting and contradictory that they overburden language..." (p.50).

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18 The display in a public space in Canberra of a sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip as two naked figures is seen by some as unacceptable, a sacrilege. This is the case especially since the figures "are realistic, life-size. Perhaps if they were more abstract it would be more acceptable" (p.11). A member of the police force tries to rescue the situation by covering the figures with an Australian flag, which in turn is seen as a 'desecration' by the organisers. It remains unclear if the attempt of covering the sculpture with an Australian flag takes place before or after it has been partly destroyed in several attacks, or "ceremoniously vandalised" (p.12). It also remains unclear if this vandalism has been carried out solely by another artist, or if others were also involved. The organisers planned to leave the mutilated sculpture in its place "as a symbol of intolerance, irrelevance, disintegration" (p.12). Eventually, however, the two statues are removed (although with them not the whole sculpture). The now vacant space attracts the attention of "crowds gathered around the empty bench on which the statues had been sitting" (p.12). The story of "Down by the Lake with Phil and Liz" is put together by taking miscellaneous quotes of newspaper and television news reports. These bits of news are taken from different contexts, and the reader pieces the story together through the various bits of information given on what it is about and what has happened. Later in the book, Taussig reveals more information about the background of the story (p.23ff).

In the third chapter, *In that other time: Isla Grande*, we find ourselves truly in the realm of anthropology. Taussig explores various works relating to the Selk'nam and the Yamana, living in Tierra del Fuego in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter takes up almost half of the book and allows him to prospect his key concepts – defacement; the public secret; the labour of the negative – in minute detail. At times, Taussig is on the verge of getting carried away by his anthropological enthusiasm (and losing the reader in the detail, in one more elaborate example). The more traditional linear narrative that dominates here is somewhat disappointing, tedious even at times, although Taussig does introduce welcome interruptions. These are some of his 'curious'<sup>19</sup> conclusions:

There may be nothing more dissatisfying than the exposed secret, the triumph of exposure giving way to some vague sense of being cheated. *There was nothing after all*. This I take to be emblematic of Enlightenment, bringing light to dark places, most ethnographies being the verbal form of the museum exhibit, which, no matter how transparent the glass or bright the light, reflects an increasingly opaque display, ever more turned in on itself. (p.157, emphasis in original)

There is a comical aspect lying in wait for those who, at their peril, ignore this mix of impenetrability and everydayness that constitutes the public secret - as when the anthropologist undertakes to reveal the secret of the Big Hut, *yet all along revelation was part of the secret's secret*, part of its secret. (p.162, emphasis in original)

Might it not be, then, that the drama of exposure staged by the missionaries did not destroy the secret, but became instead the raw material for new myths and modernist rituals along the same lines as before? Might not my own writing wriggling itself into being here, be part of just such a ritualization, the ever-repeated final exposure of the secret that in destroying redeems it? (p.216)

Having reproduced some of Taussig's 'curious' conclusions, it is perhaps appropriate to return one more time, however tentatively, to organization theory. This move serves as a vehicle to conduct a cross-reading of *Institution and Interpretation* and *Defacement* as one of the *ephemera* editors suggested.<sup>20</sup> What sets both Taussig and Weber apart from most of the work in organization studies is their *position of enunciation*. When the doxa of our field insists on clear theoretical classifications and gradual generalisations based on careful empirical research, one should bear in mind that this apparently modest position involves a much more immoderate position of enunciation of the organization theorist himself/herself as the observer exempted from the object of his/her study<sup>21</sup>. Taussig is perhaps most forthright about his position when he states:

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19 We borrow the notion of 'curious conclusions' from Weber: "curious not simply because they [conclusions] are odd and unexpected, but because, in a certain sense, they do not conclude. They should not so much satisfy curiosity as suscite it" (2001: 72).

20 Although he admitted the email containing the suggestion was written while in a slightly inebriated state, the advice was gratefully taken on board.

21 Even academics who would see themselves as part of the 'vanguard', can be accused of a certain arrogance when taking issue with traditional modes of theorising and organising (for an elaboration on this, see De Cock, 2001: 163). As Žižek puts it: "When I say, 'the theory (which I am deploying) is just an impotent mental construct, while real life persists outside,' or engage in similar modes of referring to the wealth of pre-theoretical experience, the apparent modesty of such statements harbours the arrogant position of enunciation of the subject who assumes the capacity to compare a theory with 'real life'" (2001c: 15).

So our writing becomes an exercise in life itself at one with life and within life as lived in social affairs, not transcendent or even a means to such, but contiguous with action and reaction in the great chain of storytelling telling the one always before the last.<sup>22</sup> (p.7)

Although Weber is not as explicit, his position of enunciation is also clearly included, inscribed, into the processes he describes. Both authors set themselves further apart from traditional research in organization studies in their *focus on the particular and the exception*. Their way of proceeding can be best described as a direct jump from the singular to the universal, by-passing the mid-level of particularity ('mid-range theories') so dear to organization theorists. The 'enabling limits' that feature so prominently in Weber's project are only revealed "from the perspective of what refuses to fit in, what resists assimilation" (p.252). Understanding and comprehension, while certainly not superfluous, can no longer be considered "supreme categories or absolute values" (p.38). Indeed, both Taussig and Weber encourage us to face up to the irreducible contingency and ambiguity of (social) life:

The challenge, as I see it, is not to indulge an empirically-based skepticism grinding away in its infinitude on yet another disputable or disputing fact, trying to maintain one's balance in so much heady contrariety by clutching at yet another destabilizing observation, but instead to allow oneself to be brought face-to-face and remain within the ambiguity, grasping it hole, so to speak. I am at a loss to put a name to this stance but it must imply location no less than mobility, location within struggle, the struggle with ambiguity itself, which the fact of ambiguity as opposed to the facts that constitute it. (Taussig, 1999: 107)

In taking up this challenge, the very purpose of organization and management theory, that "if we ground our paradigms in organizational reality, OMT will flourish and the management profession will benefit" (Van de Ven, 1999: 123), has to be put into question. Both Weber and Taussig challenge in their own particular way some of the field's most basic assumptions: "building scientific knowledge that better approximates reality", producing "cumulative scientific knowledge", providing "increasingly closer approximations to understanding what Gregory Bateson called 'this buzzing, blooming, confusing world'" (Van de Ven, 1999: 119). When organizational researchers attempt to capture or encapsulate organizational 'reality', they indeed ignore at their peril "this mix of impenetrability and everydayness" (Taussig, 1999: 162), and may find "there was nothing after all" (p.157). The point of 'enabling limits' (Weber, 2001), of 'the labour of the negative' (Taussig, 1999) is to put some NO TRESSPASS signs in the path of

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22 Whilst many organization theorists now fully acknowledge how the fullness of life flow escapes forever the network of language categories ("Thus words, especially in the form of conceptualizations, serve to imprison, immobilize, and injure that which they seek to address," Burrell, 1996: 646), most still see the abyss which separates 'things' from 'words' as something one has to overcome. Yet Hegel, who serves as a source of inspiration for Taussig, "is full of wonder... for this tremendous power that tears apart what 'naturally' belongs together and is thus able to subordinate the very reality of the life process to symbolic 'fictions'; this inversion where fiction subjugates reality rather proves *the inherent ontological nullity of what we call 'reality'*... What we forget, when we pursue our daily life, is that our human universe is nothing but an embodiment of the radically inhuman 'abstract negativity,' of the abyss we experience when we face the 'night of the world.' And what is the *act* if not the moment when the subject who is its bearer suspends the network of symbolic fictions which serve as a support to his daily life and confronts again the radical negativity upon which they are founded?" (Žižek, 2001b: 53-54).

overzealous researchers. Žižek's discussion of Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski's work is pertinent here:

Kieślowski's first move was to fight false representation (the lack of an adequate image of social reality) in Polish cinema through documentaries; then he noticed that, *when you let go of false representation and directly approach reality, you lose reality itself*, so he abandoned documentaries and moved into fiction. (2001c: 121, emphasis in original)

It is precisely because our social/organizational reality is sustained by symbolic fictions that the ultimate achievement of research is NOT to better represent and then explain reality (the "increasingly closer approximations"), but to make us discern the fictional aspect of this reality itself (by circumscribing, hinting at...).<sup>23</sup> It is only when we perceive this reality in all its fragility (e.g. through the process of defacement) that we have a movement from reality to the Real, to what, in reality itself, is "more than reality" (Žižek, 1991). So much for cross-readings and (over)ambitious visions for organization and management theory. Remains for us to finish our review of *Defacement*.

The penultimate chapter, in a symmetrical move, heralds a return to the more fragmentary approach of the first chapter. Whilst dipping into various stories/issues, the focus here is a revealing(!) discussion of the unmasking of the Zapatista subcomandante Marcos, based on newspaper articles/photographs and communiqués.

Everything seems to hinge not on the mask but on unmasking... When the state did the unmasking, the mask became even more of a mask. It spread through society, it became collective ("We are all Marcos"), and the appearance of depth and mystery it created became even deeper. But when the Zapatistas do it to themselves, tearing off the mask becomes like defacing-sport, exercises in metamorphosis and the generation of mana<sup>24</sup>. (p.257)

The final chapter offers, of course, no conclusion. Instead we are treated to some curious autobiographical reflections on Santa ("the cheery fat man is thus one of the great signs whereby gift and secrecy allow the adult's imagination of the child's imagination to sustain the theater of the social world as exchange", p.269) and then the book just ends. Taussig, the author, achieves some personal closure through a clever slight of hand, but the reader remains faced with an incompleteness that is now permanent (there is no more writing to follow). Mission accomplished? Taussig concludes thus:

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23 It is worth pointing out that Weber's and Taussig's respective books do not support the fashionable position that 'everything is discourse'. The current globalisation of discourse seems to have two meanings: there is no limit as to what one can say, *and* there is nothing *outside* discourse, no objective reality, everything appears as the effect of discursive mechanisms. As Žižek suggests: "These two meanings are interdependent: external and internal limits ultimately *coincide*, i.e. the moment one can 'say everything', the moment there is no inherent prohibition to what we can say, the external limit that rates 'words' from 'things' also falls and everything becomes a discourse-effect" (2001c: 190). What both Taussig and Weber take issue with is that the "NO TRESSPASS" is increasingly undermined in a society where there is pressure to 'tell everything', to 'expose all secrets'.

24 Mana is "a term of Melanesian and Polynesian origin that entered early ethnology to convey, as Marcel Mauss put it in 1902-1903, a sort of magical key to magic in general" (Taussig, 1999: 176).

Thus I bring my book to finish, in arch-defacing mode, allowing (my) art to take its revenge on reality through the medium of an autobiographical detail plundered from the adult's imagination of the child's - a sacrilege, no less, that does not expose the secret so much as do justice to it. I hope. Midday: moment of the shortest shadow.<sup>25</sup> (p.271)

And so our review also comes to a close. We are fully aware this is not a conventional review, leaving so very much unsaid and adumbrated, but then *Defacement* and *Institution and Interpretation* are no conventional books. We hope to have revealed some of their content in a way that does justice to them, but no 'pulling it all together' we're afraid. Just a few final borrowed words:

Do you really imagine that all I have to do is to find a formula, a set of words, some phrases strung together – and then you would nod your heads and say: Oh of course, that's it... and everyone would be happy? (Lessing, 1981: 328)

Of course you don't!

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25 The last sentence is a quote from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*, it pops up at various places in the book and also ends the prologue; this repetition introduces an interesting circularity.

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