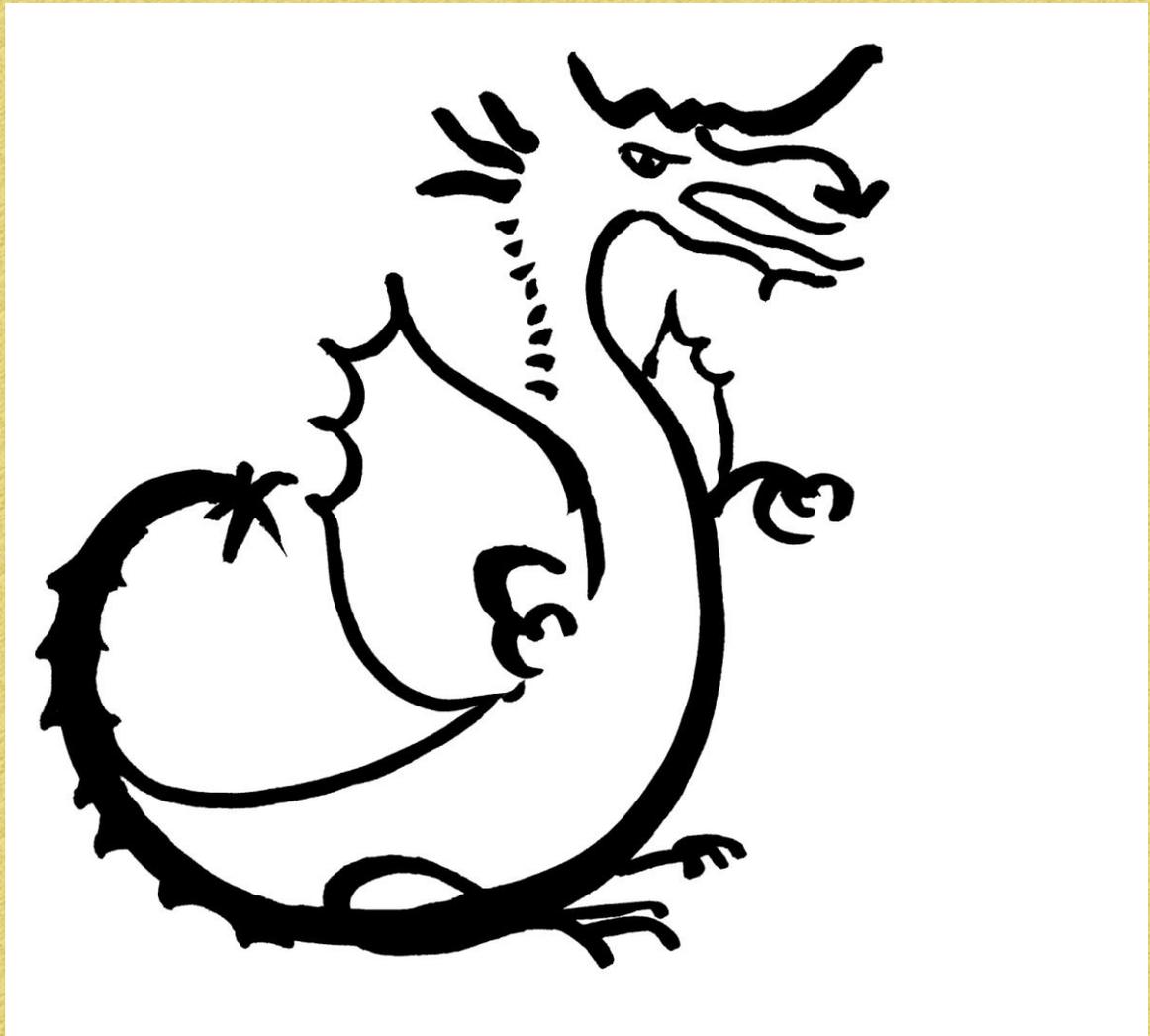


Notework

2013 May issue



2012 Conference organisers:
Hugo Gaggiotti (UK) & Diana Marre (Spain)

2013 Conference organisers:
Beata Glinka, Przemysław Hensel & Ewa Magdalena Filipp (Poland)



Notework News

Editors

First of all, many thanks to **Beatriz Acevedo** and **Anke Strauß** for their fantastic work as Notework Editors until October 2012.

Ilaria Boncori (University of Essex, UK) and **Tom Vine** (University Campus Suffolk, UK) have taken over as Network editors. Please send us your contributions, ideas, photos, announcements, letters, comments, articles and inane ramblings.

Ilaria: iboncori@essex.ac.uk

Tom: t.vine@ucs.ac.uk



Notework is your SCOS newsletter. As well as member news, it can contain conference reports, book reviews and articles. Feel free to send us your contributions during the year. From May 2013 onwards we will only publish one issue per year, which will be in your SCOS conference bags and online via our website.

SCOS Chair's Message

Dear SCOSers,

I hope you are all back from your Catalan adventures in one piece, and that you are finding it easier than me to get back down to work. Hugo and all his team of helpers gave us a wonderful conference which worked like clockwork despite being full of academics possessing varying degrees of what I believe young people call 'competencies' for getting through life. It gave a whole new meaning to Talent Management.

I have been musing since I got back about what it is about SCOS that I love so much. You can get a lot out of other conferences and symposia and workshops, but I don't think any of them are as well loved as SCOS. I think what it comes down to is eccentricity. I love the fact that in these times of high seriousness and rightmindedness SCOS will still put on a picnic in a park with a pop-up Gospel Choir and sing to a massive just about representational dragon. And that the following evening the young folk hiked to the beach. And in the middle of Catalonia we had lunch in a pan-Asian restaurant.

Plus on my own account, I can say to the organiser that three of us, including a medieval historian, thought it would be a good idea to get together and run a mini colloquium about death, and he said, 'Yep, sounds fair enough.' I love the fact that you never know what you will get at SCOS, and that it is one of the few places that you really do get kudos for style. I also love the fact that I can count on stimulating stuff from long-term SCOSSERS, but there is also whole new generation coming into the organization who 'get it' and continue the noble tradition of papers that are 'serious fun'. A standing conference allows us to do this. Year after year people can do excellent conventional work or completely bonkers stuff and we all rub along.

So, Barcelona was a great triumph, and now, along the lines of the King is dead. Long live the King, we have to start thinking about next year in Warsaw. It is a beautiful city, with a wonderful climate and a rich heritage and history. The venue is elegant, interesting, full of stimulating art pieces, and spacious. Beata, Ewa and Przemek are lovely people with a real sense of style (I saw them going out for a night at the opera). The welcome is going to be very warm. So please, when you are thinking about spending your conference dollar next year, think of us first!

Looking forward to seeing you all next year.

Best wishes,

Ann Rippin



The SCOS Board

These are the SCOS Board members for this year. Please get in touch with us before, during or after the Conference.

Chair: Ann Rippin (UK)

Secretary & elections: Lynne Baxter (UK)

Meetings secretary: Thomas Lennerfors (Sweden)

Membership secretary: Harriet Shortt (UK)

Treasurer: Nina Kivinen (Finland)

Notework editors: Ilaria Boncori (UK) and Tom Vine (UK)

Web officer: David Sköld (Sweden)

Journal editors (C&O): Jo Brewis (UK) and Damian O'Doherty (UK), with associate editors René ten Bos (the Netherlands, for Europe), Sarah Dempsey (US, for the Americas), and Janet Sayers (New Zealand, for Australasia, East Asia & Pacific)

Regional representatives: Michaela Benna (Australia); Rowland Curtis (UK); Sarah Dempsey (North America); Meltem Ferendeci Özgödek (Turkey); Hugo Gaggiotti (Spain and Italy); Jean-Luc Moriceau (France); Christian Garmann Johnsen (Nordic countries); Janet Sayers (New Zealand); Nestor Valero-Silva (Latin America); Toshitsugu Takai (Japan); Anthony Yue (North America).

Like us on Facebook!

We use our Facebook page to stay in touch, share photos, remind ourselves of deadlines, advertise what we do and enlarge our SCOS community. Help us reach 1000 members by sharing our page with your friends and colleagues!



Our first memories of SCOS

During the 2012 SCOS Conference in Barcelona we asked you to send us contributions to share with us your SCOS memories, and especially stories of your first SCOS. What makes us coming back? Why is SCOS so special and what does it mean to be 'scosy?'

We hope to be able to build a repository of SCOS memories that cover from the first to the last of our yearly reunions. Thanks for all your contributions, please send us more!

Ann Rippin: My first SCOSes in Calgary and Halifax

I have had two first SCOSes really, the very first one in Calgary and the second, after my long break, in Halifax NS.

I was invited to my first *first* SCOS by Heather Hopfl, a long-time champion of SCOS and everything it stands for and a personal inspiration for me. Everyone was talking about how great the previous year had been in Barcelona and I never did find out what had been quite so special or what the great secret was. I remember going to sessions about narrative and fairy stories in organization studies, hot topics at the time, and thinking that I had found a home. I gave a paper about TQM and the Golden Age, I seem to recall, and I think I could probably blow off the dust and write it again as lean and the Golden Age, the discourse is the same. Which makes me a bit sad. The other legacy of that conference was meeting people like Simon Lilley and Steve Linstead. As I have been known to remark, SCOS is not just for Christmas, it is for life.

My second first SCOS after a break of probably ten years was when I came back into the academy after running my own business for a bit. The venue was Halifax Nova Scotia and it was fantastic. I really loved that conference. The venue was a hotel with a Nelson theme, which meant a massive print of the death of Nelson in the ladies' loo and themed room like the Victory ballroom and the Trafalgar bar. By this time, all sorts of fancy papers about gender and identity were in fashion, and I did a piece on Marks and Spencer and Sleeping Beauty. Again, it was meeting people which sticks in the mind. I met people who are still very significant to me, and for that I have to thank Peter Case who was a wonderful SCOS chair and made everyone very welcome and worked hard to dispel the idea that we are clique-y. I don't think that, but then maybe I am in the clique. Anyway, I went to Halifax as the Membership Secretary of SCOS, which is a great way to get to know lots of people, and I really recommend the post to anyone. But no-one who was at that conference will forget the trip to Canada's equivalent of Ellis Island and David Boje's Boal-inspired theatre piece, or the lobster shack in the woods. The whole conference had that touch of eccentricity which is what I really love about SCOS. Oh, and Halifax itself had a wonderful art shop...

Nicolaj Tofte Brenneche: my first SCOS in Barcelona

I would like to share a short report for the noteworks publication. I am a phd student from CBS the conference in Barcelona was my first SCOS experience. I was first and foremost impressed by the heterogeneity of the group of participants. My own session included a Japanese, a South Korean and a UK based research project. Very interesting to share research ideas and results in such a setting.

I was also surprised that the heterogenous programme did not become too fragmented. I think this was because of the limited number of participants. It was thus easy to get back to individual presenters with ideas or questions that would pop up e.g. the day after a presentation. In this sense I think that SCOS offers a productive fragmentation whereby multiple, incoherent input can be processed, combined and played with. This is probably what I liked most about the conference - the potential for unlikely encounters to take place. This is important in a world where specialization and focus gain power in the organization of science and where the problems science is called upon to address are increasingly systemic and "cross-cutting". SCOS cultivates the generosity of relating to the work of others beyond one's own fields of specialization. This was for me an enriching experience at a personal level and, I believe, an important political and ethical feature of the conference as well.

I look forward to future SCOS encounters and send a warm thanks to the organizers for doing a fantastic job.

Ilaria Boncori: my first SCOS in Istanbul

My colleagues had told me that SCOS was the perfect 'first conference' as one would get really good feedback in a friendly environment. And no, no need for suits and business cards. I nervously submitted my abstract, got accepted, managed to get funding from a non-research department and booked my flight. I was quite excited and mildly terrified of presenting my own work for the first time.

I got to Istanbul (such a beautiful city!) with a small 'gang' of Essex Phd Students and lecturers, which made the mingling feel only slightly less daunting. Tom and Anke introduced me to some friends of theirs and I immediately noticed how unexpectedly informal and friendly everyone seemed to be. I did make a fool of myself by not recognising someone whose work I love and whose books I have on the shelves in my office (not telling who that was!), felt like running away and hiding under a rock, then got over it once I became engulfed in the amazing embrace of warmth and happiness that is Beatriz.

I presented and did get really good feedback, suggestions and ideas on my research, but by that time I had already fallen enamoured of SCOS: the smiles over great food; Tony's lovely 'SCOS baby'; some pretty out there presentations; food for thought; powerful stories stitched across colourful quilts; the methods, ideas and conversations that many of my colleagues at the university wouldn't recognise as 'real or proper academic work', which is what I actually love about research. I was hooked. Now, if there is only *one* conference that I can attend during the year, I make sure it's SCOS.

I returned in 2013 for my second SCOS in Barcelona, this time with no 'gang' but no longer alone and nervous. I was asked to become editor of Notework and became part of the SCOS Board (nicest Board meetings I have ever attended in my life!). I was really looking forward to the 'serious fun' then, and now I can't wait for my annual 'SCOS fix'.

Tom Vine: my first SCOS in Lille

Still a doctoral student at the time (2010), money was tight, so I had booked a bed in a Lille hostel. On arrival, it transpired – strangely – that I spoke more French than the receptionist

did English; I was proud of myself for checking in in a foreign tongue. A good start! I had bought my folding bike with me, and cycled the short distance from the hostel through Lille City Centre to the conference venue, Institut d'administration des entreprises. It was an impressive venue; and made only better by the fabulous weather.

As the conference got underway, I was struck at the breadth, creativity and provocativeness of the papers presented; SCOS was clearly geared towards idea generation rather than formal reportage. There is of course a place for both but on this particular occasion, I was pleased it was the former. In order to engage with the conference theme (vision), my own paper relied to some extent on poetic license. This had been troubling me somewhat in the run up to Lille, but in the cradle of SCOS the paper was well received. Following my session I could relax and even drummed up the confidence to contribute to the scholarly dialogue and debate that followed other presentations. These discussions continued well into the evenings, and – notably – revealed kernels of friendship rather than mere acquaintance. More so than anything else, this is the enduring appeal of SCOS.

Isidora Kourti: My first SCOS in Barcelona

A colleague of mine has attended SCOS several times and she encouraged me to attend it this year. She told what a great experience it is, not only from a research but also from a social perspective. I have to admit that based on other conferences I have attended I was not quite sure about the social part. Yet, I enjoyed the conference very much and I have appreciated both the social and research aspect of it.

To be more specific, researchers from many backgrounds (organisational, psychological, sociological, educational etc.) attended the conference. This meant that during the presentations different viewpoints were presented from the audience providing the presenters with a variety of feedback and enriching their perspective. The multidisciplinary background also offered very interesting and different presentations. Most importantly, the atmosphere was very friendly and this encouraged participants to express opinions and ask questions, something that does not always happen in conferences.

Most importantly, participants developed a sense of community. This encouraged discussions during the breaks and therefore further opportunities for feedback on presentations. Moreover, the formal and informal events were great and allow participants to come closer (for example, by singing all together or going to the beach). As such, SCOS provided a great platform to develop network and enhance knowledge on participants' field of interest while obtaining information on other fields.

I am not sure if this experience was very positive because the conference was organised in Spain, a beautiful city, and the organisers made a great job or because this is always the case with SCOS. In any case, I will definitely attend next year's SCOS too.

Lúcio Bittencourt: My first SCOS in Manchester

Into the room comes a short middle-aged man, wearing his overalls with a long sleeved white shirt with gray stripes. Anxious, he asks for a garden tool to the woman who answered the door; for a while, she's undecided. Promptly annoyed by that sign of insolence of the stranger - trespassing without proper identification and/or permission - the couple, owners of the

household, don't even give him a chance to speak. He tries to introduce himself as a local priest, to no avail; not only he's ordered away with a door slamming behind him, but also the woman who answered the door is firmly reprehended by the couple as soon as they get rid of that unfortunate happening. One shall, at all times, identify strangers before allowing them in; she should not trust anyone nowadays nor believe in anything people say. Short after this lecture finishes, the doorbell rings. A short middle-aged man wearing a long black priest robe: now do you believe me? Come in father, please, the couple begs; they ask for forgiveness while the priest appears to be very comprehensive. Sitting on a comfortable sofa by the living room, the priest asks to be the mansion's gardener: to take care of the grass, flowers and vegetables outside that distinguished couple's home. He should be paid, of course; not a penny more nor less than what is recommended by the syndicate. To what his proposal is positively accepted, with all due respect and deference.

This provocative scene from Luis Buñuel's *The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie* could be easily addressed as a metaphor for many everyday socialization in organizations – stores, government offices, laboratories, parks, bakeries, universities. Everyday life presents us with way too many people complaining about or adoring "the way you look tonight" in many senses. And that can be quite discouraging.

Once I was a master program candidate attending a post-graduate class. After some meetings as a listener, I became a talker. It could be tricky, but it wasn't; while sharing my research interests with the professor, I was recommended to take a look at a particular call for papers regarding a conference in Manchester, 2008, that had a theme that very much intrigued me: the city. Specially for drawing attention to the role played by stories and myths in (re)organizing and (re)building the city. It was an organizational studies group conference; would they be interested in a public policy approach? You'll like it, so I was told; they are very open to many different subjects, objects, approaches, analysis – ... quite particular.

Back then I was absolutely in love with Buñuel's pictures and that call for papers intrigued me about the possibility to relate one of his master pieces to the research I was beginning to develop. Just like those insights that one is not sure if one should share it with others or not, wondering if it would seem interesting enough to somebody else or if it is actually solid enough for scientific matters. At the time it seemed to me like a long shot, but SCOS took me in.

SCOS Manchester '08 was my real first international conference abroad. Although very excited, one never knows exactly what to expect in situations like these: should I go as a priest? Or maybe a gardener? Young people can be very insecure, you know. Uncertainty pushed me to the balcony, waiting for my pint. Let's talk to this young man over here, someone said: tell us who you are and how come nobody knows you here? And that is how I got introduced to the SCOS community.

SCOS proved to mean much more to me than originally promised by the ones who recommended it. The studies presented enjoy the freedom provided by the intention to recognize and dialogue with symbolic aspects of organizations, crafting an extremely rich academic space: to read and hear reflections started by the work of Augusto Boal, Ítalo Calvino; music, poetry, stories or even the everyday life in the city; all coming together in attempts to read and interpret organizing.

In the meantime, openness. Riding the bus, walking around town, having a meal, a drink or chatting over gala dinner. Due to the researchers, their works, their generous suggestions

and reflections, the route I was endeavoring in the researches I had just commenced slowly started to translate during the following months, along with my own understanding of our role as researchers. And this is how I recall SCOS: that precious place of possibilities in the midst of academic routine.

Albert Mills: My first SCOS in Calgary

I was first encouraged in the late 1980s by Linda Smircich who raved about the SCOS experience. It took me about 6 more years but I finally submitted a paper to the Calgary SCOS in 1994. I was in a tremendous session with Jo Brewis and Howard Schwarz. The session was fun and electric. The sparks flew at the end in reaction to what was seen as Howard's highly problematic psychoanalytic characterizations of Linda Smircich and Marta Calas. This received an angry reception from some audience members, with swearing and shouting. Welcome to SCOS! In fact, as I had already worked out, this was an unusual SCOS reaction. My overall impression was that I had found a place where I felt both comfortable and inspired. I really loved the idea of a theme that served as a metaphor for exploring organization from a totally different place. I think the theme was exploring or organizing the past. I was hooked and went on to experience empty spaces (Warsaw, 1999), premodern legacies (Athens, 2000), violence (Dublin, 2001), organizational wellness (Cambridge, 2003), sensation (Halifax, 2004) and many others. I had the great pleasure of co-organizing (with Jean Helms Mills) the 2004 SCOS and have had at least one paper presented at every SCOS conference since 1994.

More contributions



Peter case: "Adios Catalonia: some flying Notework"¹

"I hate flying. Don't you? It's the fear I think. I don't want to end up like so much hamburger on the runway."

Meating

Blair lent over from the window seat intending to make polite conversation with an adjacent passenger. There was one unoccupied seat between them. With trained curiosity, he'd been noticing her behaviour: the choice of newspaper - *Telegraph*; declining to eat; travelling with two children (opposite aisle), one, a girl, maybe seven or eight the other a boy of twelve, both reading comics. She looked tired and a little sad. Elegant facial features. Late thirties, perhaps early forties. Darkening shadows beneath her sullen eyes. Straight shoulder length blonde hair - probably dyed - severely cut. Charcoal blue trouser suit, expensively cut. Two heavy gold rings, one on middle finger of right hand, the other on smallest finger of left.

She caught his movement and lent towards him. Above the quiet roar of the engines Blair said, "I've not heard the news lately. I gather the Americans have bombed Baghdad with cruise missiles but it's not mentioned in any of the papers." Her quizzical look led him to repeat himself.

"Ah yes," she said after a pause for comprehension. "But that was on Sunday. It was Clinton's retaliation for the Iraqi threat on Bush's life."

"Conventional warheads?"

"Twenty-three tomahawks. But that was on Sunday. You must really have been out of things?" She was clearly a native English speaker but there was something not quite right. Blair supposed she lived in Spain - probably married to a Spaniard - and a little out of practice perhaps.

"I've been at a conference, near Montserrat. It was all a bit intense and none of us had much access to newspapers. Someone caught a fragment of satellite TV news and scared the life out of us when he mentioned 'cruise missiles' and 'threatened declaration of war', we thought it might be the beginning of World War Three or something."

"No. Not that serious. Just a retaliation... It's ridiculous that Clinton's let things go this far. At least Reagan and Bush were strong leaders. They would have done something about it before it got this far."

Blair was uncomfortable with the tenor of the conversation so changed the subject.

"Why are you travelling to Britain?" He asked.

"My father's unwell. I usually try to visit a couple of times a year, but they've just hospitalised him so I've made a special effort."

¹ This anecdote is something of a personal footnote to the 11th SCOS in Barcelona. I have documented an in-flight interaction that occurred on Thursday 1st July 1993 in an appropriately ambiguous space somewhere over Europe. My thanks to Robert Grafton-Small for encouraging me to write this field note.

"What's the problem?"

"Cancer."

"Prostate Cancer?"

"No, it's stomach cancer - he's had it for some years - but now there's a metastasis on the bladder."

"Are the metastases spreading to the lymph glands, or what?"

"No, there's just one large growth... Are you in the medical profession?"

"No, no. My father has prostate cancer and the metastases have spread to the lower back bones, so I know something of the oncology. Besides, my wife's a biologist so we talk about these things."

"I was a radiologist in Britain for eight years before I moved to Spain. My Spanish husband-to-be was a houseman in the same hospital." Blair was nodding with polite interest.

"So where is your father?" He asked.

"My family lives in Gloucester... I don't much like going home these days. England frightens me. I don't feel safe anymore. Everywhere you go there are Blacks and Asians. Even in the South. It's not like when I was a girl and things have got much worse even since I left thirteen years ago. You know, you can't even go to a corner shop without it being owned by an Asian family, even in Gloucester. It's horrible. And all the homeless people. It's not safe to walk the streets or use the trains. London's always been like that. I used to use the tube to get to work and you know what to expect, but now it's on all the trains. Last year I was travelling home and two Black youths came to sit next to me. They put their feet up on the seat right next to me. No respect for someone's space. I mean I didn't say anything, of course. You never know what they might have done if I'd made a fuss."

Suddenly checking herself, she asked.

"Your wife isn't Black or Asian I suppose. I sometimes forget myself. I know that some white people do marry..."

"No," Blair interjected, sensing the embarrassment, "my wife is not Black or Asian."

Evidently reassured that she was in sympathetic company, she continued.

"... Things are getting so much worse. The way the working classes dress these days. You know. You go to one of these shopping malls and you're met with mothers dressed slovenly in tracksuits, pushing their trolleys and accompanied with screaming children who they hit brutally from time to time. They're so untidy and brutish. At least a few years ago the working classes had their Sunday best and were well turned out when you saw them. Everything is becoming so Americanised."

The vitriol seemed to accelerate.

"I'm embarrassed to say I'm English these days. What do I say to my friends when they read about assaults on elderly people. Last week I read about a woman of eighty being raped. Eighty! What can you say to your friends? Surely they're animals who violate a person of that age. And my children want to study in Britain. I don't know that I want them to."

Blair listened intently.

"And if they don't study in Britain, they want to go to the States. That prospect thrills me even less. The way the Americans drawl on and on. I'm frightened they'll come back with an awful drawl themselves."

"Are they at private school in Spain?" Blair enquired.

"They were at a private Catholic school but there was too much pressure from the Opus Dei, you know the Catholic fundamentalists (?), so we moved them to something equivalent to an English 'direct grant' school. The standards are very high; much higher than in Britain. If we stay in England for any length of time and they attend an English school, they're always well ahead of the children their own age."

"I suppose they're bilingual?"

"Trilingual. They speak English to me. Classes are in Catalan. They learn Spanish as a second language in school and speak Spanish to their father, who's Spanish... Maybe it would be good for them to study abroad. It would give them some independence. Annabel has her heart set on being a vet, so we're thinking of Cambridge. And Stephen wants to be a surgeon, like his father. It's just

that England is on such a downward slide. I don't know if it's the right place to study. Still, the decision's a few years off yet ... What do you make of John Major?"

Blair did not reply.

"He comes over as such a wimp, don't you think? I gather they're grooming Kenneth Clarke for succession. He seems much more impressive whenever I've seen him. Why didn't Mrs Thatcher bring down Major when she had the chance? She and the Euro-rebels had him on the ropes, didn't they, then at the last moment she turns round and supports him."

"I think she probably realised that if she continued to criticise him, the government would have capitulated and there would have been a General Election, which they'd have lost," Blair commented.

"You think they would have lost?"

"Almost certainly. Labour have a twenty-four point lead and Major is the most unpopular prime minister in polling history. They would have lost power..." She interrupted before he had a chance to complete the observation.

"The trouble with Europe these days is that there are just no decent dictators left. What we need is strong leadership and no one's providing it. We've suffered badly in Spain since Franco [Supreme Chief, responsible only before God and History] died and the socialists took over. We pay far too much in taxes - sixty percent in the top range! And gone are the days when you could get servants for two pesetas a day. We used to pay them next to nothing. They were happy to live in and you could afford five or more with ease. And the working classes are no better off under socialism. I go riding most days and see the peasants in the villages. Nothing's changed for them. You see the women spending their whole day at the washing stone, you know, pounding the clothes, poor things. Still, it's not as bad as in Britain. I mean, in the country, you can still go riding or walk the streets without fear of attack.

"With any luck the socialists won't be able to hold out for much longer anyway," she continued with increasing optimism in her voice. "As it stands they have to forge a coalition government. But it won't last out the year and next time we should get in again. I can't wait. It's embarrassing having that man G. representing us. The man looks just like a gypsy. Scruffy, and he can't speak any foreign languages. What an embarrassment."

The conversation turned to Blair's life. She asked about the 'congress' he had just attended in Montserrat and enquired of his wife's occupation. Blair reveals, pointedly, that his wife is American.

"Oh really. What sort of accent does she have?"

"She has lost her American accent. We've lived in England for seven years now and it has all but disappeared." Blair had a strong sense of subtext in the direct question to the effect that it would be difficult to live with an interlocutor possessing such a 'horrid drawl.'

There followed talk of legal residency and the fact that upon marriage Blair's wife was granted working rights and after four years of marriage acquired permanent resident status regardless of divorce or his death.

"She didn't want to change nationality?"

"No. She wanted to remain an American citizen. We may want to return to the States some day. Her citizenship will give us access." Blair's response appeared to appeal to the logic of her calculating intelligence. It made expedient sense. "Are you a Spanish national?" He asked.

"Yes, I changed nationality shortly after moving to Spain with my first husband. Not that I needed to. There's lots of protection for immigrant workers and females now under the socialists. The socialists have given too much protection to females, in fact, and the cards are really stacked against men now. I'm about to be divorced. I'm divorcing *him*. It's unnatural to be monogamous, don't you think?"

She looked at Blair directly as she delivered the lines. He felt distinctly disturbed by an undisclosed implication and quickly filled the unsettling silence.

Homage²

She got up and came towards him in what struck Blair as a very unconcerned manner; then she put an arm round his neck and, with a sweet smile for the benefit of the other people in the lounge, hissed in his ear:

"Get *out!*"

"What?"

"Get out of here *at once!*"

"What?"

"Don't keep standing here! You must get outside quickly!"

"What? Why? What do you mean?"

She had Blair by the arm and was already leading him towards the stairs. Half-way down they met a Frenchman ... though he had no connection with the P.O.U.M. [*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*] he had been a good friend to them all during the trouble. He looked at Blair with a concerned face.

"Listen! ... Get out quickly and hide yourself before they ring up the police." ...

"What the devil is all this about?" Blair said ...

"Haven't you *heard?*"

"No. Heard what? I've heard nothing."

"The P.O.U.M.'s been suppressed. They've seized all the buildings. Practically everyone's in prison. And they say they're shooting people already."

² Adapted from Orwell (1951, pp.219-220)

Carnage

The aircraft had begun its decent into Heathrow airport. After a short pause. She said, "I hate flying. Don't you? It's the fear I think. I don't want to end up like so much hamburger on the runway."

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Rowland Curtis: "UK Rep Report: 'Absent Presence'"



One of the most high-profile news items relating to universities in the UK in the last 12 months has been the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) decision to revoke London Metropolitan University's license to accept students from outside the European Union [at time of writing]. What the UKBA have done in practice is to withdraw London Met's 'Highly Trusted Sponsor' status; a conditional license, dependent upon institutions being seen to have taken reasonable steps to prevent the UK higher education system being used by people who are perceived to want to work and/or live illegally in the UK. This has taken place in the context of the policy of the current Conservative UK government to reduce net immigration by 100,000 people by the end of their term in parliament. In addition to criticism of the action by lecturer's unions and university advocacy groups, the UKBA decision has, at least in part, been successfully challenged by London Met in the UK High Court, pending the results of a

judicial review. The result is that, for the time being more than 1,000 of the 2,000 affected students that are deemed to have their papers in order have been allowed to start their courses this September. While this has been a high-profile case in the UK media, university participation in measures to try to control and regulate the flow of immigration from outside EU borders is not an entirely new thing. The conditional licensing of UK universities is a significant development however, and it is notable that many institutions are now employing dedicated compliance officers as part of their central administration staff.

As well as proper checks of documentation, one of the main obligations of universities being promoted under this new regime is the monitoring of student attendance. Recently introduced by some of the more proactive institutions is the use of portable electronic scanners to monitor student attendance [as pictured]. As a digitalised alternative to more familiar paper registers, these handheld scanners are intended to scan student ID cards at the start of each seminar (and possibly lectures), producing data to be centrally collated and monitored for the early identification of 'problem' cases. Many amongst teaching staff have been alarmed by this extension of UKBA surveillance into the academic seminar room, and union branches have begun to introduce motions against the use of scanners until reassurance has been gained that such data will not be used for purposes beyond pastoral care.

Beyond some of questions here about the relationship between State and university, immigration and asylum policy – not to mention current extreme tensions and contradictions in the integrity of the EU and its borders - these recent controversies have also brought back to mind some of the pedagogic questions regarding the keeping of registers that have arisen in my own teaching experience. The ticking of a box (or the scanning of a barcode) has always seemed to me to be an extremely impoverished approach to questions of student participation. With the register system in place, and with compulsory attendance an accepted norm for most UK undergraduates, the experience of teaching a room full of largely disengaged first or second year students, administratively in attendance but often more on the absent side in terms of involvement or participation, is one that may be familiar to many academic faculty.

One of the challenges I have found in my own teaching experience in convening a philosophically-oriented final year module is that the major challenge is in coaxing students into the habits of self-directed learning, independent study, as well as helping develop a tolerance for open-ended questions. This presents significant challenges for many UK-based students, whose prior years of university education - and many more prior years of school and college education – is increasingly characterised by structured, bullet pointed material, oriented to rote learning and examination. When it comes to the kind of maturity that is demanded in discursive seminar formats typical of the humanities, attendance registers have proved problematic in tending to return students to the mindsets of school or even early childhood: of teacher-pupil, or child-parent relationships of authority, where attendance and conformity is required as a matter of obligation – and serving as a barrier to what we might describe as the more intrinsic motivations of students.

With regard to the kind of administrative logics that seek to confirm student participation through the ticking of boxes or the scanning of barcodes, a certain tone is set with regard to

student participation that is arguably counter-productive to the very excellence in teaching and learning that UK universities claim to be striving towards. In what has been described as a consumer model of higher education currently taking hold in the UK and beyond, such attendance registers can also be seen to play into the misguided notion that having paid one's inflated student fees (or more likely, to have taken on a corresponding debt burden) one need only turn up and have the boxes ticked to have fulfilled one's own side of the contractual bargain, so to speak; to have purchased an education. (We might describe this a gloss over the gap between teaching and learning – a gap that tends to be bridged with an ampersand in university policy documentation). Instead of technologically enhanced attendance registration, perhaps it is that we might achieve a more involved participation and a richer 'student experience' by giving chance within the space of the curriculum to a vital and timely questioning - for both students and lecturers - of the potential value and purpose of our collective attendance in higher education - beyond the value-added passport stamps of institutional administration.

Hope you enjoy the 2013 Conference in Warsaw!

Ilaria and Tom