

# Museletter of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism



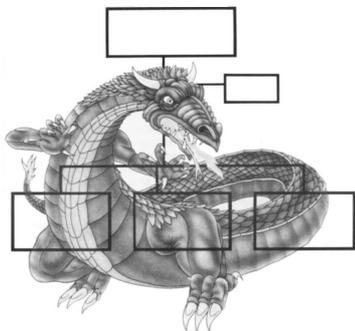
## *Notework*

November 2008

*SCOS is an international and interdisciplinary network of academics and practitioners interested in organizational symbolism, culture and change. The SCOS philosophy of 'serious fun' is articulated throughout the network's activities, particularly in the encouraging of unusual and groundbreaking ideas in the analysis of organizing and organization. We are committed to providing a forum for research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries, and a reflective space for the development of new forms and new voices for this work.*

Visit: <http://www.scos.org> for further details or  
Email: [smatil@essex.ac.uk](mailto:smatil@essex.ac.uk) to join

# From 'The City' towards 'The Bridge'



'Turn, turn, turn, turn, turn, turn, turn....turn, turn, turn, turn, tuurrrrrrr': so said *Travis* on *The Man Who*, just as the previous millennium was drawing to its much anticipated close. A slight metaphorical over-aggrandization (save that, over-utterance) of the turn in question, perhaps, although not necessarily an over-aggrandization of turning as such.

From the turning of the other cheek in *The Sermon on the Mount*, through to just so many notions of turning implied by just so many revolutions, right on to Margaret Thatcher's notorious u-turn speech, and beyond, turning has often been recounted with an air of profound significance. The frequency of turning reminds us, as if we ever needed reminding, that history's development does not occur along a straight line, that historical development is frequently disjointed.

So in a time of widely heralded Financial Crisis (crisis, as with critic, coming from the Greek *krinēin*, which can also mean turning point), such as our own, what is it that we are to now turn towards? Where are we to go?

It seems uncannily clairvoyant for the SCOS contingent to have chosen *this* moment in history as the moment in which it might make a turn away from 'the city' and towards 'the bridge'. For if it is the case that the contemporary city stands at the root of many of our contemporary problems, then there is surely something quite apt in our having chosen this particular moment as the moment to leave it behind. And similarly, if we are now in the process of crossing over to a brave new era, surely we will require something that will guarantee our movements within these uncertain times, something that will keep us and stormy turbulence apart, at least for now.

So we left 'the city' behind because it has become so difficult to preserve faith in it. And we turned towards 'the bridge' because we envisioned uncertain times ahead and therefore the necessity of something to connect us to them. Otherwise, recall that before planning this turn from 'the city' to 'the bridge', we had come together to discuss 'the future'. Maybe there's something we learned then that we are only starting to realise now! Perhaps the SCOS conference planning mechanism might guarantee its financial security by opening a side-project in reading tarot cards and writing horoscopes. Credit card details to the editors in the first instance!

We should say in passing that we too have been hit hard of late, having recently had our staff reduced to a skeleton of its former self. How can we possibly produce anything of merit with only five assistants and four tea servers? Impossible we hear you say! Almost, though not entirely.

Thankfully, as always, our contributors have not suffered the creative void we are presently exhibiting here! So the good stuff starts with Jo's **Notes from the Chair** and continues with the call for papers for **SCOS 2009**. Sam's **minutes** for the Manchester 2007 and Lille 2008 board meetings then portray those discussions in condensed, highlighted form.

**The Musery**, has no less than four contributions: a **poem**, from our resident words-smith Robert Grafton Small, a **short story**, from anonymous, an **art review** (Francis Bacon at the Tate), by Beatriz Acevedo, and some **reflections** on a recent union protest, from Daniel King. We then have our **regional reports** from SCOS reps around the world before turning towards Zoë's latest instance of punching above all our weights with the latest delivery of a 10lb baby's worth of magic with **Tales from the Field**. As usual, we close with **calls and announcements**.

Please remember to send us your ruminations, calls and miscellany for the next edition. We are simply your mouthpiece.

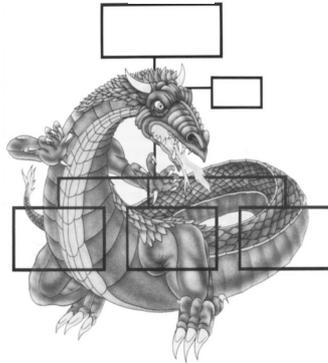
And don't forget to wrap up well!

Stephen and Sheena

## In this issue...

SCOS – who are we?	3
Notes from the Chair	4
SCOS 2009 CFP	5
Board Meeting Minutes	7
The Musery	9
SCOS regional reports	21
Tales from the Field	28
Calls & Announcements	29

# SCOS: the Standing Conference on Organization and Symbolism (oo-r-ya?)



## **We are...**

...an international and interdisciplinary network of academics and practitioners interested in organizational symbolism, culture and change. Formed in 1981 as an autonomous working group of the European Group for Organisation Studies, SCOS has grown to become a global research network comprising of hundreds of members.

## ***Philosophy: scosophilia***

The SCOS philosophy of 'serious fun' is articulated throughout the network's activities, particularly in the encouraging of unusual and groundbreaking ideas in the analysis of organizing and organization. Since its formation, SCOS has run annual international conferences and regular workshops, producing both critical debate and a considerable output of original scholarship. SCOS has always been committed to a critical approach to qualitative research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries as well as to reflection on the forms and voices that this work takes.

## ***Research***

*Moving into its fourth decade, the SCOS network continues to develop innovative views of organization and management, taking inspiration from a variety of different fields and disciplines. SCOS has always been committed to providing a forum for research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries, and a reflective space for the development of new forms and new voices for this work. The SCOS Network also aims to produce and develop theoretically and practically innovative views of organization and management and seeks to:*

- encourage and foster new approaches in the study of culture and symbolism of everyday life in organizations
- provoke discussion of marginalised perspectives on the understanding of organized life
- provide an arena where the boundaries of conventional thinking about organized life can be challenged and blurred
- sustain continuity and development in this fast-growing field of study
- enable the continued exchange of information and the development of community amongst a highly dispersed group of researchers, scholars and practitioners

## *Notes from the Chair*

Greetings once again, Constant Reader. Chair Lady here. That's Chair with an 'i', just in case of any confusion. No giggling at the back please. Now safely at home after my Antipodean sojourn, and embroiled in a Christmas term packed full of teaching, I wanted to begin these Notes by saying a huge thank you to Damian O'Doherty and the team at the University of Manchester, Hulme Hall, the Contact Theatre and the Whitworth Art Gallery for an excellent conference in Manchester this summer. So excellent in fact that I had to have a fairly long lie down on a friend's sofa in order to equip me for the two hour drive home to Nottingham afterwards. I will resist boring you with my personal highlights (including a lovely paper on gambling and another one on metal theft<sup>1</sup>, plus Ann Rippin's fabulous vernissage 'Me and Mr Thornton' at the gala dinner): suffice it only to say that we had a wonderful time both intellectually and socially, in true SCOS fashion, and if you missed it then I am very much afraid that you missed out. I do wonder though if I might lodge a personal plea with Annette Risberg, Peter Elsmore and Dave Crowther, our genial hosts for 2009, to put big stickers on the conference bags saying Please Consume SCOS Responsibly. Ahem.

Anyway, on the subject of 2009, please see the call for papers in this issue of *Notework*, if you haven't already received it, as well as at <http://www.scos.org/2009/>. Our theme is 'The bridge: connection, separation, organization' and abstracts are due by 6.12.08 to [scos2009@gmail.com](mailto:scos2009@gmail.com). Fingers to keyboard ... ready, set, go ... We will be visiting Copenhagen, one of our venues (the other is Malmö, across the Øresundsbron bridge), for the board meeting towards the end of November, where amongst other things we will decide whether I get the clothing allowance I mentioned in my last set of Notes or whether instead we should spend our surplus resources on frivolities like doctoral bursaries for conferences, SCOS sponsorship of academic events and so on.

We should also have some news about our venue and possible theme for SCOS 2011 following this meeting. As reported last time, we are now definitely descending en masse on Lille in July 2010, and the call for this conference (the theme of which is Vision) will be launched in Copenhagen. Boardites have had a sneak preview and it looks amazing even in draft format, so thanks very much to Sam Warren and Bea Acevedo-Robbins for all their hard work so far. I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome two new members to the Board; Kat Riach and Sumohon Matilal, both of the University of Essex. Kat is our new Meetings Secretary and Sumo has taken over as Membership Secretary. A very fond and ever-so-slightly tearful farewell also to Ann Rippin, who has stepped down from the latter role and whose good humour, wisdom and efficiency will be much missed by us all.

Apart from all of that, I do remember that I promised you a rip-roaring account of my flip-flop collection last time round as well as some discussion of Sam from *ER* and her wise decision to go brunette. Both of these are unfortunately still works-in-progress, as is my tour de force analysis of why I want to meet Josh from *The West Wing* in real life. Still, whatever format the UK Research Assessment Exercise appears in next time round, I'll be ready for them.

May the road rise with you,

Jo

---

<sup>1</sup> In the spirit of Stephen and Sheena's Mancunian-musical introduction to the last *Notework*, I would however like to add that I am very proud of myself for managing to get some lyrics from the Smiths' song 'Vicar in a Tutu' into a question to Luke Bennett, who presented this paper. Altogether now, 'I was minding my business/ Lifting some lead off/ The roof of the Holy Name church ...'. I am also grateful to Luke for not calling Hulme Hall security to get the madwoman thrown out.

# SCOS 2009

## The bridge: connection, separation, organization

27th Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism

Venue: Copenhagen and Malmö

Dates: 8th-11th July, 2009

The symbol of the bridge has a long and complex genealogy in European social theory and serves as a powerful metaphor in organization studies. Georg Simmel's essay 'Bridge and Door' is at least one obvious reference here, with its observation that "the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and can not connect without separating". This makes the bridge almost ubiquitous in social relations – either in terms of its presence or absence. Simmel goes on to conclude that we must "first conceive intellectually of the merely indifferent existence of the two river banks as something separated in order to connect them by means of a bridge". These themes of connection and separation also take us further back, to Hegel's Platonic discussion of the human condition as predicated on discontinuity, on a lack of otherness, an *absence* of connection and a fundamental separation from each other. Consciousness, for Hegel, means identifying as *one* self (oneself) and not an *other* (another). A similar trajectory of course can be found in the many variants of psychoanalysis and their emphasis on both connection with and separation from those around us as crucial aspects of early psychological development.

The physical structure of the bridge also functions as a potent historical and cultural icon. Think for example of Livy's account of Horatius' defence of the pontis sublicius at the gateway to Rome; or the painting of the Forth Road Bridge, which in British culture is a more modern metaphor for an unending task than the myth of Sisyphus; or the destruction and subsequent rebuilding of the Old Bridge at Mostar, for which the city is named. Relatedly, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, London Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge, inter alia, all operate as visual proxies in popular culture and a variety of commercial media for their respective cities. And bridges inspire – paintings by Canaletto, Monet, Pissarro, Turner and Van Gogh, songs by Simon and Garfunkel, Bobbie Gentry and the Kinks, Christo's wrapping of the Pont Neuf, a myriad of creative writing and film ... and this call for papers. At our two-centre 27th SCOS conference, during which we will travel across the 17 kilometre long *Øresundsbron* connecting Denmark and Sweden, we invite you to consider the bridge in the context of organization studies.

Organizations themselves – of whatever sort - are of course based on connectivity and separation, on the *inter* and the *intra*, and their diametric opposites. And organizational scholars, both 'mainstream' and 'critical', have reflected on a wide variety of issues which pertain to these themes. Thus there are well developed and longstanding literatures on culture, conflict, teamwork, competition, identity, diversity, inter-organizational partnerships (of whatever kind) and so on. For SCOS 27 we therefore encourage innovative and novel perspectives on such topics which do simply not rehearse established wisdom. Bridging is, moreover, absolutely central to the SCOS ethos of encouraging interdisciplinarity in an international environment. So we are, as ever, interested in papers about any aspect of organizations and organizing which connect together different knowledges and realities, different disciplines, different geographies, different cultures, academe and practice, 'mainstream' and 'critical' and so on. But the number of associations attached to bridges and bridging are limitless – thus the potential themes below are limited only by your (and our) imaginations:

- (Inter)disciplinarity in organization studies
- Critique and collaboration in organization studies
- Construction and deconstruction in/ of organization studies

- Global organizations as sources of international connection and separation: WTO, World Bank, IMF, United Nations
- Bridging as boundary maintenance, bridging as blurring, in and between organizations
- The bridge in finance: capital, impermanency and the interim
- The bridge in higher education: fast tracking and 'year zero' programmes
- The bridge in music: a contrasting section of melody or words prefacing the repetition of the chorus
- Links and hyperlinks in organizational cyberspace
- The allegorical bridge: as masculine icon, as feminine icon, as spiritual icon, as icon of modernity
- Organizing relocation: managing and experiencing expat careers
- The bridge as temporal connection between present and future: strategy, vision and mission
- Organizational arrivals and departures: hiring, induction, firing, 'outplacement', redundancy, turnover, retirement
- Organizational connections and separations: sameness, difference/ diversity, identity, culture, teamwork, etcetera
- Mending intra-organizational bridges: conflict, its resolution and/ or persistence
- Inter-organizational bridges: joint ventures, strategic alliances, mergers and acquisitions, public-private partnerships

As always, alternative interpretations of the theme are both invited and encouraged. SCOS 2009 will also have an open stream, allowing for the presentation of papers of more general interest to the SCOS community. In addition we welcome suggestions for workshops or similar events in line with the proposed theme. Outlines of workshops should be the same length as a paper abstract and should give an indication of the resources needed, the number of participants, the time required, the approach to be taken and the session's objectives. Please identify 'open stream' or 'workshop' on your abstract as appropriate.

\* \* \*

Venue: The conference will be hosted primarily by Copenhagen Business School with assistance from the Department of Urban Studies, Malmö University. In keeping with the bridge theme, we will bridge two different countries. Train tickets will be provided for travel between the two venues, as will some time.

Organization: The main organizers are Annette Risberg (Copenhagen Business School, Denmark), Peter Elsmore (London South Bank University, UK), and David Crowther (De Montfort University, UK). Support is provided by Copenhagen Business School, Malmö University and various other sponsors.

Please visit the conference webpage [www.scos.org/2009](http://www.scos.org/2009) for more information.

Abstracts: Abstracts of no more than 500 words, in Word format, should be submitted as e-mail attachments by Friday December 6th 2008 to: [scos2009@gmail.com](mailto:scos2009@gmail.com) You may also direct any queries to this address.

# Musings of a Board Secretary....

## Manchester 07 minutes agreed at Lille board meeting, May 08

A fairly small SCOS board met in a rainy Manchester on Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup> 2007 and here is a summary of what went on... It was no ordinary meeting however, for this was Jo Brewis's first board meeting as Chair and the board began by thanking Peter Case for his sterling efforts on SCOS's behalf as outgoing chair.

After the usual formalities, Peter C, Annette, Jo, Saara, Rowland, Damian, Sam, Sheena, Peter E and Nina (in particular order!) heard the first of the conference reports – in absentia from Campbell Jones on behalf of the Leicester organizing committee. He was pleased to report that the financial side of what was a very successful conference had now been finalised and in true evaluative spirit of the Learning Organization that we are, conversation turned to the possibility of formalising 'post conference reflection'. Damian agreed to give this a go after the forthcoming Manchester conference in July 2008 with a view to publishing a piece in C&O, as EGOS do in Organization Studies. An interesting idea we hope you will agree.

Damian went on to report that the arrangements for Manchester 2008 were going well, with the fee and registration details now agreed. Annette and Peter followed with preliminary details of the Copenhagen & Malmo 2009 event, and Sam (that's me with my

conference organizers hat on) proposed to organise SCOS 2010. Unfortunately, it was not going to be possible to hold the 2010 SCOS in Italy, but Peter E tabled Lille as a possible venue. The board agreed to hold their next meeting in Lille to check this out. Peter Case reported he had not heard any more on the proposal for 2011 that had been tentatively suggested and it was agreed he should follow this up with Saara. Saara, our diligent treasurer then presented the accounts and confirmed that the signatories on the account were being changed to reflect the change of Chair.

The possibility of formalising SCOS as a legally recognised entity was again discussed – since it is not at all clear how far SCOS board members and conference organisers are personally liable for any SCOSsy problems. This led to a productive discussion on how best to finance, develop and invest to secure the future of SCOS (see, we do deep and meaningful too!).

Ann reported as Membership Secretary that the membership still continues to grow at a healthy level and it was decided to do *just one last sweep* for Cambridge delegates who had not received their subs to C&O (yes that old chestnut for those of you following the saga!) Sam (that's me with my election officer's hat on) clarified the consultation process by which Jo had been elected Chair for the newer members of the board and she also tabled Peter P's request to serve as Germany rep for a further 3 years which the board gladly accepted.

It was also noted that Ann wished to stand down from her post as Membership secretary in Jul 2008 and Brenton Faber, our new North American rep was proposed and

agreed by the board. So all change at your SCOS exec HQ!

The regional reps present, Rowland and Nina then gave their reports including one from Beatriz Acevedo, our Latin American rep, who was currently in Colombia drumming up delegates for the Manchester conference. Sheena and Stephen then updated us all on goings on at *Notework*, unveiling plans to encourage engagement with controversial issues important to the membership. The board thanked them both for their enthusiasm and commitment since taking over.

Peter Case gave his first report as C&O editor and explained that he and Heather would be in charge of editing the special issue from the Ljubljana conference. Bob Westwood has now resigned from the SCOS board and it was proposed that Simon Lilley be invited to take his place. Given the change of personnel, Peter agreed to redraft the C&O policies and bring them for ratification to the next meeting.

The meeting closed by formally welcoming Jo Brewis as the new chair of SCOS and confirming the date of the next meeting as May 2008 in Lille, before retiring for dinner at the forthcoming conference gala dinner venue. Well we have to have some perks!

## Lille 08 Minutes

Situated a stone's throw from Lille's atmospheric old town, Peter P, Annette, Damian, Nina, Peter E, David C, Jo, Ann, Sam and Dominique Besson and Xavier LeCocq (from IAE Lille) were in France to suss it out for a potential 2010 conference venue. A short hop from most European cities, Lille is a wonderfully vibrant, small and

SCOSsy city packed full of Northern French charm, bars and fine dining. After the usual formalities, Damian started proceedings with a full report on the Manchester conference. Everything was going to plan with 97 abstracts accepted from 121 received. He also raised a nice to problem to have in that SCOS is proving so popular with PhD students that 24 bursary applications were received. It was decided to defer discussions about formalising bursary criteria until another meeting. The board also agreed funding for an 'art vernissage' and drinks reception to be put on at the Whitworth Gallery to coincide with the conference. It was agreed that this was an excellent opportunity and very good value for money.

Next up were Annette and Peter with the Copenhagen/ Malmö 2009 plans which are coming on very well, and it was finally decided that a formal PhD event would not be held. PhD students are part of the 'full' SCOS community but they would of course be free to arrange their own event within the main conference if they so choose. Dominique and Xavier enthusiastically took the board on a tour of the facilities at the IAE Business School, a fabulous blend of old and new – including the world's oldest 'working staircase'! The board agreed Lille would be an excellent choice for the 2010 conference and the dates were set for 7-10<sup>th</sup> July 2010 with Sam & Beatriz Acevedo as organisers. An interesting discussion

on e-possibilities for SCOS in the future immediately followed.

Seeing as most of the board are techno-illiterate, further discussions on this topic were postponed until Alf (our web officer) could hold our hands! Jo then tabled the Treasurer's report in Saara's unfortunate absence due to injury and discussions of the new SCOS constitution/ financial strategy (see previous minutes) were postponed to the November board when it was hoped that Saara would be fighting fit again. Ann presented the membership secretary's report, including what was hoped to be the final discussion of the Cambridge C&O matter (see minutes ever since 2004 for further details!)

Next up, Sam donned her elections officer's bonnet and reported that it was likely that an election would be needed for the post of Membership Secretary to replace Ann in July – two nominations had been made and once 'manifestos' were received from the candidates, a ballot of the membership would be held. A review of the tenure of board members was also undertaken and Annette agreed to step down as Meetings Secretary to allow her to undertake her 2009 conference duties and make way for a new board member who had expressed an interest. The regional reps present gave their reports including a request for sponsorship of the 2009 Scandinavian Academy of Management conference.

All of this was followed by reports from Rowland (by Jo) and Beatriz (by Sam) concerning their respective promotional beaverings. This in turn led to a discussion about the absence of some executive members' reports in absentia. It was agreed that reporting to the board was not optional even if members could not sometimes attend in person. We also discussed the merits of holding meetings on weekdays but decided we were still *delighted* to donate our weekends to the SCOS calling ☺ Jo also presented the *Notework* editors report whose diligence underlined the need for timely information from board members!

Peter & Simon tabled their report (via Jo) on C&O reshuffles and regrettably confirmed there would be no Ljubljana special issue given the poor response to a CFP. The board formally recognised Peter and Simon as editors and thanked Heather for her excellent stewardship of the journal to date and Jean Helms-Mills for her work as North American editor. The process of compiling the new associate editorial board is still ongoing and SCOS board members were requested to send nominations.

After a great deal of Flemish hospitality including a five course lunch (!) the meeting closed at 5.10pm, with the date of the next meeting set for 1<sup>st</sup> July at Hulme Hall immediately preceding the Manchester conference.

### **Your board are currently:**

**Chair:** Jo Brewis (UK) **Meetings Secretary:** Kat Riach (UK) **Secretary & Elections Officer:** Sam Warren (UK), **2008 Conference:** Damian O' Doherty (UK) **2009 Conference:** Peter Elsmore (UK), David Crowther (UK) and Annette Risberg (Denmark) **Membership Secretary:** Sumohon Matilal (UK) **Treasurer:** Saara Taalas (Finland) **Notework Editors:** Sheena Vachhani and Stephen Dunne (UK) **Web Officer:** Alf Rehn (Finland) **Journal Editors (C&O):** Heather Höpfl (UK), Peter Case (UK) and Simon Lilley (UK) **Regional representatives:** Peter Pelzer (Germany) Nina Kivinen (Nordic countries) Rowland Curtis (UK) Janet Sayers (New Zealand), Carl Rhodes (Australasia) and Beatrice Acevedo (Latin America).

# The Musery

## And More Again (my little-read book)

*Robert Grafton Small*

'The poets of Ireland one day were gathered around Senchán Torpéist, to see if they could recall the 'Táin Bó Cuailnge' in its entirety. But they all said they knew only parts of it.'

(Tr. Kinsella 1974: 5)

'He performed as a crank, even in the spotlight whispering bad news or just a drunken non sequitur from the alley; as a crank, he performed as one who knew the truth but would only tell it in bits and pieces, hints and warnings, jokes in their relation to the unconscious.'

(Marcus 2006: 235)

A group where each is a fragment; an individual where fragments group: we tell ourselves our selves. Recalling memories we'd forgotten we have, every sign of our lives is overlaid with the lives of our signs, Twombly in tribal terms. As 'cunning animals realize at once that we aren't especially at home in the deciphered world' (Rilke 1974: 19-20), we look to be, encrypted - literally buried alive.

Termites in other, our, words, casting stories: picture Yambo's comic desperation (Eco 2005), framing a past he may never have had, his unlooked-for last bow. So reader follows author, Barthes lives and text endures. The suppressed and the rest, other others, are there with us, all somehow somewhere illiterate, like Irish poets. On this earth, extratextual life is alien.

Instead, we're street theatre in some city of words, playing scenes from the neighbourhood. Favela to Facebook, each of us cranks out a performance, a part of parts - and something extra: method acting *en masse*. Debord's revue casts everyone, reviews them too. So common space can be poetry (Amadei 2008: 37), concrete but never settled, home to nomad semiotics.

We move in shuffle mode, forward with digital and back, to the comforts of machine-made choice: multiples of one - for one, solitary play, virtually permanent things individually ordered. Still nothing we have is entirely ours; significance too is a company product, prop and property, shared. Memeself follows dreamself, after another Irish poet (Heaney 1984: 57), and each of us emerges from, as, with our coming culture.

Scenes seen changing. Exits. Entrancing one another, we're all in the mix, in part, alone, incomplete. Mute to Munch, mouths open, wholly closed, we take in everything: demand wants it and want.... A story that knows only shards, splinters, groups scarred by the telling, the strain of a riddle with no sphinx. Anti-Oedipus then, desire structuring lack, not Ouroboros, the tale that swallows itself, endlessly satisfied.

Talking in circles keeps its own time; the rhythms are not ours, the seasons more material. We are rather a force on nature: thinking locally, acting globally - kiwi fruit to corner shop - we tell ourselves we don't have to, we don't want to wait. Presence is the object after all, objects with presence above all; we're cultured this way.

Fragments again, gathering: what it is that makes today's homes so different, so appealing. Our dreams too, our heartaches, all the signs, symptoms, of belonging, our viral marking. Yet we're branded outsiders, by groups knowing other parts to us, other stories. Hints and whispers, the overheard, the understood, everything asides aside, that slips between - you talkin' to me?

Conscious of the spotlight, we perform in shades, Man Ray to Ray-Bans, reflecting, screening the common gaze, each a shade of our own, Seurat deconstructed as scenes dissolve. Ghosts in time, afterglow. Our bodies books with organs, the learning of decay and forgetfulness, we're read, we read, in multiplicity. Every crease and fold maps a rupture in the text, every self some other way among orders of chaos and desire. Thinking too with things, acting without words - Pressburger's (1992: 38) white spaces - our becoming is always that, a partwork. The Irish again, a gathering of one (Beckett 1999: 25); the tale is told: 'Total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object.'

## References

Gian Luca Amadei, *Blueprint*, September 2008, 270 (pp. 34-39)

Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues* 1965, John Calder, London

Umberto Eco, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* (Translated from the Italian by Geoffrey Brock) 2005, Secker & Warburg, London

Seamus Heaney, *Station Island* 1984, Faber and Faber, London

Greil Marcus, *The Shape of Things to Come* 2006, Faber and Faber, London

Giorgio Pressburger, *The Law of White Spaces* (Translated from the Italian by Piers Spence) 1992, Granta Books, London

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (Translated from the German by David Young) 1978, W.W. Norton & Co., New York

*The Táin* (Translated from the Irish by Thomas Kinsella) 1974, Oxford University Press, London

---

---

## Dead Main Street

### *Anonymous Kiwi contributor*

The shop on Main Street was dead. Dead as a moa. Not endangered like a Kakapo. Not gasping for survival on Ninety-Mile Beach. Not washed up with a piano on some god-forsaken west-coast beach. Dead.

Well, closed anyway.

The doors to Wakefield's bike shop were boarded up. Windows, sad and empty. A note slotted into the gap in the door.

Not even any sellotape. Closed.

*Get your bike at The  
Warehouse and good  
luck, fucking morons!*

Van tucked his wet hair behind his ear. Pulled his swandri hood over his head to keep the stinging rain off his face. Shit, it was a miserable day. Cats and dogs.

Aotearoa. Land of the long white cloud, alright.

He pulled the soggy notice away from the crack in the door. It dissolved in his hand. Van sighed. Too bad. It was a rude notice. Wasn't right.

Van looked up and down the main street. The wind whistled. Not even a Mr Whippy. Someone lightly touched his shoulder. "Shit!" he cried, and jerked upwards. "Bugger me, you gave me a fright!!" he said to Moana, his gorgeous wahine chick research assistant. She packed a sad, but looked shit-hot. She wore tight black pants. No knickers. A plunging V-neck jumper. All from the new Rachel Hunter range at The Warehouse. Van caught sight of them both in the window, Crikey, we look good together, he thought.

"What's the story, hori?", lilted Moana.

"Another closed one", said Van sadly. "That's three this week, and twelve shops closed overall. The whole town is knackered".

"Any suspects?" she asked coyly. Moana had a thing for this Pakeha. He was a sweetie. Clean. Slim. Neat. Sarcastic. Better than the other dickheads in this town anyway, she thought. Who'd want to root them?

"Just the one", said Van, seriously. "The Warehouse. Set up just outside of town. Well connected. Huge. Offers everything. Cheap. Thinks it's the Big Wal-Mart around here". Van looked down at his jandals. White. He'd bought them at The Warehouse last week. Three bucks. He felt somehow culpable, like he was dirty.

Van felt stink today. He'd had a doozy of a night. Rugby game and then drinks. He could still feel the scrum-chaff from his team-mates sweaty thighs and buttocks on his face. They'd knocked the bastards off, and then drank 'til the cows came home. Man, had he got a hangover, or what! The weed hadn't helped. He was crook as a dog's hind leg.

Van needed a drink, and thought about his e hoa Munter, killed in a car wreck on State Highway One 6 months ago. A head-on collision with some fucking moron city hoon in their bloody 4WD. Never been off-the-road until it ended up in a ditch after munting Munter. Bugger! Tears came to his eyes. Van wanted to weep like a girl.

Van thought about the last time he had seen Munter. Stoned, he'd asked out-of-the-blue, "What does ironic

mean?" Munter had replied, "It means how come the guy with the job has never got any money for any piss?"

God, he missed him.

Well, he loved him. Loved him. Past tense now. Shit. Munter had told him he loved him once, "I love you, man. But I really hope I'm never stuck in a life or death situation and you're the one who has to figure out how to rescue me", he had said. Shit, he was hard case.

If the rugby bros knew he was gay he'd be up shit creek without a paddle alright. When asked, "Where are you going?", he'd deflect with "Up the boohai shooting pukeko's with a long-handled shovel". Munter had laughed like a Kaka; he got it. But, the blokes would guess soon. His Southern Man impression was all fake. He was all Hollywood. Then he would be in-for-it. Hog-tied and chucked over Huka Falls most likely.

Van brushed a tear from his eye. Shit, he felt randy. And he felt like getting out-of-it. Scull some piss. But he turned to the job in hand.

"Let's run the figures on this, Moana. Get the accounts down to Peters and Peters. The full post-mortem aye?" Van smiled to himself. Peters was a real corker. Ponged like a kunekune in heat. The pig had better personal hygiene. Great hair though. And he was shit-hot at his job alright. Nothing got past Peters. Not even the corruption charges at the Serious Fraud Office.

Peters would tell them tomorrow. Could just be an unfortunate case of mis-management. Maybe the poor bastards were just lousy at service. Not niche enough. Shit, you had to be tough these days. But that Big Bully with the Big Ideas bothered him. Take the shop down and stab the town in the heart. Bastard. Not on my watch, thought Van.

Van sighed, and remembered something Munter had asked Moana once about chi-square tests. "What about if the person doing the research is an idiot. Can that throw the test off?" Van felt like butter chicken.

Van looked down. Soft brown dog shit was stuck to his jandal. "Fuck", he said. "Gotta shoot through Moana. Text me. Haere mai."

Moana frowned. Sometimes Van was a dick. "E noho ra, you moron", she hissed under her breath.

AGONY AND PLEASURE:  
FRANCIS BACON'S RETROSPECTIVE AT TATE BRITAIN  
(September 2008-January 2009)

*By Beatriz Acevedo*

*"Birth, and copulation, and death  
That's all the facts when you come to brass facts:  
Birth, and copulation, and death"*  
T.S. Eliot

Francis Bacon has been regarded as one of the most important artists of the Twentieth Century and even now his work does not cease to produce questions, reactions and controversy. The retrospective of his work at Tate Britain provides a unique opportunity to grasp at the power of his oeuvre and to experience the fascination that it exerts on the viewer. Bacon's experiences were shaped by the whole Twentieth Century: he was born on October 28, 1909 in Dublin, and he was brought up in the shadow of the First World War, he also witnessed the horrors of the Second World War. The experiences of these two wars, and the subsequent changes in the world during the century, may explain the most common reactions to his work: the violence, the horror, and the brutal. For many, Bacon's work conveys all these adjectives; however, his work is more complex than a first sight of his paintings may show.

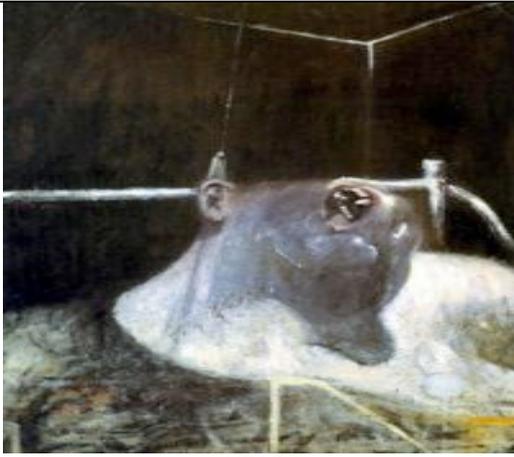
For the spectator, the sensation of being shocked, marvelled or horrified is part of the fascination exerted by Bacon's paintings. As the artist stated, his intention was to make an impact on 'the nervous system more violently and more poignantly'<sup>2</sup>, and he used the human figure as the main weapon for his mission. Although Bacon did not attend any formal education, his genius developed by following some of the most important trends of the earlier Twentieth Century: the work of Picasso and the Surrealists. His own life is the big canvass of emotions, experiences, pain and enjoyment, and although he would prefer that we separate his paintings from his personal life, it is undeniable that his work conveys the emotions of the modern man: the anxiety and the pleasure, the question of life and the presence of death, and the co-existing forces of Eros and Thanatos.

The exhibition is organised in ten rooms, covering certain historical periods in his work. In doing so, the curators aimed to show some echoes and dialogues amongst his paintings. Since Bacon was a fierce critique of his own work and he is famous for the amount of work that he destroyed when displeased with it, hence, very few paintings from the earlier period (stemming from the 1930s) are exhibited here. Some of the survival paintings of his earlier period are grouped in the first room, titled **Animal**. Bacon's concern with the bestial nature of human beings is largely explored in this first group of paintings painted during the 1940s: the scream, the pain and the convulsions of the flesh. In particular, the series of 'Heads' announce the seeds of further developments in Bacon's work. For example, in *Head I*, the emphasis is put on the corporeity of the 'head', while only the open mouth with the carefully painted teeth suggests the singularity of a deaf scream.

As noted by Chris Stephens, one of the curators of the exhibition, in the *Heads (Head I and Head II)* 'these details add a disquieting reminder of the figure's humanity while the contrast of their stillness with the dynamism of the mouth makes it seem as if the figure is possessed, taken over by this animal force' (Stephens, 2008: 94). However, it is not very clear if the figure is screaming or gasping for air, and here Bacon in his conversations with David Sylvester revealed his original intentions: "I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror." The anxiety of the scream, the threshold between the sound and the total deafness of this gesture, and the conveyance of internal forces governing the flesh became common topics in Bacon's future works. For Deleuze, the scream in Bacon establishes a relationship between the visibility of the scream (the open mouth as a shadowy abyss) and invisible forces, which are nothing other than the forces of the future (2003: 43).

---

<sup>2</sup> Bacon, in interview with David Sylvester, 1966.



HEAD I

1947-8, Oil And Tempera On Board  
The Metropolitan Museum Of Art, Bequest Of Richard S. Zeisler,  
2007.



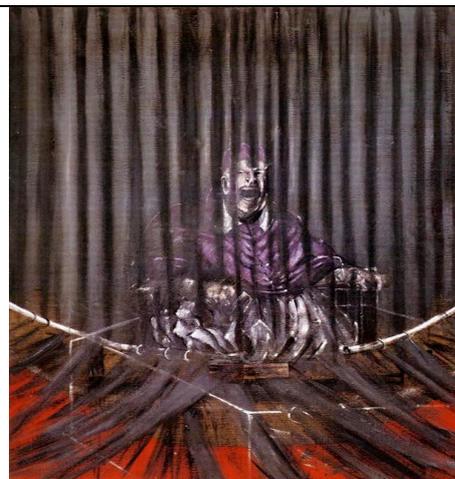
Painting, 1946, oil and pastel on linen  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

In this group of paintings some of the most important elements in Bacon's language start to appear. In particular, the *Painting 1946*, can be considered as the prototype for further developments in Bacon's work: here a dominant male figure emerges, black tie and coat, yet, only his mouth in the gesture of the scream is carefully revealed. His physical features are crowned by an umbrella -the suggestion of a big bird with black wings - and the Figure is flanked by a couple of fleshy carcasses part bone, part dead meat in brilliant tones. The Figure is sustained by a tubular structure, and it stands out in a bright field of pink colour. It is said that Bacon based his Figure on some pictures of Nazi leaders, and the thick neck suggest the gestures of Mussolini. Nevertheless, Bacon wished to distance himself from the specificity of the Nazi references to something more universal in which the sense of threat and brutality had been distilled (Stephens, 2008: 92).

The image of authoritarian figures and leaders inspired many of Bacon's paintings. In this room we can appreciate an early interpretation of Velázquez's painting of the Pope Innocent X, titled *Head VI* (1949). As noted by Peppiatt: 'in paraphrasing the Velázquez portrait, Bacon strikes not only at the highest personification of spiritual power, but also at the grandeur of the Western tradition of art' (1996: 64). His poignant reinterpretation of Velázquez's Pope can be also understood in relation to the influence of the surrealist spirit in transforming pieces of art, such as Duchamp's moustache on Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa thereby situating Bacon's screaming Pope. Other explanations can be drawn from his difficult relationship with his father (Pope or Papa-Dad) or his disdain for the catholic religion.



Diego Velázquez  
Portrait of Pope Innocent X 1650  
Oil on Canvas  
Galleria Doria Pamphij, Rome



Study after Velázquez, 1950  
Private collection to The Steven and Alexandra Cohen Collection

The point here is to appreciate how Bacon's painting of the Pope explores the depths of authority and leadership. Whereas in Velázquez's painting the Pope appeared both regal, serene and cruel, Bacon's explored the isolation conferred by his authority. By confining the Figure within the limits of a chair, and surrounded by a shuttered wall, a curtain, or a white parallelepiped, the Pope is isolated and somehow incarcerated. The Pope's fists cling recklessly to the chair and this produces a sensation of both frailty and contained anger, while his screaming mouth oscillates between the agony and the fury. As developed by Deleuze: "Innocent X screams, but he screams behind the curtain, not only as someone who can no longer be seen, but as someone who cannot see, who has nothing left to see, whose only remaining function is to render visible these invisible forces that are making him scream, these powers of the future." (Deleuze, 2003: 42)

In the view of his contemporaries, Bacon's use of religious symbolism and the exploration of the human figure contradicted the artistic tendency toward abstractionism and conceptual art. While artists around the world were engaged in the exploration of abstract art - in particular the Abstract Expressionism and the playful potentialities of the Pop Art- Bacon followed a different route. He broke with figuration, but at the same time, he used the figure to accomplish his aim. His work "it is not impressionism, not expressionism, not symbolism, not cubism, not abstraction (...) Never (except perhaps in the case of Michelangelo) has anyone broken with figuration by elevating the Figure to such prominence." (Deleuze, 2003: xiv)

During the 1950s and 1960s, Bacon had completed the basic elements in his work: (1) the Figure, not as narration or illustration, but as a Figure in motion, or transformation; (2) the place in which the Figure is located, normally a chair, a ring or inside a geometrical figure of ice; (3) and the field of colour (Deleuze, 2003). These pictorial elements aim to stretch the Figure toward more sensational (in terms of heightened sensations) effects while avoiding the 'representation' or the 'description' of an scene or an event. As Bacon remarked: "A picture should be a re-creation of an event rather than an illustration of an object: but there is no tension in the figure unless there is the struggle with the object."<sup>3</sup> The second room in the exhibition is called **Zone** and a number of examples concerning the creation of fields, places and figures as 'matters of fact' (using Deleuze's words) are presented here.

By the 1950s Bacon's work developed in amidst his hectic life and sexual explorations around London during the post-war years. The next room in the exhibition refers to this feeling as **Apprehension**: a number of paintings and studies for Figures, amongst them the series of the "Man in Blue". These men are dressed as 'executives' or 'business men' although they look anonymous and innocuous. For example, in the *Man in Blue IV* the figure seems to sink in the depths of darkness and obscurity. Like the Popes, the businessmen are depicted as figures of authority, yet vulnerable and solitary (Stephens, 2008: 122).

Bacon's obsession with religion and authority appears intermittently in his paintings. The series of **Crucifixions** reveal the many ways in which the artist approached this classic theme. He was not attempting to re-create a religious message, nor was he interested in challenging it. For Bacon, the crucifixion can be understood as an act of violence; and it is related to his concern about the bestiality of human beings. He developed his crucifixions by focusing on the fleshy characteristics of the subject. As he asserted, "Well, of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher's shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal"<sup>4</sup>. For many, the reference to the Crucifixion can be understood within the context of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Notwithstanding, the first painting of the Crucifixion came from the earlier period of the painter and it was this painting which put Bacon in the map of artists in Britain.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Bacon: from an interview in Time, extracted in Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, *New Decade: 22 Painters and Sculptures*. Catalogue MoMA, 1955 p. 60

<sup>4</sup> Bacon, May 1966, in Sylvester 1993 p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Almost an unknown artist, Bacon exhibited this work in the Mayor Gallery, April 1933, alongside a group of promising British artists including Nicholson, Nash, and Moore. The art establishment was taken aback by the brutality of his work and not many critiques welcomed the new artist. However, few could foresee the force of his painting when a copy of his work *Crucifixion (1933)* was reproduced in Herbert Read's book *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture*. By placing it opposite Picasso's *Female Bather with Raised Arms* of 1929, Read clearly suggested the formal link he himself had registered between the two artists. (Peppiatt, 1996: 64).



Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion  
c. 1944. Oil on Board. Tate Gallery. Presented by Eric Hall 1953

Almost ten years later, the same topic is depicted in the Triptych format, also exhibited in this retrospective. Here we find the famous: *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944) which is one of the jewels owned by the Tate Gallery (normally exhibited at Tate Modern on the Southbank). It consists of three paintings connected by a bright field painted in orange. On the central panel there is this ambiguous form, like an embryo, from which only an opened mouth appears - savaging and devouring - covered by a blanket (it looks more like a phallic figure - maybe a penis dentata?) in an orange background limited by angles. Because of the date of this painting, the second version of the *Crucifixion* has been linked to the horrors of the holocaust as an apocalyptic vision of the world although heavily influenced by the political responsibility of the artist illustrated by Picasso's *Guernica* (exhibited in London in 1938). *Guernica* showed how the formal language of modernism could frame a response to contemporary events (Gale, 2008: 139). Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion* goes beyond the depiction of a single episode by denouncing the ongoing nightmare.

Further versions of the Crucifixion are produced in 1962 and 1965. In *Three Studies for A crucifixion* (1962), and *Crucifixion* (1965), the main elements of Bacon's language reached their maturity: the format of the triptych; the treatment, dissection and isolation of the figure; and the large fields of colour. In Deleuze's brilliant analysis of Bacon's work, these are the three fundamental elements in his painting: "the material structure, the round contour and the raised image. If we think in sculptural terms, we would have to say: the armature; the pedestal, which would be mobile; and the Figure, which would move along the armature together with the pedestal." (Deleuze, 2003: 4).

These paintings became Bacon's platform as a recognised artist and then his life changed. From living on a sort of roller coaster, hardly making means to meet ends (and yet indulging in drinks, parties and gambling), he found himself with a disposable income. Immersed in the chaotic relationship with his lover Peter Lacy, he travelled around Europe and North Africa engaging in compulsive gambling in cities such as Monte Carlo while trying to paint under different lights either in Tangier or in the South of France. Different experiments marked this period: coupled figures, interpretations of Van Gogh's paintings and more expressive and colourful paintings are grouped in the exhibition in the room titled **Crisis**. Although in this new situation he was able to afford bigger premises, he kept the smaller atelier at the Reece Mews (London) as his favourite place for painting. An interesting feature of this exhibition is the 'archaeology' of his studio in which many objects, pictures, photographs and books may help to re-construct the creative laboratory of the artist. Amongst the objects shown in the '**Archive**' room were: magazines with photographs of Nazi leaders; a medical document about mouth diseases; the studies of Muybridge's *The Human Figure in Motion*; books with reproductions of his admired Velázquez; plentiful pictures from newspapers, sport magazines; and photos of friends, lovers and models.

Bacon relied on reproductions and pictures as the first step for most of his paintings. For instance, in the portraits of friends he preferred to rely on the picture rather than painting directly from the model. For him, photography has taken over the illustrative and documentary role so that modern painting no longer needs to fulfil this function. The challenge consists of extracting the Figure from the figurative and to overcome the descriptive or illustrative aspects of painting. He insisted on the fact that his paintings were not describing violent acts, neither were they trying to tell a story. Instead, what Bacon aimed was to convey the emotion behind the act, the horror prior to the scream, the convulsion of the body in anticipation of the movement.

To this aim, the combination of the three mentioned elements in Bacon's paintings make sense: the large fields as a spatializing material structure; the Figure, the Figures and their fact; and the place – that is the round area, the ring, or the contour which is the common limit of the Figure and the field. Within the round area, the Figure is sitting on a chair, lying on the bed and sometimes it even seems to be waiting for what is about to happen. But what is happening, or is about to happen, or has already happened is not a spectacle or a representation (Deleuze, 2003: 9). By isolating the Figure, Bacon attempted to condense the movement, the impulse and the emotion even before their materialisation. As argued by Deleuze: “the Figure is the sensible form related to a sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is addressed to the head, and acts through the intermediary of the brain, which is closer to the bone” (p. 10). This complex mechanism may explain why Bacon's painting impacts directly on our 'nervous system' and thus the conflicting sensations of agony and pleasure, anguish and convulsion, coexisting in the experience of seeing his paintings.

In the last rooms of the exhibition the dramatism of Bacon's pictorial language appears more clearly. In the room called **Epic**, the format of the triptych reaches exquisite powers since the figures express drama, tragedy, and in some cases, abandon and pleasure. Furthermore, in the series of **Portraits**, Bacon aimed to reinvent portraiture in the age of the camera; he sought 'to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance'<sup>6</sup>. The portraits of his friend, Isabelle Rawsthorne, convey the vision of a strong woman with a huge personality and charisma. As explained by Chris Stephens, the idea that an individual might be used by Bacon as the vehicle for certain aspects of the human condition seems especially evident in the paintings of George Dyer. Dyer, who became Bacon's lover in 1963, had strong masculine features as his attire resembled that of a 'gangster' in East End London. In contrast, Bacon's numerous portraits of Dyer suggest a fragile and sometimes comical individual. In the *Portrait of George Dyer Riding a Bicycle* (1966), the figure is silhouetted in fair depiction of the model and although the physical features of the face are distorted, the viewer can see the absurdity of his situation: riding in circles, heading for nowhere, chasing a shadow... unfortunately, this painting somehow anticipates Dyer's tragic end.



© Peter Schibli, Basel / Estate of Francis Bacon. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2008

Triptych-In Memory of George Dyer, 1971, Oil on Canvas.  
Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel

<sup>6</sup> Bacon 1963, in Sylvester 1993 p. 40

By that time, Bacon had reached worldwide fame reinforced by the Retrospective at the Grand Palais of Arts in Paris in 1971. Ten years earlier, the exhibition of his work at Tate Gallery elevated Bacon as one of the most important British artists and this exhibition in Paris expanded his success. This was, however, a year of contrasts: in April his mother died in South Africa and another tragedy was looming over him. The evening before the triumphal exhibition at the Grand Palais while Bacon was busy with preparations - hanging paintings and sorting out the details of the night in which the President of France would open the ceremony - George Dyer committed suicide and his body was found in the room that he and Bacon shared. Not surprisingly, the events impacted Bacon deeply. As a way of grieving, Bacon embarked on a number of triptychs collected in the room **Memorial**. Amongst them, the *Triptych in Memory of George Dyer* (1971) brings to mind the scene of Dyer's death: on the central panel a man opens a door, the key is just being removed from the keyhole, it is late at night as evidenced by a solitary light bulb at the top of the staircase; on the floor the cryptic typos of a newspaper sink into the strong red blood colour of the field. The rest of the canvas is painted in bright colours of lilac and pink which relate to the fields in the other two panels.

On the left panel, the convulsive yet athletic figure of a man lingers alongside a curve, a shadow pending on his existence. Bacon has often said that in the domain of the Figures, the shadow has as much presence as the body; but the shadow acquires this presence only because it escapes from the body. The shadow is the body that has escaped form through some localised point in the contour (Deleuze, 2003: 12). On the right panel, it is the figure of Dyer in a thick mirror, on the reflecting pair, the drop of life spilling carefully on the canvas. The use of mirrors represents another of the pictorial elements in Bacon's work. As observed by Deleuze: "Bacon's mirrors can be anything you like – except a reflecting surface. The mirror is an opaque and sometimes black thickness. Bacon does not experience the mirror in the same way as Lewis Carroll. The body enters the mirror and lodges itself inside it, itself and its shadow. Hence the fascination: nothing is behind the mirror, everything is inside. The body seems to elongate, flatten, or stretch itself out in the mirror, just as it contracted itself by going through the hole (Deleuze, 2003: 13)."

In general, the series of triptychs in the Memorial room are both haunting and remarkable. The fields of colours, the void of obscurity, the body in movement (in anticipation of death or pleasure), the shadows and the living flesh produces a long-lasting effect in the viewer. For instance, in *Triptych May-June 1973* the treatment of the figure reveals Bacon's heightened artistic powers. In this triptych, it is possible to imagine the last moments in Dyer's life: the agonic figure crawling to the bathroom, clinging to the toilet, devoured by the dark void of death. The Figure is moving, yet it is fixed in a point; there is emotion, but there is also agony. The body is the focal point, but as in all his work, brushing or scrubbing deforms the features so the tones are subtle and alive. As argued by Deleuze, Bacon's Figures represent one of the most marvellous responses in the history of painting to the question: 'How can one make invisible forces visible? (...) Bodies and heads in Bacon's paintings can look as deformations but they are not tortures, despite appearances. On the contrary, they are the most natural postures of a body that has been reorganised by the simple force being exerted upon it: the desire to sleep, to vomit, to turnover, to remain seated as long as possible.' (Deleuze, 2003: 42-43)

After almost eight decades of life, Bacon's late paintings return to the common themes: new interpretations of the crucifixion such as the *Second Version of Triptych 1944* (1988), as well as a number of self-portraits. A general refinement of composition and expression is evident in the late paintings (Tant, 2008: 231). Getting to the end of the exhibition, I feel both isolated and stimulated. In fact, this is my third view of Bacon's work. The first time was in March 2001 in the Netherlands when a small collection of his work was presented at the *Gemeentemuseum* in The Hague where I made notes and drawings from this first encounter that I still keep. Whereas in The Hague I was fascinated with the colours and the effects of the skin, the movement and the passion; in London, I have been impressed by the complexity and depth of his work: the subtle qualities of movement, the dramatic scenes, his experience of war and the ambiguous sensations of pleasure and horror.

What is really remarkable about this exhibition is the opportunity to experience the power of Bacon's imagery and the innovations of his treatment of the Figure. This Retrospective is the opportunity to go beyond appearances and prejudices, to embark into a solitary journey of reflection and sensation: to scream in silence, to agonise in joy, to vibrate in colours whilst touching the void, to live at the brink of a disaster. Although Bacon's life and work referred to the last century, echoes of his paintings are still relevant today.

As Kenneth Clarke describes, he is ‘the interpreter of our contemporary nightmare’<sup>7</sup>. Bacon’s reminder of the ubiquitous disaster - evidenced in the latest worldwide financial crisis - of the horrors of human actions in a world without hope but driven by religious fundamentalism are ever-present in the works exhibited in this retrospective and demonstrate the perpetual power and relevance of his paintings. Although this review is a futile attempt to bring all the grandiosity of Bacon’s work together, it provides an invitation to forget everything you read and experience, this wonderful Retrospective!

## REFERENCES:

Deleuze, Giles (2003) **Francis Bacon**. Original Title: *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation*. Translation by Daniel W. Smith. Continuum: London

Gale, Matthew and Stephens, Chris (Editors) (2008) **Francis Bacon**. Catalogue Exhibition, Tate Publishing: London

Sylvester, David (1993) **Interviews with Francis Bacon**. London, 1975. Enlarged 1980, revised as “*The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*” 1990, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. As “*Interviews with Francis Bacon*”, 1993 Thames and Hudson: London

Peppiatt, Michael (1998) **Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma**. The Orion Publishing Group: London

---

---

## *A view for the picket line; reflections of a (not quite so new) lecturer*

*By Daniel King*

Yesterday I was on strike. I work at Nottingham Trent University and as some of you know we have been experiencing some industrial relations difficulties between UCU the academic union and the management of the university. Of the last few weeks there has been a notable increase in political activity with a rally, the strike yesterday and potential future action such as greylisting proposed.

I have never been on strike before and found the whole process quite intriguing. The industrial action which swept the university sector that accompanied the negotiations over the *National Framework Agreement* in many regards passed me by. As a sessional lecturer completing my PhD I was dimly aware of the strikes and withholding of student marks which occurred a few years ago. This time, as a lecturer, I feel more strongly involved in proceedings. I do not want to get into the specifics of this dispute, it has been covered elsewhere <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3535>. Rather I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the experience of being involved in the dispute and the wider issues that it raises.

In recent weeks our email inboxes have been bombarded with claim and counter-claim from the university and the union around if UCU, the academic union, has actually been de-recognised. UCU state that the university has derecognised the union, tearing up the recognition agreement and therefore leaving academics without a voice in negotiations. The university maintains that they recognise UCU as a union rather they are trying to create a more open consultancy forum that allows for non-union staff to be represented. This consultancy forum is resisted by the union as they argue that it goes against collective bargaining principles and thus represents a form of union busting, trying to weaken the collective voice of academic staff. Finally, the university is seeking to cut the “time off” as they put it, of union officials to do union activity to “sector standards” whereas the union argue that their “facility hours” are being unreasonably cut by 80% meaning that they cannot represent their members. Moreover, they now have to approach their Academic Team Leaders (line managers) for each case they want to represent for permission to act in a case.

---

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Peppiatt , 1998, p. 113

At stake, if you take the unions arguments seriously, is much more than time off for a few union officials at a mid-ranking university, rather it is the future direction of the university sector. The direction of travel with these proposals is very similar they argue to that which occurred in the FE sector, where lecturers' working conditions have gradually been eroded, teaching workloads increased and opportunities for professional development diminished. Colleagues of mine that *escaped* the FE sector fear that it is happening all over again. In short over the last few weeks I have received a crash course in industrial relations. There is a certain irony to this situation. My first teaching engagement at NTU was in fact to teach final year management students about German style consultation committees, American union busting attempts and to get into the whole debate of the labour capital relationship. It appears that I am living through the very same thing.

***We do it to ourselves and that is what really hurts, we do it to ourselves, ourselves and no one else***

This claim and counter-claim has certainly led to some confusion. The exact status of the derecognition agreement has led to some debate as some see the union as being *trouble makers* and *disingenuous* to the university by claiming that they are derecognised. Some want to withdraw from confrontation seeing it as all too political for their liking. They have found the email exchange, with the claim and counter-claim, difficult to follow. The union have at times been shrill in their accusations (for instance the latest UCU magazine article) whereas the university seem to straight-bat these attacks and thus present themselves as sensible and rational (thereby portraying NTU-UCU as militant) and the squabble quite minor.

Many others feel that they do not want to strike over hours for union officials when their own hours for teaching have been increased and allowances for preparation work and administration have been dramatically reduced. Why, one of them asked me last Friday night, should I go on strike for their hours when his administration allowance for teaching over 1000 students and running the module is only 25 hours a year (an impossible task). Fighting for union officials' hours seems a minor concern in his situation. Yesterday I was told by a number of students that a few of their lectures were continuing. Their lecturers told the class that they supported the union action and felt aggrieved what was happening but did not want their students to miss out on their education. This action is obviously problematic from a union viewpoint – strikes are meant as an expression of labour power and therefore by implication students will in the short run will suffer, but in the long run a strike should help to produce better conditions for the lecturers and thus better quality of education all round.

All of the above issues connect around the latent notion of professionalism. The lecturers which continued to teach on that day seem to subscribe to the belief that as a professional their first duty is to the students and keeping the 'show on the road' at all costs. A similar concern with professionalism is expressed in those that want to withdraw from political action. Rather than seeking to work in solidarity with other academics to tackle issues within the university they concentrate on private affairs, their own career and professional conduct. So long as they are free to continue their job then they do not protest. The final notion of professionalism, and the one that is most troubling from a union viewpoint I believe is the professionalism that seeks to cope with the increased workload in a manner than the student experience does not suffer. Rather than complaining that the demands are too great and the student experience will suffer, this version of professionalism finds ways to manage with these demands (i.e. work longer hours on tasks in order to provide a good service), largely without complaint. Upon reflection I also see that I am not immune from this notion of professional.

Over the last year the student numbers of my first year course have risen from 450 to about 780, this dramatic increase has been seen across much of the university. Discovering this change my first reaction was "how do we cope with this dramatic increase?" We had planned the year with the previous student numbers in mind, and with the same, experienced staff to take the sessions, our objective was largely to continue the process as before. This dramatic increase in numbers, however, changed the rules of the game. Seminar groups increased from some 23 the previous year to 43, meaning more rooms, more lecturing staff and greater complication of managing the module. Quickly myself and others I teach with put into place action to help *solve the problem* – contacting everyone we knew who might be appropriate sessional lecturers and rearranging timetables.

The most significant change was writing a comprehensive seminar programme, so that these sessional lecturers, with potentially little teaching experience could take the seminars. These sessional plans included highly detailed lesson plans, activities, overheads, resources, and other materials that they might need to pick up a session. The result, I hope, is that we have a smooth running of the module that otherwise might have been in chaos.

Upon reflection though this move might have been a major strategic error. The introduction of lesson plans with their prescriptive format designed to ease the teaching pressure on my new hourly paid colleagues could be interpreted through Braverman's rubric as deskilling (1974). Rather than demand more colleagues with the experience and expertise to teach and the time for them to develop the subject knowledge, I made the teaching task as simple as possible. My solution to teaching on a larger scale with less experienced colleagues was thus a Taylorist one, doing the thinking in advance, breaking down the teaching experience into lesson plans to make the lessons as simple to teach as possible. By creating these lesson plans and supporting the move to hour paid lecturers, a cost-effective solution to the university, my inclination to being a professional ironically has cheapened the role of lecturer. With lesson plans sessional lecturers are more replaceable and cheaper to employ.

My point is not about the use of hourly paid sessional lecturers *per se*, but the manner in which this notion of professionalism can at time work against the best interests of our students, ourselves and our profession. By trying, correctly in my view, to offer a good service, we often do not consider the wider political or social consequences of our actions, or more precisely do little to challenge these conditions. Rather we accept them and try to work around them. We are our own worst enemies. The union action at NTU is important and if you have not done so please support it <https://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3398> but let's also consider those actions which we do everyday and the ideologies which inform them.

## **References**

Braverman, H. (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

# SCOS Regional rep. reports: news from around the globe.

Thoughts, views and news from the SCOS regional representatives, take it away reps!

## **Nina Kivinen (Nordic Rep)**

### *Business as usual?*

The Nordic business studies community is interesting in many ways. Most of us speak more or less the same language or at least we can understand each other to some degree without having to resort to English, our countries are more or less the same size with similar economies and our education systems build upon a German ideal of *Bildung*.

But there are a number of distinct differences between the countries. We all have our languages and very different historic contexts. Last week the Norwegian Nobel committee awarded the former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari the Nobel Peace Prize. For Finns, working for peace is central to our nation-building and maintaining a neutral position in a global world has been self-evident. From our small country perspective, engaging with the world beyond our borders is a necessity, yet a strong belief in our strength and distrust in the help of others gives a unique flavour to our economies.

One of my very first academic conferences was the Nordic Academy of Management conference (NFF) in Helsinki in 1999. And I have to say this was one of the reasons why I decided to do a PhD in the first place. This bi-annual conference gathers Nordic and international academics for one of the most friendly, open and engaging conferences there is. Because of the small size of our countries and the commonalities, there is a genuine feeling of community among Nordic academics.

The NFF-conference is a brilliant example of this. Before the conference, there is traditionally a PhD-workshop where a number of professors would be discussing PhD-projects with a limited number of students. This is usually a great success and a wonderful opportunity for students. Next year's conference, NFF 2009, will be arranged by our very own Åbo Akademi University in Finland with Alf Rehn,

Eerika Saaristo and yours truly on the organizing committee.

The theme of next year's conference is Business as Usual which with our current economic turmoil is even more interesting than we could ever have imagined (see the CFP below for more details!). For Nordic academics NFF is not only a must but a great networking event, but even for other SCOSians. NFF provides a wonderful platform to explore Nordic Business studies. And our working language is English! So welcome to the 20th Annual NFF Conference on the theme Business as Usual on August, 19–2 in Turku/Åbo, Finland! ([www.nff2009.com](http://www.nff2009.com)). And all Scandinavians, please be in touch about events in Scandinavia that could be of interest for SCOSians!

## **Rowland Curtis (UK Rep)**

### *Getting RAE-dy*

Some heads of department at UK universities will be having their Xmas present early this year, while others may have to go without, because on December 17<sup>th</sup> the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) will be released to universities, before being made public the following day. The research reputation and financial well-being of university departments across the UK will to a large degree be staked on these results, and, we might suggest, the career ambitions of some individuals.

For those unfamiliar, for the last two decades the RAE has been the large-scale bureaucratic means by which UK academic departments are assessed and scored for the quality of their research, and on the basis of which a large proportion of the UK government's research funding is selectively allocated. With the 2008 RAE, research quality will have been evaluated by panels of nominated experts according to judgements of research 'output', 'environment' and 'esteem', and, by means of a formula (yet to be decided upon), the resulting departmental scores will then be used by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils to determine the size of

the research infrastructure grant for each institution (as distinct from the parallel awards made by UK Research Councils for project based funding).

Despite the financial magnitude of such awards - the amount awarded to universities via this funding stream in 2006/7 was just over £1.3bn (over €1.64bn at time of writing)<sup>8</sup> distributed across around 200 higher education institutions – the RAE scores also carry a potent symbolic force. For many well-funded departments, the prestige value of a high RAE score profile will seem of far greater strategic importance than the direct financial gains.

This will also be an unusual results day because, twenty two years after the first RAE was conducted in 1986, the 2008 RAE will be the sixth and final such exercise, due to be replaced by what the UK Funding Councils have named the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The first of these is due to take place in around five to seven years. This replacement was announced in December 2006 by the UK government Department for Education and Skills (DfES), following a consultation exercise undertaken earlier that year.

On the basis of this initial consultation, a mixed means of assessment was proposed, cutting back the RAE's existing system of 'peer review' to a minimum, with the proposed introduction of a new 'basket of indicators' or 'metrics', including the proposed use or development of appropriate bibliometric measures. It was even suggested in the DfES proposals that some of the panels for the upcoming RAE 2008 assessment might have introduced a greater reliance on metrics for the *current* assessment process, though this idea was quickly abandoned after reported widespread opposition by consultation respondents.

Based on this initial consultation, a modified conception of the REF was passed on to the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, who in November 2007, opened their own consultation for the more detailed development of the new model. In this second consultation, we might describe the Funding Councils as having *softened* the initial metrics-based proposals of the DfES, instead placing more of an emphasis upon retaining a 'peer review' element, according to a proposed division between subject areas. The proposal was that whilst the assessment of science-based disciplines could be oriented around bibliometric indicators such as citation

counts, the arts, humanities and social sciences should also involve a 'light touch peer review process', whilst 'informed by metrics' (Hefce 2007, p.1).

After the Funding Councils' consultation closed in February 2008, they published an analysis which suggested that there had been broad support expressed both for the future promotion of research excellence by means of the RAE/REF, and, indeed for the principle of selective allocation of research funds based on research assessment results. Their analysis also suggested broad support for the continuation of the dual funding system for research (referred to above), and for the principle of the reduction of the 'burden' of assessment to both panellists and university departments through the increased use of metrics in any new system.

The analysis also described some concerns held by respondents, including perhaps more prominently, the worries expressed about the strong binary distinction between science-based subjects and other subject areas in the assessment process, with many respondents reportedly wishing to see a more unified system 'that varies the use of quantitative indicators and expert review, as applicable to each discipline' (ibid.: p.2). This latter suggestion has since been taken up by the Funding Councils in the modified REF model, where panels of experts are expected to be involved in supervising evaluations across all subject groups, though arguably with a perceptible change of emphasis, such that the proposed role of these 'expert panels' is oriented much more strongly around the interpretation and application of groups of metrics than has been the case with the RAE's 'peer review' panels.

The Funding Councils' report also dedicated space to responses on other subjects of concern such as the exact types of metrics to be used in the exercise; specific subject groupings and boundaries; the potential for the introduction of a measure of 'user value'; equal opportunities considerations; and concerns about assessment 'burden' for institutions, amongst other issues.

On the basis of the consultation, and on the basis of the positive results of a pair of independent inquiries into the use of bibliometrics, the Funding Councils have announced their decision to press ahead with the development of the REF, though this has been set back by 12 months to allow for the development and testing of the system.

---

<sup>8</sup> Hefce, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/funding/resfund/>

According to the last public statement on the subject issued by the Funding Councils, this will mean that the REF will now be developed throughout 2008 and 2009. Later on, 'aspects of the framework' will be phased in from 2011-2012, and these aspects will 'fully drive research funding for all disciplines from 2014'.<sup>9</sup>

Having presented this 'official' narrative of events, I would like to take a moment to consider here what I feel has been one of the more interesting responses offered to the Funding Councils' consultation, and which perhaps is deserving of further consideration. This was the response from the University and Colleges Union (UCU), which represents more than 120,000 higher and further education staff in the UK. Perhaps one of the more powerful features of this response (UCU 2008), is that it based itself upon a consultation exercise of its own – a survey of academic and related staff working throughout UK higher education, conducted in 2006 (UCU 2006), which elicited over 1,500 responses (of which 92% were from union members).

To begin with we might usefully contrast this aspect of the survey to that of the original DfES consultation on research assessment, which, while open to responses from all, out of its 287 responses, only a fraction of those would have come from individual academics or other staff,<sup>10</sup> with the rest coming from the senior representatives of higher education institutions, subject associations and other related bodies. On this point we might also consider the HEFC consultation, described above, which invited responses from the representatives of higher education institutions, and other related organizations, but which, unlike the UCU survey, precluded a consideration of independently expressed views of the larger population of individual academics and related staff.

The stated aim of the UCU survey was to allow 'the voice of the profession' to be heard in the debate on the future of research assessment, not simply the voice of the 'great and the good' (UCU 2006, p.2). It might be *counter-argued* that the group of organizations invited to respond to the Funding Council's consultation may have included the views of academics and other university staff. However, it could also be said that the UCU has a strong claim to have been seeking to

engage with the views of the *wider* population affected by the proposed changes in a way that the DfES', and particularly the Funding Councils' consultations have not.

In addition to this point about the inclusive or exclusive nature of the consultations, we could also say that the UCU survey is distinctive in that, unlike the DfES and HEFC consultations, it has sought to broaden the agenda of its inquiry beyond the specific technical issues concerning the evaluation of research to a wider range of research-related principles and concerns. In so doing it has addressed a number of questions on what it refers to as respondents' 'core values' – values relating to such questions as relationships between research and teaching, and of the relationship between universities and business. Supporting this widening of the agenda is the statistic provided by the UCU survey that nearly all of its respondents (96%) supported what the survey called 'a fundamental and longer-term review of funding', a course of action that has been officially recommended by the UCU. We might expect such a review to stretch beyond the technical questions of the DfES and Funding Councils' consultations - such as the manner in which the use of metrics or otherwise will be applied within a future system of research assessment - to return to some more fundamental and perhaps troubling questions regarding the assumptions that have underpinned the bureaucratic assessment of research quality over the last twenty-two years (of which the RAE has been an intimate feature). It might also bring us to more closely regard the underlying principles of the increasingly selective allocation of research funds that the RAE has served (*ibid.*, p. 1; cf. Willmott 2003). In this light we might suggest that such consultations have to some extent been effective in restricting the 'official' (government sanctioned) agenda of discussion to a broadly *technical* set of questions, while deftly underplaying the potential for a more fundamental and comprehensive review of policy. As discussed above, we might also suggest that such official consultations by bodies such as the Funding Councils and the DfES have contributed to a sense of legitimacy around particular policy-backed programmes of action, while in fact working with what is a significantly reduced segment of the higher education sector population - i.e. broadly speaking, with the most senior managers and decision makers in and around universities and not 'the rest'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Hefce webpage, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>

<sup>10</sup> A precise figure which is not provided in the Funding Councils' document it would seem, but that is included within a category numbering less than 59.

<sup>11</sup> In passing we might draw a parallel here with the manner in which the composition of panels for the process of RAE 'peer review' has been based upon a set of initial appointments by the

Indeed, we might also note here that with the Funding Councils' consultation, whilst inviting responses, has *summarised* such responses in the form of 'analysis' that could be seen as a careful crafting of the representation of opinion, and by which a particular tone of consensus can be allowed to resonate while smoothing over some of the more jagged edges of wider popular opinion.

Perhaps these reflections on processes of 'consultation' could be taken as the starting point for a wider debate about decision making and accountability in higher education institutions - or *universities* as they were once known - that might draw upon the spirit of what once was the university *senate*, and as what might offer the basis for the participative development of different models for consultation, and even for a movement towards more democratic patterns of decision making across UK higher education.

However, perhaps come the New Year, as we allow our attention to drift towards the coming REF, and as some will find themselves attentively planning their next 'four' (publications) for the REF, with a studied eye on the most up-to-date journal impact factors and the ABS rankings of their potential research outlets, surely such (anachronistic) distractions will have slipped away, and the consultation documentation neatly filed.

A very Happy Xmas to you all (!).

## References

Hefce (2007), Consultation on the Assessment and Funding of Higher Education Research Post-2008, Hefce Policy Development Consultation document 2007/34, [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07\\_34/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_34/)

Hefce (2008), Analysis of Responses to the Research Excellence Framework Consultation, Hefce document 2007/34, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/consult/outcomes/ref.asp>

RAE (2004), RAE 2008: Panel Configuration and Recruitment, RAE 2/2004, March, <http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/02/>

---

HEFCs, rather than according to the judgements of the broader range of their 'peers', as perhaps would seem more appropriate given the choice of terminology (see RAE 02/2004: RAE 2008: *Panel Configuration and Recruitment*, <http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2004/02/>).

UCU (2006), The Future of Research Funding and Assessment: the 'Voice of the Profession', [http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/c/m/researchfundingfuture\\_1.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/c/m/researchfundingfuture_1.pdf)

UCU (2008), UCU Response to the Research Excellence Framework – Consultation on the Assessment and Funding of Research Post-2008, [http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/6/q/ucu\\_refresponse\\_feb08.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/6/q/ucu_refresponse_feb08.pdf)

Willmott, H.C. (2003), 'Commercialising Higher Education in the UK: the State, Industry and Peer Review', in *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 28(2), pp.129-141.

## **Beatriz Acevedo (Latin American Rep)**

### *Waiting in the Back...*

Latin America has been commonly referred as the backyard of the United States (politically and geographically) and hence our 'sense of reality' is mediated by the relationship with this country. In this context, the coming elections in the United States are being followed with great interest.

As expected, there are many links between the North and the South of the American continent. The establishment of a Latino community in the United States represents fifteen percent of the population, being the largest non-white community in the United States, and thus, Hispanic voters are an increasingly important constituency. It is possible to think that the Hispanic population may feel closer to the Afro American groups, due to the obvious ethnic *mestizaje* of Latin American heritage, or by virtue of some shared experiences of discrimination within the WASP society.

However this view may be misleading, taking into account that the Latin vote in the past elections supported George W. Bush, and that there exists certain sympathy for the republican candidate John McCain who - eager to please the Latin electorate - promised changes in the immigration policy. On the other hand, Hispanic communities are concerned with general issues such as health care, education and employment, and in fact, they are more interested in widening their participation in the mainstream system, rather than supporting alternative views. Taking into

account the major attention that Latinos have acquired in the political campaign, it is clear that Hispanic support is crucial in this election. A careful examination of the values and principles of the Hispanic community needs to be taken into account: the attitudes of this community should not be underestimated.

A shocking illustration of how 'mainstream' Latinos can be in the United States arrived through the conversation with a Colombian guy who lives now in Philadelphia. In the view of many of my people, he has achieved what is called the 'American dream': he migrated during the 1970s with less than five dollars in his pocket and he has managed to make his way and get the benefits of a developed society: a big house (including its even bigger car), a steady business, and his 'precious' citizenship. In a casual conversation I asked his opinion about the Bush government and the coming elections. Expecting a critical view about the war on Iraq and the housing crisis, it took me aback to find out that he not only defended the right of the USA to intervene in the Middle East, but also wholeheartedly supported the free market and its individualistic values.

Hence, if this is the opinion of a guy who comes from a disadvantaged background and has suffered against the discrimination of difficult jobs for a place within this society, I really cannot predict how the rest of the Hispanic community will behave in the election.

In relation to this, it is not difficult to draw some coincidences with the topic of the recent Mexican movie *La Zona*. The title refers to the urban developments in Latin American countries, particularly in Mexico, where huge buildings or 'condos' are constructed for wealthy families. Surrounded by huge walls, aiming to emulate the American way, via TV Cable, trips to Miami, compulsive shopping, or by the extensive migration, we – Latinos in Latin America - are increasingly disconnected from the local reality. While yearning for the American Dream, there is not consideration of the costs or the consequences of the 'free market' and the promises of globalisation. Nor can we accept that there are others who are not benefiting from this so called progress. Instead, this great majority seems to render itself invisible, despite their presence in every corner of the Latin-American cities.

Curiously, it is important to note in relation to Mexico, that the farmers and indigenous communities of Chiapas posed the first questions to the 'free-market model of competition'. Now with the financial crisis and the evidence of the failure of the wild capitalistic

system, questions and demands about the necessity of acknowledging the differences of these disadvantaged groups and their local economies, emerge clearly and loudly. Notwithstanding, it seems to me, that Latin America is just awakening to the crisis...

While the political debate in the USA is increasingly focused on the religious views of the two candidates, the reality is biting back and hard: the financial crisis and the social costs associated with it demand more attention from politicians and leaders: radical solutions are required. Whether or not the religious beliefs of the two candidates may influence their policies, the fact is that the practical aspects of employment, economy and foreign policy, will have important effects in our Latin American countries....

## **Peter Pelzer (German Rep)**

### *A Local Perspective on the Global...Crisis*

Nothing special to report at the moment, except, perhaps, deep in the shadow of the global financial crisis, a regional event. A nice event from the outside, but for Bavaria it was more of an earthquake. Or, to ask the question from the non-Bavarian point of view: what has happened that is considered as the arrival of normality in the *free state*, as Bavaria calls itself?

Elections for the local parliament!

The governing party, the CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democrats in Germany, had to face a landslide loss: from 60% of votes of the last election down to 43% now. What looks like a nice strong position for many other parties in the world, leads to a depression in the CSU. After 40 years of governing Bavaria alone they now have to look for partners to form a coalition. Of course the shock of this loss blew the minister president and the party leader out of office, both chaps in their middle sixties.

They should be replaced by someone who can credibly represent a change was the demand, preferably a younger person. The choice was made in favour of a present minister in the federal government, turning 60 next year who claims that the CSU has to concentrate on those values which made Bavaria strong: tradition. Germany is puzzled: back to *Lederhose* and *Dirndl* as the answer to the challenges of global markets.

As I said, nothing special, and of interest only because of the fact that the Bavarians have always considered themselves as special and that their super-ego is now reduced to normal size.

They only have to realise it...

## **David Bubna-Litic (Australia)**

### *Out with the old...*

The Australasian sub-group is currently preparing to hold its third biennial conference in Sydney. The interest which this has sparked has exceeded our expectations with around 50 papers and 60 delegates. We have arranged for some great food and Australian wine (we know a bit about the latter down here) and the weather is just about right for the beach in early December.

Hopefully, the conference will facilitate some new ideas and new practices, the meeting of new people, in a new place and the proliferation of whatever other new things the might appeal to a conference on Neophilia. Of course, it is important to explain that this is a conference *about* Neophilia and Organization. It is *not* a workshop for people, whom, like myself, might from time to time ask, "So, what else is *new* in the Antipodes?" Well, whether or not the maxim "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," applies, there is still the sense that a big event is just over the horizon and so, whatever it is, we are looking forward to it.

## **Carl Rhodes (Australia)**

### *Missive From the South*

Once again I was caught late (sometimes never) with my contribution to Notework – charged, as I am, with providing updates as to the intellectual shenanigans and other newsworthy titbits that are happening in my far flung region of the world.

My job as local/foreign correspondent is one that is most difficult given the quiet (some say hermetic) life that I lead, but on this occasion the difficulties were at least doubled. The news that I have to report concerns the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australasian Caucus of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism (it's a hell of a mouthful, but we call it ACSCOS). And so ACSCOS

is on 26-28 November 2008, at my very own place of work, The University of Technology Sydney.

Wanting to do a good job I contacted the tireless (and unusually patient) Notework editors asking when Notework would be coming out – not wanting to be tense, I asked whether it would be issued before or after this salubrious antipodean event.

'Time was out of joint', Derrida reminded me as his ghostly presence stared down at me from my bookshelf ... I was to write this report before the event, but it would be read after the event. My tenses were tense. Like my gas bill, I received a final final final reminder that my report was overdue – I was in the past again.

Stephen captured it well when he emailed me almost cryptically: "are you still ok to get a prospective to me now (or shortly) which also flags up the forthcoming retrospective which will adorn the pages of the next Notework?" I couldn't have expressed my anxiety better myself - time was/is/will be indeed out of joint.

The preparations for the ACSCOS that might now have already been are a done – we have about 50 papers and more than 60 delegates. People are walking/flying in from everywhere, be it Haymarket or Heeklen, Paddington or Palmerston North, Sydney or Stockholm, Chatswood or Chicago, Albany or Amsterdam, Tourak or Trondheim, Footscray to Frankfurt ... and beyond.

And on the Thursday evening we were 'heading to another joint' (Dylan cognoscenti only) – we had managed to book the roof top of the Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art where we all enjoyed the conference dinner (I hope) with views of the Harbour Bridge, Opera House and Circular Quay. All to be seen from a lovely balcony that I am assuming nobody jumped off.

So, I am hoping that the conference went well, that the intellect was in place, that the company was convivial, that the wine was sparkling on ice in the sun... and that the headaches were bearable.

More next time, in the past tense.

## Janet Sayers (New Zealand)

*Tēnā Koutou from Aotearoa.  
Greetings to you all from New Zealand.*

Life in New Zealand continues in its winsome way. We have had some bad storms and by pure coincidence the neighbourhoods of both my sister and myself, at different ends of the country, found ourselves on the front page of the newspaper. Me because my neighbourhood was so wet it started to slip into a crevasse, and hers because the sea was so high it washed away houses on the sea shore not far from her house.

Yes, it was a wet winter, but in NZ we console ourselves with such catastrophes in our usual fateful egalitarian way. Events such as these are karma for a.) building in high stupid places and b.) being rich enough to build on the sea front.

Otherwise in New Zealand life is very good. Our front pages are full of the usual financial hysteria, and the election is just about to start. So far, to me, it all sounds like Bird Flu. 99% of life seems exactly the same as it always has so far, even better. Petrol prices have in

fact gone down. So have cheese prices. The exchange rate is also better.

Plenty happening on the academic/research front of interest to SCOS. Quite a few SCOSers are making the trip down under to Sydney for ACSCOS 2008, which no doubt the Australian reps will cover (**nice to see the vote of confidence paying dividends? Eds!**).

See you there.

I think a few will also be taking the time to attend the ANZAM event at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. If so, see you there. Somehow I ended up chairing a stream. Note to self: learn how not to put up hand.

OIL is also going strong, with the fourth annual event being held at the University of Waikato in Hamilton in February of 2009. Regional issues are discussed. Much brain power used. The kai is always ka pai (the food is good).

See you soon, hopefully at SCOS 2009, if not before.

Regards, Janet Sayers

# Tales from the Field

Dr. Zoe Bertgan – over to you Zoe!

Ashley Coward, professor of paleo-Marxist geography, pulled up outside the Business school this morning in his sleek desert red B9 Tribeca model Subaru 4 x 4. Members of the “pink ladies” collective feminist research lab were outside the main gates waiting to welcome him, each one a pique of excitement, flushed cheeks, and all a nervous twitter. We had prepared a welcome song worked up from interview archives collected from one of our current ethnographic field sites whilst conducting research methodologically inspired by Coward’s groundbreaking work that introduced organization studies to the *derive gauche* of National Business Systems analysis. I guess y’all would call it a “cut-up” in SCOS circles, mixing and matching transcripts that offered to the world tales of suffering, pain, and rejection in the corporate world. Nevertheless, translated – or I dare say *sublimated* into an art of management research – these messages of distress and woe can be made to sound quite pleasant to the ear. So, there we were all in one place singing in point and counter-point to a ‘pick-up’ song, and with Dilys Moutard offering a glissando of pinched but reedy alto-sax blue notes and Rodnéé Delouche sounding a triumphal crescendo of pure trumpet, we must have sounded to Ashley like – and yes, I *will* say it this time, despite the sniggers of my all too clever colleagues – a veritable *avant-garde* of the academy of management. And, whilst I’m at it, and I would appreciate some editorial generosity here, why don’t you clever and aggressive dissimulators of the academy lessen up on your barking of ironic pose (“and for cough ... hrchh hhmh , do buy *Ludens*” as the ad used to say). The press, of course, loved this innovation in the use of reception committees, and as Coward entered the building he even whispered in my ear, ‘Zoe, that’s a mmytee fiine toon ya gals got there!’

One of the youngest professoriate in the country, at 27 Ashley Coward was a sight to bathe tired eyes. A heterogeneous ensemble composed of wrap-around ‘Bienvenue’ Vuarnet shades, Indian belted dark leather button-fly trousers, superfuture suede winklepickers, and a ‘fake’ red Che T-shirt helped frame a freshly minted number 1 buzz-cut that revealed two major slash wounds, infamously sustained during the recent San Francisco anti-China protests. His appearance offered a taster of things to come, which as I realised later, was absolutely essential to the radical methods he wants to bring to contemporary scholarship. No dilettante was Coward. His outfit no mere supplementary Tartuffe or excessive frippery. The silver studded Martian Parker ear-ring sprouting a triple feathered faux crêpe paper cascade of convolute neck ribbon seemed justified and completely reasonable. His entire demeanour was in and of and for-itself methodologically instructive, Aufhebung of Hegelian integrity, a crystallised exoskeletal distillation of his inner authenticity, walking the talk, saying it like it is, hungering after thirst and righteousness. His seminar on our advanced research methods course for senior management executives began in typical dramatic fashion: a quick rebuttal of Forbes-Addison (1943), executed via the Milan solution, before regaining his main target by way of a baroque digression on the Derek Pugh inflected ‘Aston school’ of context variables and multi-causal analysis. As he spoke his feet seemed to articulate a quick-step fandango not seen since the days of the Lisbon revolution, the ankle buckles on his winklepickers offering a percussion of ocean waves crashing against the sand to the dominant scansion absent but present in the major tonic of his seminar. I was not the only one in the room to realise the importance of this polyphonic performance...

It took the pink ladies and I some time before we were able to tease out the full methodological lessons of the seminar. We were agreed that reflexivity was simply passé in the heady world occupied by Professor Coward. I have sought the counsel of Y-Tlee on the precision and accuracy of his chi-squared distribution calculations exercised on the second series of ceteris paribus assumptions concerned with the notorious ‘boomerang’ of convex feedback noise emergent between observed to observer – suspiciously tucked away, one might think, in the footnotes to Coward’s paper – but, no (Base matter!) his measurements are correct. He has, it seems, all his bases covered. Clearly it will be some time before scholars in the business school are able to fully work out the implications for organization studies, but, for the immediate future, one thing is certain (and he spelt this out during the Q&A): no more can we rest comfortable with the pragmatist assumption that representation holds good when validated by a community of accredited scholarly specialists. We need to look in our rear-view mirrors and watch out for curved air and bending light! This is bound to pose a considerable challenge to many still working to triangulate post-paradigm organization analysis. So, until next month my Notework readers, I will sign off with a twist of my wrist and a clack of my castanets: metho-dolo-gee!

---

---

## Calls and announcements

The 20th Annual NFF Conference: "Business as Usual"  
19–21 August, 2009

PhD Workshop: 17–18 August, 2009  
Turku/Åbo, Finland  
[www.nff2009.com](http://www.nff2009.com)

### CALL FOR PAPERS

In an age of increasing fragmentation, an age where the very point of business schools is being challenged (see e.g. Bennis & O'Toole 2005, Mintzberg 2004), we believe it is time to discuss what the state of business studies is – and in connection what we can understand by the phrase "business as usual". Rather than pompously positing a 'contemporary' theme, or make grandiose claims about what will be important in the future, we want to look to more basic, even mundane questions. What is "normal business" and what can we mean by "business as usual"?

Many have criticized much of modern studies of business and management for being overly abstract, divorced from the actual happenings in actual companies. Others again have criticized business studies for still clinging to a cleaned-up, clinical image of economic phenomena. Looking at the numerous things that are studied and theorized under the label of "business studies" one can easily become quite confused, and some have even asked whether there is such a thing as a united field any longer. Yet, for all our internal fragmentation, we are all somehow connected as a greater whole.

If we look to the world of business and corporations, a similar puzzlement seems to reign. The current economic situation, where change seems to spin ever faster, where innovative upstarts and efficient monoliths are constantly competing for position, where globalization is so normal that we can barely keep up with which country is supposedly on top, makes for a confusing time to do business. What is "usual" or "common" or "best practice" in a world where gurus tell us innovation and permanent change is the only game in town?

In other words, we want NFF 2009 to be a space to look at the very core of Nordic business studies. Is there something definable at the core of our field, or are we a loosely knit aggregation of interests, tied together by only the flimsiest of ideas? What is the natural state of our phenomena, and can we even agree on what these phenomena are? These questions are obviously both enormous and amorphous, and in order to partially organize it, we envision five areas of discussion:

## 1. **What do we actually know?**

### **Knowledge and knowing in Nordic Business Studies**

It is almost 100 years since Frederick Taylor coined the notion of "scientific management". But what have we learnt in this time? Can we actually claim to have generated general theories? Are there things we dare say with certainty within business studies, or are we forever locked into making disclaimers about our statements? We invite papers to this discussion that try to make clear what we have learned over the years and what is still to be learnt. This can take the shape of review papers, state-of-the-art papers, critical papers or papers discussing individual theories or theorists. This discussion will of course also include and invite papers on the status of knowledge in business studies: What kind of knowledge is accepted in the field? What knowledge claims are made? And how do we know what we know? What status should be given to the agent of this knowledge (academic, executive, innovator...)? What knowledge regimes exist and are they the ones we need?

## 2. **What do we actually study?**

### **The subjects of Nordic Business Studies**

Perhaps that which unites us within the field of Nordic business studies are the objects and subjects of study. What is the usual business? Is the normal company one that produces steel doohickeys in a factory, or a knowledge-intensive studio where people in trendy clothes make cool games for girls? Are there set limits for what we should be studying? Has the expansion of phenomena studied (from companies and executives to not-for-profits, artists, new technologies, social movements and so on) helped or hindered the field? What for example is the relation between law and business studies? And who do we study or choose not to study? We invite papers that make the studied subjects/fields/phenomena clearer and/or more interesting, which can include things such as:

- Explications of areas of study (relationships, innovation, marketing, strategy, management accounting, entrepreneurship etc.) and what should/should not be included in this;
- Analyses of specific groups and the value studying specifically this brings to business studies;
- Critiques of the choices business studies has made.

## 3. **Business, management and the everyday**

The notion of business as usual implies a kind of normal state, something one could meet on any given day. But are the mundane goings-on in everyday life properly represented in business studies? What is business as usual in the everyday life of people in organizations, really?

By inviting empirical studies of business as usual as well as methodological or conceptual papers on the everyday in companies we want to stimulate discussions about the aspects of business studies that tend to be overshadowed by our fascination with the special, the fantastic, and the spectacular. Where large-scale surveys and abstract analyses have their place, we feel that in order to really find the usual in business we need to get down to the actual daily happenings of organizations. Papers that for example deal with daily accounting practices, mundane marketing or strategy in the everyday are especially welcome.

#### **4. After business studies?**

Movements such as critical management studies have increasingly questioned business studies and its standing in the world. Other have felt that the interests of for example critical scholars have caused a drift away from the key issues in the field, and expressed a fear that business studies is becoming alienated from business life. In our fourth discussion we want to take these issues seriously and ask: What is the future of the field, and what comes after business studies? We thus invite papers that deal with any of the following:

- The developmental path(s) of business studies;
- The business school of tomorrow;
- Going beyond business studies;
- The future of critical management studies;
- Death and resurrection in the field.

#### **5. Teaching as usual?**

Based on the challenges that Nordic business schools and business education are facing, we invite papers that for example deal with the following:

- Master programs and international recruiting
- Competences development for teachers and students
- New teaching methods or the good old ones?; Individuality or collectivity?; Mentoring, supervising or coaching?
- Relevant textbooks and their writers
- Cross-disciplinary teaching; Teaching philosophy and art in business school; Teaching business to computer nerds and other non-business students
- Managing the business school
- 'Virtual' and 'real' teaching
- Ethics and responsibility in business teaching

#### **Practicalities**

We welcome abstracts not exceeding 500 words. Abstracts can be submitted via email to [nff2009@gmail.com](mailto:nff2009@gmail.com) by January 15, 2009.

#### **Organizing committee**

Professor Malin Brännback (chair), professor Alf Rehn, Nina Kivinen, Eerika Saaristo, Tuija-Liisa Pohja, Anna-Greta Nyström.

## **PhD Workshop: August 17-18, 2009**

In accordance with NFF traditions a pre-conference PhD Workshop will be held in the Turku Archipelago on August 17-18, 2009. The workshop is open for all doctoral students within all fields of business studies. The aim of the workshop is to give students the possibility to discuss their research projects with prominent academics from their fields, academics with a reputation as excellent supervisors and commentators. Doctoral students will be divided into groups of approx. 5-6 with two tutors for each group. Doctoral students who are about halfway through their projects are most likely to benefit from this workshop and they will therefore be given priority. Priority will also be given to doctoral students from NFF member institutions. An outline of the research projects should include the aim of the study and proposed methodology and how this study contributes to the development of the field. The outline should be no longer than 2000 words, and submitted by January 15<sup>th</sup> to [nff2009@gmail.com](mailto:nff2009@gmail.com). Notification of acceptance will be made by March 1, 2009. Accepted doctoral students can submit a revised outline of their research project by July 1, 2009. The workshop will begin with a joint departure from Åbo in the morning of August 17. We will return to Åbo in the afternoon of August 18.

### **Commentators will include:**

Professor Malin Brännback, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Professor Christer Carlsson, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Associate professor Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist, Gothenburg School of Business, Sweden

Professor Lars Hassel, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Professor Daniel Hjort, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Associate professor Ulla Hytti, Turku School of Economics, Finland

Professor Bengt Kristensson Ugglå, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Professor Alf Rehn, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Professor Peter Skaerbaek, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Professor Lars Strannegård, Uppsala University, Sweden

Professor Janne Tienari, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland

Professor Jan-Åke Törnroos, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Swansea University  
Centre for Research into Gender in Culture and Society

# SEX, GENDER AND QUEER(ING) BIOLOGIES



**A one-day symposium and public lecture**



**Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup> 2009**

**9.30-3.30**

Venue: Digital Technium 104



**Public Lecture 4.00pm**

**Anne Fausto-Sterling (Brown University)  
'Nature, Nurture, Neither: Reconceptualising  
Sex and Gender'**

Venue: Callaghan Lecture Theatre

Staff/Waged £10

Students/Unwaged £5

PUBLIC LECTURE:NO CHARGE



Further details of the symposium and registration form will shortly be available via the GENCAS website (<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/english/gender/>). Inquiries may be sent to Sarah Gamble ([s.gamble@swan.ac.uk](mailto:s.gamble@swan.ac.uk)). PLEASE NOTE THAT PLACES FOR THE FREE PUBLIC LECTURE MAY BE LIMITED. Expressions of interest should therefore be sent well in advance to Sarah Gamble via the above email address or directly to the Department of English, Keir Hardie Building, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea SA2 8PP.

# The State of Things

## *Towards a Political Economy of Artifice and Artefacts*

April 29<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009

### Keynote speakers:

*Tiziana Terranova, University of Naples L'orientale*

*Natalie Jeremijenko, New York University*

*Nick Dyer-Witheford, University of Western Ontario*

In a more wistful moment, Marx asked what commodities would say if they could speak. Surely, if he listened long enough, they would have announced the various traumas of their exploitatative and violent birthing to him. Eventually, one imagines, they would have described the nature of the various forms of labour necessary for their production as the apperitionally elementary components of the capitalist mode of production.

But would the commodity's autobiography be the same now, one wonders?

Today we live in a much different state of things: the artifice of artefacts is evident all around us. A parliament of communication technologies, from RFIDS to bluetooth devices, constantly exchange information and network all around and through us. Wireless networks of communication, control, and cooperation proliferate in mysterious ways, all speaking an infra-language of organization, inscribing new techniques of governance. But these networks have become all the more indiscernible by the open secret of their appearance.

Developments in Actor Network Theory (ANT) and autonomist techno-science studies have made a turn towards the economic. What does this bode for the field of organization studies? Will these two movements join in an encompassing view of post-human economic institutions? Will ANT provide the definitive answer to the interrelation of economics, politics and objects? These two yet separated strands of economy and politics might provide a good opportunity to revisit the problematics of objects and their commodification, combining them with more traditional approaches. This conference therefore proposes a return to the study of objects and artifacts and the various logics and dispositifs that underlie the formation of their fields of power, while combining them with modern and more classical forms of political economy. Themes could include, but are not limited to:

- Protocols and networked governance.
- Diagrams and control.
- The return of resistentialism and insubordinate objects.
- Army ANTs and the bones left behind.
- ANT and the networks of economies.
- Imaginary futures and technological dis/utopian visions.
- The affective states of machinic interaction.
- Anachronous inquiries and steampunk dreams.
- P2P commons, conflict, and governance.
- Interpretative labor and semantic webs.
- Extended minds and their cognitive scaffolding.
- Posthuman artificing.
- Artefacts, black boxes and governance.
- The art of commodifying the artficed Network.
- Immaterial politics of networking.
- The estrangement of networks.
- Marx's Laboratory Life vs. Engel's Scallops.

Please send proposals to Tanya Dean ([ulsmtemp1@le.ac.uk](mailto:ulsmtemp1@le.ac.uk)) of 500 words or less by November 28th, 2008. Notification of acceptance will be provided by February 4<sup>th</sup>. We envisage the cost of participating in the event, including refreshments and lunches to be in the order of £150. This fee does not include accommodation and a list of variously priced options for accommodation will be provided once the call for papers has closed.

For more information please e-mail Simon Lilley ([s.lilley@le.ac.uk](mailto:s.lilley@le.ac.uk))

Sponsored by the [University of Leicester School of Management](#) and the [Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy](#).

---

## ....and finally

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of *Notework*. Please continue to support your locally global SCOS museletter by sending your contributions to us. Any suggestions for new features, don't hesitate to contact us.

**Sheena Vachhani**  
s.j.vachhani@swansea.ac.uk

**Stephen Dunne**  
s.dunne@le.ac.uk