

ADVANCES IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES

SERIES EDITORS:
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Edited by
Alison Pullen &
Carl Rhodes

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Bits of Organization

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Advances in Organization Studies

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Borderlines

Alison Pullen and Carl Rhodes

Organization Studies are in Wikipedia!! When we went to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization_studies in March 2008 we found a useful and pithy definition: “the academic study of organizations, examining them using the methods of economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, communication studies, and psychology. Related practical disciplines include strategic management, human resources and industrial and organizational psychology”. There’s more. In Wikipedia we were told not only that “organizational studies encompasses the study of organizations from multiple viewpoints, methods, and levels of analysis”, but also that “a variety of methods are used in organizational studies”. Now if, in generic terms, a definition is a statement that describes what something is, then as far as the Wikipedia author(s) are concerned, organization studies are oh so many things. Furthermore, this definition is not really definitional at all – as long as you employ the methods from another (more respectable) discipline to study something vaguely related to organizations then you are doing organization studies. And we can only get that definite if we suspend any debate on what constitutes an ‘organization’ in the first place.

In academic circles Wikipedia is not considered as a robust source of knowledge – except perhaps for the hurried student (or professor?) who no longer feels it prudent, efficient or necessary to visit the library or the bookshop; indeed students are told that this is a source for laypersons, whomever they may be. But when it comes to organization studies, at least, Wikipedia provides a useful form of anti-definition that seems do quite well at knowing what this field is defined by – that is, not very much at all (at least in any formal sense). What is called organization studies defies formal definition because of the breadth and incommensurability of activity that goes on under its name. And, if it is stated in Wikipedia we can presume that the diverse unconnectedness of organization studies is well known and conventionally accepted – acknowledging it is a conservative rather than radical move. But this provokes another line of questioning too. We might start by asking what lies outside of organization studies? What is illegitimate to it? And if

we can imagine some answers to that, we can also ask what it is that lies on the borderline between the inside and the outside.

In conceiving of this book, it was our intention to publish papers which might be perceived as borderline to the already contested mainstream of organization studies – indeed, in approaching people to contribute to the collection we asked: ‘do you have papers in your desk drawer that you dare not send to a journal or that have been rejected because they don’t fit within journals in our field (or we might add its editors)?’ We were keen to receive papers that could be located in a monstrous space, one that “disrupts boundaries by inhabiting margins and peripheries” (Thanem, 2006: 165) – papers that the authors themselves thought were monstrous. In some cases this was explicit, for example in chapter eleven, Sheena Vachanni in her own way links the monstrous to the *vagina dentata* to disrupt gendered organizations. But the task of such a monstrosity for all the people who have put their work in this book has been to “take especially seriously those problems, beliefs and experiences that are annulled by (‘quaint’, ‘naïve’, ‘outrageous’, unthinkable in terms of) a dominant discipline” (Hodge, 1995: 37). In this regard, the papers in this collection, we believe, are serious to the point of solemnity.

If we think of organization studies as having borders (both in creating and maintaining them), then we are drawn to another metaphorical convention – referring to the ‘field’ of organization studies. A field – a parcel of land cleared of forest for the purpose of planned grazing or for crops; land clearly demarcated, enclosed and identified by ownership. Often fields are fenced such that defining a field is a process of ring fencing. We can ask then, are organization studies fenced off from their outside by borders so that their contents can be easily identified and cultivated? The agrarian unifying metaphor strains under the pressure of the heterodoxy present in what can and has been signified using the term organization studies. Indeed, if there is a unity of organization studies it is only one that is propagated by the power of its own eponym. Academics and the journals they hide within and behind constantly judge what is deemed as legitimate knowledge – a process that works on political as much as scholarly grounds, as Damian O’Doherty and Hugh Willmott poignantly illustrate in this volume. But amidst these political machinations there is a movement and collision of various traditions, interests and institutionalised writing practices, often competing for exclusive rights to the name. There are borders, for sure, it’s just that there is a paucity of agreement as to where they lie. Even amidst the vastness of the bits and pieces conveniently and ironically calling themselves organization studies the inside and the outside are not so clearly identifiable. And further, our attention here is directed to the outer limits of possibility of what might be allowed to count in the already diverse and disordered realm of organization studies. But do these defiant bits of organization, as they might be rep-

resented in an assemblage of text, mark an ‘advance’ in organization studies driven from the outposts of borderlands and badlands? With this advance would we pursue the desire to be free, and rejoice in this pursuit and the gifts of toil that it promises? Are these the boundless plains promised as if one were freed from the penal colony imagined in Carl Rhodes and Martin Kornberger’s chapter?

The advance of which we speak is not one that seeks to locate the most efficient and prudent means by which to generate scientific progress (cf. Knudsen, 2003). Instead it is the advance of the *avant-garde* – it seeks to destabilize the assumed yet already diverse and contested normalcy of what organization studies are allowed to be. When the field of organization studies is considered to be an *avant-garde* literature it is in the sense that it can be experimental and subversive and that, culturally, it “trades on, hybridizes and mixes the high and the low [...] Such an *avant-garde* experiment rather than repeats; it disrespects the canon rather than either following or opposing it” (Czarniawska and Rhodes, 2006: 215) so as to counteract those tendencies that seek to fossilize theory and method into a universalized or pedantically accepted common sense. And invoking this artistic practice in organization studies, we take heed of Lyotard (1986): “it should be remembered that science and industry are no more free of the suspicion which concerns reality than are art and writing” (p. 76).

We want to be specific here in noting that there is a relation between enclosing and opening. Borders are drawn to define a space whose identity follows rather than precedes the border, yet this space as it is differentially drawn can also be resisted through a critique that opens and questions the suspension of disbelief that is required for the space to make sense – in Rancière’s terms to try to ‘redistribute the sensible’ that so forcibly denies permission for experimentation and transgression (Rancière, 2004). The distribution that Rancière speaks of is one that is policed so as to determine what separates the inside from the outside. Further, it is in the opening of this book that we find ourselves in between the inside and the outside. In this book we too have borders to contend with. We are in a double bind. Should we introduce the book, its contributions and its contributors so as to offer a map of what is to come – to chart our territory in advance and draw our boundaries as if anticipating that you will stay within them? Such mapping would seek to locate both us and you in a cartographic effort to make sense of all of this as if the authority of our authorship was so alive and well; and Barthes said some time ago “to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to *close* the writing” (Barthes, 1977: 147 italics added).

But whilst the genre of this opening chapter seems to demand that we take up this position of authorship and mastery, the idea of the book itself demands that we do not take up such a position. Our dilemma in opening

the book is that in so doing we are afraid that we might also make the hubristic claim to close it in that very act of opening – to enclose the various bits within our editorial fencing. This closing would direct, map and route ourselves and the book into an alignment with each of the contributors. The genre of this edited book demands a masterful introduction. What we are subject to is the force of what Derrida (1980) identifies as the ‘law of genre’. A law enforced by “a certain kind of police brutality” (p. 66) that wants purity and punishes that which is monstrous and infected as each of the contributors in their own ways demonstrate. We are beckoned to obey the law (the law of the father; we should cower under the phallus as Heather Höpfl (in this volume) might say), to stay within the enclosed limits prescribed by the genre such that the outside does not contaminate the inside even though the ethos which informed the creation of this book was one that in itself sought that very contamination. This inside and outside are not without their problems either. We speak from within this genre as we participate in it knowingly – this is an academic, edited book ‘within’ organization studies, this is the first chapter as written by those named as its ‘editors’. So we will try to stay with the idea of this as being an ‘opening’ chapter while recognising the closures that it inevitably participates in. As Chris Land puts to us in his chapter, organizations are achieved through the concealment of the antagonisms that characterise their existence – organization studies are the same.

Although we recognise our identity location as being both within and without genre, as already noted the very field of organization studies is already ambiguous in terms of its borders. Indeed, “the politics of prescribing what is ‘proper’ to organization theory (a process of also excluding considerable bodies of theory that it proposes to disown) is a long vexed subject area” (Jones and Munro, 2005: 7). As a result of this vexation we see that the ‘field’ of organization studies, as it is conventionally referred to, is not so well tended and its borders not as neatly or strongly marked as some might imagine or hope for as if scholars of organization might be sequestered into a “clean California research park where nothing is out of place and all is governed by a corporate logic focussed on productivity, competitive advantage and the good old bottom line” (Van Maanen, 1995: 689). These vulgar and purist imaginings are transgressed again and again by the nomadic impulses that refuse the inscription of a particular order – an order imagined by those settlers who would feel so much more comfortable and powerful in enforcing an agrarian thinking where fields (of study) are carefully organized, fertilized and irrigated and with crops separated and property rights ensured (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This speaks to the very instability of meaning and being to which Robert Grafton Small attests in chapter three – the unsteady stone on which we teeter.

It may be that the agrarian image of study as being demarcated into dis-

tinct fields has enabled the creation of ‘correct images’ and ‘correct narratives’ (cf. Lyotard, 1986) of legitimate organization studies – not defined formally, but defined culturally and practically by its gatekeepers and border controllers – phallogocentric ring fencers. And although the gates may be opened, they are gates nonetheless and they could not be otherwise. These gates attempt forcefully to stabilize theory and method such that they can be captured, reproduced and indoctrinated into a “canonically and topographically predetermined terrain” (Jones and Munro, 2005: 8). Moreover the call for an avant-garde is not to seek to relocate the gates to their proper place, but to ensure their instability and constant moveability and attest to a heightened reflexivity in considering what is counted as the advancement of theory, not just practice. Everything can be questioned here, nothing is sacred or legitimate. We note, however, that as Lyotard suggests there is a public for the legitimacy that the avant-garde disavows – a public that desires it as an “appropriate remedy for the anxiety and depression that public experiences” (1984: 75). But our objectives are precisely the reverse – we want to invoke and provoke such an anxiety so that method and theory work in the ethical space that is outside of the “good conscience of having done one’s duty” (Derrida, 1994: 28).

We wish to challenge the labelling of what becomes un/acceptable and dominant/marginal in organization studies, and in so doing challenge the dichotomies that privilege rationality over unrationality, masculine over feminine, voice over silence, and clean over dirty writing practices (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). In recognizing that the study of organizations is in a condition of heterodoxy, where diverse methods and theories collide and compete, gathered together only in the broken net of a name (Westwood and Clegg, 2003) we might assemble some of the bits that break in or break off in the process of this collision – that which spins out, interrupted and interrupting, by the possibilities of decentredness, flying from the field to the plain or the plain to the field.

As Deleuze and Guattari (1984) proposed “[w]e live today in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers”. It is these bits, as they shatter from organization studies, that concern us. This is not a project of resurrection: “[w]e no longer believe in the myth of the existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original unity” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 42). Indeed, performing such a disunification attests to and celebrates the multiplicity of what is (and might be) possible in organization studies so that any uniting pretended by border controlling is seen as function of power and pretence. If the desire for a ‘standard instrumentation’ for measuring the constructs of organizational knowledge (McKinley, 2007) were ever realised, then we hope that what resides in this

volume would be immeasurable. We want to augment rather than the “reduce fragmentation of meaning” (McKinley, 2007: 139).

If there ever was a historical unity to what is now called organization studies it was forged out of the imposition of doctrinaire positivist sociology and structural functionalism that diminished the possibilities of what might count as legitimate study (Hassard, 1995). In this unity the object of study was bureaucratic organization understood in a Weberian sense, and the method of study was to test theory “by collecting data, usually of quantitative kind, utilizing standard positivistic methods in search of managerially relevant conclusions” (Burrell, 1999: 388). This neat picture of organization studies sought for itself to be a “new physics of human social arrangements” whose acolytes used “empiricism, quantitative statistical analysis, and large scale surveys to advertise their commitments to science” (Clegg and Bailey, 2008: xliii). But this mythical past, is no longer. It has for some time been recognised that organization studies have been characterised by an “anything goes attitude” rather than a “theoretical tyranny” even by those whose explicit preference is for a more balanced approach (Pfeffer, 1993: 616) – like Ann Rippin and Peter Fleming in chapter nine we can now speak of cricket in poetry and quilts. And this is so despite the nostalgic hankerings of those who would wish to impose an idealised view of the past onto a future not yet realised by the macho image of the ‘man of reason’ who successfully slays his opponents with the weaponry of science (Rhodes and Pullen, 2008). This nostalgic future is boldly hoped for as being one where “succeeding generations can continue to make progress, by keeping the science in social science” (Donaldson, 2005: 1085). But history is up for grabs, and even the stories of the most classic ‘writers on organizations’ can be re-told with different effects, as Stewart Clegg and Alexandra Pitsis illustrate in their commentaries on F.W. Taylor and Taylorism in chapters five and six respectively.

Plurality is the order of the day, like it or not – the call for scientific unity has been ignored or resisted by many. As Pfeffer acquiesced: “while some see paradigm proliferation and incommensurability as a problem and others as a valuable dimension of the field, there is virtually no disagreement about the *fact* of paradigm proliferation” (Pfeffer, 1997: 17, italics in original). Moreover, this consensus has not been disturbed in the decade or more since Pfeffer’s acknowledgement of it (see Westwood and Clegg, 2003). Despite various attempts to tame organization studies, that which manifests under its name continues to diversify substantively, theoretically, methodologically and even textually and sensually as Marin Corbett’s chapter in this volume illustrates. Any supposed unity is by now “fragmented and frayed into a cacophony of querulous ‘voices’ totally lacking in general moral force and analytical coherence” (Reed, 2006: 19). And if this is the case then we can only approach a definition of organization studies that rests on its multi-

furious and malleable character – organization studies have for some time, then, been a collection of bits only vaguely related to each other. For some, all of this difference is perplexing and unfortunate such that there is a need to “*handle* the problems of pluralism, diversity, and incommensurability” (Scherer, 1998: 147: italics added), but for others the very purpose is to create and publish “new theories and ideas that increase the varieties of knowledge about organizations” (Daft and Lewin, 2008: 117). It is the extremities of this variation that we seek to celebrate in this book, where difference is not something to be ‘handled’ but to be fuelled. There is no need for fear and loathing, and no need to heed the calls of field defining dictators (Van Maanen, 1995; Czarniawska, 1998). Indeed, this might always have been the goal of theory, understood as “a creation and a production, and therefore always at least a tremor and a threat to the community it emerges from” (Jones and Munro, 2005: 2).

In stoking the fire, we can push the boundaries of innovative and unconventional work that is on the fringe of publishability (or non-publishability as some contributors to this collection can testify) as governed by prevailing standards in the dominant bastions of organization studies. Ho hum. Together such work would “exploit rather than fear polysemy”, and would do so by being “elusive, playful, open” (Czarniawska, 2003: 433) or even satirical as in the case of Alf Rehn’s zombies in the final chapter. It is conventional for scholarly endeavours to be justified and united primarily by a *telos* – a goal or end to which the different bits will collectively contribute towards achieving. We have no such mission. Instead an avant-garde as we consider it would be guided only by a shared *ethos* – a sentiment which can be engaged with, reflected on, or interrupted with more advance. This ethos is informed by the possibility of research that produces an avant-garde organization theory that teeters on the edge of acceptability – conceivable but only barely representable in our (small) part of academic activity (cf. Lyotard, 1984). These bits are not parts of a whole, rather part of what is left when the whole is exploded across the criss-cross of its contested borders such that not only is it incapable of being put back together, but also the idea that the whole ever existed is deeply questioned. Such transgressive work has the capability of moving organization studies but is at the same time unacceptable to its current convention (at least to what is often carelessly labelled as its ‘mainstream’). It would push the limits of organization studies back into its ‘semiotic system’ so that it might be disorganized through creative and disruptive forms of semiosis (cf. Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). This ‘fringe’ project desires an ongoing vitalization of organization studies – not by bemoaning the death at the centre, but by engaging with the life of the margin. And this may be by employing fiction, poetics, ficto-criticism, and engaging with the sensual, the textual, the corporeal, the feminine, the abnormal, the unacceptable and the weird.

Let the opening continue, but tread with caution as each chapter is a violation against the idea of a mainstream – these are acts of resistance, acts that engage, acts that transgress and subvert the proclamation of a centre.

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Scientia Ficta

Heather Höpfl

Inside the Clinic

Medicine had tended, since the eighteenth century, to recount its own history..... The theoretical, it was thought, was the element of perpetual change, the starting point of all the historical variation in medical knowledge, the locus of conflicts and disappearances; it was in this theoretical element that medical knowledge marked its fragile relativity. The clinic, on the other hand, was thought to be the element of its positive accumulation: it was this constant gaze upon the patient, this age-old, yet ever renewed attention that enabled medicine not to disappear entirely with each new speculation, but to preserve itself, to assume little by little the figure of a truth that is definitive, if not completed, in short, to develop, below the level of the noisy episodes of its history, in a continuous historicity. In the non-variable of the clinic, medicine, it was thought, had bound truth and time together (Foucault, 1975: 54–55).

I am in a national health hospital in the northeast of England. I arrive at 10.50 for an appointment at 11 o'clock knowing it will be late. The queue for reception is at least fifty people long and winds round the reception area. My card says, "Report to the Women's Clinic on arrival" so I spurn the queue and ask a passing nurse. At first, I am directed to the gynaecology clinic passing through "ear, nose and throat" and cardiology on my way, only to find, at the end of a charmless corridor, a deserted waiting room, devoid of all the usual debris of hospital waiting rooms, with a locked door where reception would normally be. I go back down the corridor and intercept another nurse. She is friendly and tells me that the Women's Clinic has now moved so it is necessary for me to go back out of the building through Out-Patients and along the front of the hospital, in through the revolving doors and turn right. Outside, out of the excessive heat of the Out-Patients department, a gale is blowing so I am swept along the front of the hospital, past the *Ambulance Entrance*, to the revolving doors. They are locked, shut for essential maintenance. I press on following the blue arrows to another entrance and then turn back on myself, back down the corridor to find the

main entrance from the labyrinthine corridors. However, the new Women's Clinic is not difficult to find. There is a long queue here, too, but I wait patiently and move forwards slowly until it is my turn. The receptionist checks my letter, issues me with a card, checks that my file is in the tray then sends me over to sit in the waiting area. It is a strange place. This clinic is clearly a multi-purpose space. On the walls are posters which explain the joys and benefits of breast-feeding, the calculation of due dates for pregnant mothers, the symptoms and prognoses for patients with breast cancer, there are exhortations to have regular cervical smears, and warnings about the long term use of hormone replacement therapy. There are precisely six magazines on the table. Just in front of me are a young couple. I can tell from the way they are talking and leaning together that they have a problem. The woman sitting beside me is over seventy and has a tightly buttoned coat done up to the neck. Despite the oppressive heat, she does not undo even the top button. I have forgotten my book.

Models

One magazine is clearly aimed at teenagers. Its *in-your-face* frankness would offend anyone who knew better. It invites girls to consider pages of vacuous celebrities and to learn their "star tips" about clothes and make-up. I flick through it with some dismay reflecting on the heroic women who were offered to me as role models in the 1950s in *The Girls' Book of Heroines*. My role models could do things – row boats in terrible storms, run hospitals, fight disease, reform prisons. The women in the magazine that now rests on my knee can drink to excess, starve themselves to near death, serially co-habit with wasters and ne'er-do-wells, and indulge their limited talents in dreadful "reality" television shows. I am getting old. I throw the magazine down on the table in front of me where it sits with two booklets on pregnancy and three copies of the Women's Institute magazine which look singularly unappealing. The glossy magazine I was reading has fallen open at a very well *sculpted* black man who is provocatively posing in swimming trunks with a naughty, inviting smile. The tightly buttoned woman sitting next to me picks it up: and so we sit, and the minutes pass by, and the quarter hours. I have forgotten to bring with me the book I had put by the door to occupy me during my waiting time. I am re-reading *The White Hotel* but I keep getting caught up in deferral so I had also put out Žižek's study of Deleuze, *Organs without Bodies*. I have brought neither and so I begin to tidy the contents of my handbag. Here are some receipts from my recent visit to Utrecht and a plastic bag of mixed coins: some Euros, some pounds. My passport, a letter the clinic sent me, my latest payslip with a phone number I want to keep. Here is my mobile phone. I look at the photo gallery:

some images of Trento, Krakow and Cologne. I put several disintegrating paper tissues in the bin. It is now ten to twelve. I have been here an hour. The elderly woman sitting beside me is still here. The couple are called. I pick up the magazine again and make an audible sigh.

Monition

Behind me a mother is reading very loudly to her child. She reads well but her voice is affected and she is clearly reading for all of us. "Then the little bear said... what did the little bear say darling? The little bear said..." The child, a boy, is more interested in the toys which he is bashing together to the visible irritation of the woman sitting next to me. I don't think she is annoyed with the child. I think she is anxious about seeing the doctor and the intrusive noise is bothering her. Just then, she is called and disappears into the corridor and, almost immediately, I am called too. "I just need to check your weight and blood pressure". The nurse is clearly under a lot of pressure. They are all running late and the waiting room is still filling up. She does my weight but then forgets all about my blood pressure and tells me to return to my seat and I will be called. By now I have reached the tranquil stage. However, that sounds too much like an achievement, so perhaps bovine state is more accurate. I am in an institutional stupor. People pass by, are called, emerge from the corridor so, apart from a young couple and because the young man is clearly embarrassed by being in this place of women, I do not notice the comings and goings. Then it is my turn. I am taken by an orderly down a long corridor. There is something Kafkaesque about the experience. I am shown into an empty room. "Wait here and someone will come". I wait. These little movements provide the illusion of process although I now begin another period of waiting. This time I am alone. I do not have to undress or bare my arm for a blood test. I am just in the same situation as I was before but this time in isolation. On the wall are the ubiquitous charts about calculating due dates for pregnant mothers and there is also a chart which calculates acceptable levels of amniotic fluid around a foetus. I find, in the absence of anything else to do, myself reading them over and over again, hypnotically. By now it is ten past twelve. I look at my watch then I look up at the clock over the desk. It is frozen at six twenty-two. For all I know it has given up waiting long ago and decided to remain here as an emblem of empty time. Six twenty-two. Just then, the consultant comes in. An Indian woman, pleasant, hurried, clearly rushed off her feet, "I must warn you..." she begins.

As we chat, I tell her that I use Joan Emerson's well known paper, *Behaviour in private places: sustaining definitions of reality in gynaecological examinations*, (Emerson, 1970) for teaching purposes on my third year

Management Psychology course and briefly outline what it is about. “Yes”, she says, “you know we are discouraged from wearing a white coat outside of the clinic because of the transfer of infection”. In fact, she distinguishes herself as a consultant by wearing everyday dress and she is differentiated only by her insistent busyness and bustle which announce that she is in charge here. “But, one colleague”, she continues, “wears her white coat wherever she goes in the hospital because it is the only way she can identify that she is a member of staff”. “A doctor?” I ask. “No”, she smiles as if to make a point, “a podiatrist”.

Pronouncement, statistics, contra-indications, side-effects, indices, British Medical Association, the Federal Drug Agency, signs to look out for, adverse reactions, and a web-site address to follow this up because I am “someone who will understand these reports”. These are the monitions that come with the prescription. Then I am out in the corridor again and now moving against the flow and heading for the exit.

Clinical Evidence

“Because it came a corpus of knowledge (*un savoir*) [original italics], the clinic was a universal relationship of mankind with itself: the age of absolute happiness for medicine. And the decline began when writing and secrecy were introduced, that is, the concentration of this knowledge in a privileged group ... what was known was no longer communicated to others and put to practical use once it had passed through the esotericism of knowledge” (Foucault, 1975: 55). In the clinic, I am a processed body, circumscribed by height and weight, signs and symptoms. My entry into this space is defined by pathology. The touching vestiges of the happier medicine occur when the consultant makes a conspiratorial bracketing and confers on me the honorary status of someone who is eligible for entry into esoteric knowledge. This is because she acknowledges me to be someone who belongs to an another esoteric community. However, we are both complicit in constructing the phallus. We are two professional women in a women’s clinic losing our own bodies in the service of the body of knowledge: what Foucault refers to as the *corpus* of knowledge but, as I hope this chapter will demonstrate, it is not really a body *per se*, it is merely the phallus. Žižek (2003) is right. It is an organ without a body. Synecdoche.

In the organization, “there is a hiatus between what is experienced and socially constructed by the users on the one hand, and the circumstances that socially produced the space and its current physical form and design on the other... [which is]... subject to symbolic interpretation and manipulation [such that the place becomes] a forum for the expression of cultural conflict, social change, and attempts at class-based, gender segregated and

age-specific social control” (Low, 2002: 134). In point of fact, Low is referring to public space in Costa Rica but the parallels with the clinic work well. The clinic is a regulated site of performance from entry to exit. In classical times, the *fascinum* was a phallic amulet worn around the neck of children and cattle to protect the wearer from the eye of the other. Here in the clinic, the metaphorical phallus serves the same function. It is an amulet against the other. Here is the irony: the pathology is endemic. The female consultant and myself are already amputees but the scars are of a membership which we never had but which is *remembered* only by the fascinum of medical knowledge which we are forced to wear.

Contagions

The fascinum is the badge of order which is elevated in the face of disorder. It is the fear of plague running riot in the streets. In the clinic, the fascinum is elevated in the face of MRSA. Actually, I do not know precisely what MRSA means but I know that I am supposed to be afraid. MRSA is death walking beside me in the hospital corridor, waiting for me in the washrooms, hiding in trays of inadequately sterilised instruments. There are notices and signs and leaflets explaining in great detail how we must wash our hands to protect us from *C difficile* and MRSA. *C difficile* is resistant to washing and disinfection but we can protect ourselves against MRSA using a number of careful precautions. We can wash before we enter the hospital and, on returning home from a visit, we can shower and wash our clothes in at least 40 degrees. I forget the details. The leaflets create the *cordon sanitaire* around the hospital, around ourselves. But, of course, I will not return home and shower and put all my clothes in the washing machine. Perhaps I am being irresponsible and will carry the disease from door handle to supermarket trolley, to ATM keypad, to you. Order, with an insistent commitment to writing and classification, must protect itself from the disease “which is transmitted when bodies are mixed together; that of the evil, which is increased when fear and death overcome prohibitions” (Foucault, 1975: 197–198).

I am much intrigued by our obsession with warning. We are obsessed with monitoring and all the insecurity which is suggested by such obsession. At the same time, I am interested in this paralysis which prevents action, pins us to the spot, deprives us of all sense and traps us in inaction. These places where I become void, invalid, invalidated, where I am lost, caught up in order, processed, produced, rendered abject, where identity becomes vertiginous and I fall away barely able to maintain my own construction. Here is where “I”, as an entity, become more fiction than fantasy. Where I am first constructed as text and then reconstructed as text and what is in-between

is cast aside, is made abject. I am inclined to consider Julia Kristeva's comment that all literature is apocalyptic (Kristeva, 1982: 207) as meaning that literature is not only revelatory but that it also reveals states which lie beyond the fiction. So, how should a reader encounter the narrative opening this chapter? What is its status in apocalyptic terms? Does it reveal anything of any interest to the organization theorist? Is it true? Well, *it is* true to say that it is hardly gripping fiction. But, the question is a serious one. Is it fiction or field notes and how can we decide? Does it matter? Increasingly, we are confronted by an inability to verify the information we use to make decisions about our actions. Of course, this has always been the case. A visit to the misericords in the choir stalls in Chester Cathedral would show how mediaeval wood carvers, unfamiliar with elephants, interpreted travellers' tales and attempted to carve the familiar and to incorporate the unfamiliar. So the elephant carving at the end of one of the benches has the cloven hooves of a cow and the trunk and large ears that are characteristic of the elephant.

Closer to home, advice to students about the use of Wikipedia frequently argues that its sources are not reliable, that the validity of information on the Wikipedia site is not authoritative. Certainly, editing access at my son's school resulted in third year boys, that is, boys of about thirteen years old, adding illustrious figures to the staff, Albert Einstein taught physics, William Golding taught English, Jonny Wilkinson taught rugby. Innocent fun, but the boys were embarking on the project of fictionalizing the school. In those few simple changes, they introduced a fictitious alternative to the school as it was. The school took on a parallel existence as an abstraction.

Codding

Recently, I used a painting to illustrate this point. The original painting is a portrait of Ludovico Capponi and was painted between 1550 and 1555. At present it hangs in the Frick Collection in New York. It was painted by Agnolo di Cosimo Bronzino the Italian Mannerist painter and is a fine example of Mannerist art. It shows Ludovico Capponi, a young aristocrat and page at the Medici court, dressed in black and white, his family's armorial colours, and wearing a large silver cod-piece with a pronounced *knob* at the top. This playful conceit is replicated in a pastiche created by the so-called Museum of Depressionist Art, a web-site which displays several well-known pieces of art *doctored* and presented with commentary and context precisely as the with the original. Here, however, in place of the prominent codpiece is a piece of cod. Where there is a silver codpiece in the original painting, there is a silver scaled fish: a cod piece. Of course, it is not only in this direct and obvious way that the parallel between original

and copy is indicated. Some of the facts that are provided by the painting are consonant with the original. “The portrait subject is believed to have been a page at the Medici court in the middle of the 16th century”, says the website before launching into a commentary on the artist’s, Bronzenose, obsession with fish. More than this, the word “cod” itself means to hoax or fool. This is a hoax it says. The architects of the site, the *Museum of Depressionist Art*, Ernie Jurick and Andrea Nicolaidis are only *codding*. The response from students was predictable. A group of mature Dutch students study the painting and comment. They know from my presentation that nothing is necessarily as it seems and they cannot decide. Some say it is a modern painting created to copy the Mannerist style but modern and a joke. Others say it is an old painting and that the cod is really in the painting as a symbol. Perhaps the young man comes from a seafaring family: perhaps it has some Christian symbolism. It is a fish. The symbol for Christ is a fish. Some say it is an old painting that has had the fish superimposed. These people I believe to be right. It accords with the accounts on the web and I have acted in good faith. But, how do I offer an authoritative account in all these competing explanations. The students have to take so much on faith and for that matter so do I. Do Ernie and Andrea exist? Have they created themselves or have I created them? Getting to the point where I can say anything with any certainty is a precarious journey. Is my story about the elephant in the misericords in Chester Cathedral true or have I simply made it up. Well, of course, we could appeal to science but the validity I am seeking to offer the students is subject to recursion. What exactly can science validate here – at least to the extent that it might enable us *to act*. Well, *in truth*, certainly some of these things can be verified with time and at a cost, but others clearly cannot.

Fake Science

The story of Velikovsky’s controversial books is a case in point. Velikovsky attracted considerable criticism of his work by arguing that many of the myths of the ancient world had their origins in *real* events. However, according to Henry Bauer, “Reading something they can understand, that seems to make sense, that presents itself as technically competent, *non-scientists are easily gulled by fake science* [italics added]” and Robert Todd Carroll says that, “What Velikovsky does isn’t science because he does not start with what is known and then use ancient myths to illustrate or illuminate what has been discovered. Instead, *he is indifferent to the established beliefs of astronomers and physicists*, and seems to assume that someday they will find the evidence to support his ideas” [italics added] and continues, “The essence of Velikovsky’s unreasonableness lies in the fact that he does not pro-

vide scientific evidence for his most extravagant claims. His claims are based on assuming that cosmological facts must conform to mythology. In general, he offers no support for the plausibility of his theory beyond an ingenious argument from comparative mythology”¹. A well-educated man, Velikovsky came from a Russian-Jewish background studied medicine at Edinburgh and Montpellier in France and studied psychoanalysis under Wilhem Stekel, a pupil of Freud, in Vienna. Velikovsky’s study of *Oedipus and Akhenaton* derives its central theme from Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* examining the role of Akhenaton in monotheistic thought. His passion for understanding world events through the study of myths and legends was regarded as “*unscientific*”. Stephen Gould has said, “Velikovsky was surely ill treated by certain academics who sought to suppress the publication of his work. But a man does not attain the status of Galileo merely because he is persecuted; he must also be right. The scientific and sociological issues are separate. And then, times and the treatment of heretics have changed. Bruno burned to death; Galileo, after viewing the instruments of torture, languished under house arrest. Velikovsky won both publicity and royalties. Torquemada was evil; Velikovsky’s academic enemies, merely foolish”. Velikovsky’s *Worlds in Collision* was an international best seller and attracted considerable attention. However, the scientific community regarded his work with derision. When I first read *Worlds in Collision* and, more particularly, when I first read *Oedipus and Akhenaton*, I thought these books were a good read. Unlike the offerings of science, Velikovsky’s work is exciting, challenging, speculative. I never regarded them as science, as fact, as answers but rather as speculations, ideas, notions, intellectual diversions. In Velikovsky’s case, there is a recursive effect whereby *his* books asserting the possible *validity* of the origins of myths are rendered as fiction by the scientific community: much read but without weight. Yet, in the Preface to *Worlds in Collision* he writes, “I have excluded from [these pages] all references to ancient literature, traditions, and folklore; and this I have done with intent, so that careless critics cannot decry the entire work as ‘tales and legends’. Stones and bones are the only witness”. However, scientists and historians *have* criticised Velikovsky’s works, leading to the ... misconception that Velikovsky was “completely proved wrong”.² As Gould says, “The Velikovsky affair raises what is perhaps the most disturbing question about the public impact of science. How is a layman to judge rival claims of supposed experts? Any person with a gift for words can spin a persuasive argument about any subject not in the domain of a reader’s personal expertise” (Gould, 1977: 153–159). The day after I wrote this piece I was waiting in the queue for the ATM on campus at the University of Essex and suddenly noticed that the

¹ <http://skepdic.com/velikov.html> [accessed 23.02.08]

² <http://www.knowledge.co.uk/velikovsky/> [accessed 23.02.08]

man who was two people ahead of me had under his arm a copy of *Worlds in Collision*. Since I have not seen a copy of this book since the 1960s I was intrigued by this piece of Jungian synchronicity. However, peering over his shoulder, a closer look revealed it to be a different *Worlds in Collision*. This book was *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order* by Ken Booth and Tim Dunne. And this too, citations and all, could be so much of a cod-piece.

Scientific Dishonesty

So what of the Lomborg case? Bjorn Lomborg is a Danish statistician who has taken on some of the more extreme claims of environmental deterioration. For example, Lomborg has challenged the assertion by Norman Myers that species are becoming extinct at the rate of 40,000 per year. This, argues, Lomborg has no statistical validity, no scientific basis. It is simply sensationalist. However, the Danish Committee on Scientific Dishonesty (2003) in their report on the Lomborg affair, criticized Lomborg for “scientific dishonesty” in failing to acknowledge Myer’s contribution to science and arguing that Myers had found it “difficult to make more accurate assessments”³. The reactions to Lomborg’s work came in the form of an attack on Lomborg himself. John Kay, in his article *Previous Convictions* (Kay, 2003), argues that the reactions to the Lomborg case “have nothing to do with the evaluation of scientific evidence: they are affirmations of tribal loyalty” and he goes on to say that “*Scientific American* actually headed its symposium ‘science defends itself’”. It seems, if these accounts are correct, that Lomborg was vilified for speaking out against the scientific community.

There are echoes here of the controversy surrounding Jeffrey Masson and the story told *In the Freud Archives* (Malcolm, 1983). This is a story about politicking in the New York psychoanalytic community and it reads like a novel but as the introduction says, “*In the Freud Archives* is a work of non-fiction... a journey through actual circumstances and real events” (Malcolm, 1983: ix). I will not say any more about the whole history of the case here but the similarities with Lomborg’s experiences can be seen from this short extract. Masson had given a contentious paper he had given at a meeting of the New England Psychoanalytical Society in New Haven in which he had made some reference to the “sterility of psychoanalysis” in his concluding remarks. “The paper was very scholarly, and I thought analysts would be fascinated by my discoveries and would receive them with great warmth. But something causes analysts to ignore my material and to focus on me. Every time I give a paper, someone gets up and says, ‘I’m not interested in

³ <http://www.johnkay.com> [accessed 23.02.08]

that paper, I'm not interested in your findings, I'm interested in you', and then they come out with some cheap parlor [sic] analysis" (Malcolm, 1983: 54). Masson had fallen out with the psychoanalytical community over an interpretation of Freud's seduction hypothesis and was excommunicated as a result. For a fuller discussion of Masson's position see his book *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (1984).

Scientific Fraud

Cyril Burt died in 1971. By that time, he was a well-respected educational psychologist and policy adviser. However, shortly after he died, a huge controversy opened up. Burt had based a good deal of his work on intelligence and the performance of monozygotic twins who had been reared separately. The scandal that ensued was prompted by the work of Leon Kamin, a Princeton psychologist, who identified a number of flaws in Burt's work. Kamin, however, did nothing about his suspicions but in 1974 he published a book, *The Science and Politics of IQ*, in which he was highly critical of Burt's work. At the same time, Arthur Jensen, another US psychologist wrote a paper which arrived at similar conclusions. It was two years later that the controversy came to a head.

Dr. Oliver Gillie, who was at that time the medical correspondent to the *London Sunday Times* made a scathing attack on Burt's work after reading Kamin's book. Perhaps one of the most striking disclosures of the Burt affair was that when Gillie set out to find two of Burt's research assistants, Miss Margaret Howard and Miss Jane Conway, he was unable to find either, and, according to Jonathan Plucker of Indiana University, "was forced to conclude that they were fictitious names". This fact, in conjunction with other findings, led Gillie to conclude that Burt had falsified his data. The article which appeared on the front page of the October 24, 1976 edition of the *Times* said, "*The most sensational charge of scientific fraud this century is being leveled against Sir Cyril Burt. Leading scientists are convinced that Burt published false data and invented crucial facts to support his controversial theory that intelligence is largely inherited*", (Gillie, 1976)⁴.

Science Fact

Well, of course, Michael Crichton's book *State of Fear* is a novel and, as a novel, it has attracted a good deal of criticism from the scientific community for its pseudo science. Indeed, William Schlesinger, Dean of the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, at Duke University, has

⁴ <http://www.indiana.edu/~intell/burtaffair.shtml> [accessed 23.02.08]

called it, “The best peer-reviewed science since Jurassic Park!” Crichton has attracted derision for his book which in many respects represents itself as thoroughly researched and based on established scientific “fact”. This is a novel which offers page after page of bibliography, references, extensive citations in the text, and footnotes, diagrams and technical data. Consequently, the thrust of the argument is laden with detail, metrics and scientizing. And, very persuasive it is to the reader. Not only does it allay our fears about global warming but it also contends that the scientists have got it wrong. Clearly, a message we might welcome. However, for the sensible reader *State of Fear* as a work of fiction is precisely that. Crichton is skilled at taking a significant issue and feeding it to our insecurity: global warming, virtual reality, genetic engineering, cloning, sexual harassment. Via a series of inversions and distortions, the smoke and mirrors of the novelist, he has a way of identifying an anxiety and prodding it. In a sense, this makes *State of Fear* a novel which is close to his own writing strategy and, as such, it is revelatory. This is because for all its deficiencies, misunderstandings and perhaps misrepresentation, *State of Fear* offers an interesting argument. It relates to our inability to make sense of competing accounts. The US National Resource Defense Council website says: “*State of Fiction* – Unlike most novels, *State of Fear* includes footnotes and a bibliography, giving the impression that Crichton unearthed facts buried as part of a dastardly plan by scientists or non-profit groups to suppress disagreement on global warming. Yet all the data he cites has been widely and publicly scrutinized as part of the peer-reviewed scientific assessment process involving independent academic and government experts from across the U.S. and around the world”,⁵ but how do we decide. We are asked to put our faith in science.

Fear

For one reason or another, it argues, we are in a state of fear. For example, at the time of writing this in 2008, the newspapers are full of the latest warnings of one sort or another, “Feral Youths Roam Our Cities”, “World Recession Coming”, “Immigration Reaches Record High”, “Rumanian Crime Syndicates Operating in UK”, “Energy Prices Out of Control”, “Global Warming – Hottest Summer Yet”. Crichton’s books, like our newspapers, are full of gloom and conspiracy. So, we are battered by the appeals of science, by statistics and charts, by taxonomies and tables, by the weight of evidence and the fear of being overwhelmed by feral youths, excessive heat, immigrants, spiralling costs, in other words, we are rendered fearful and anxious, subject to the implications of endless monitoring and self-mon-

⁵ <http://www.nrdc.org/globalWarming/fcrichton.asp> (accessed 10.03.08)

itoring so that our experience of the world is always mediated by fear: fear of our own failings and the failings of others. In the context of this chapter, a fear of not having the right story, not being part of the right community, not being affirmed as worthy in some way: of alterity itself.

This fear is the fear of the other: the fear of contagion, of contamination, for example, the fear of immigrants or the fear of feral youths; and the fear of things that we may or may not do. We might, for example, forget to pay our income tax, or fail to slow down when driving in an area where there is a speed limit. We might fail to respond to some demand made of us or we might actively commit some act where we might fear the consequences – from adultery to abortion, from lying to larceny. However, all such fears might not be of this order. The more subtle fear of falling below some expectation might be enough to contemplate here. In response to the endless rhetoric of contagion and the endless commitment to monitoring, it is not surprising that the consequence is a paralyzing catatonia that sets the individual at odds with the world, alienated from it, terrified of it, unable to act, react, or to adopt a moral disposition. The fear is what it always was. It is the fear of the disordered other. As Kristeva says, “under the cunning, orderly surface of civilizations, the nurturing horror that they attend to pushing aside by purifying, systematizing, and thinking; the horror that they seize on in order to build themselves up and function.....” (Kristeva, 1982: 210).

Castration

And there is that most primitive of fears, the fear of castration. In his discussion of the role of the phallus, Žižek says of those symbols which confer power such as the insignia of office, the sceptre or the crown, that they are external to the wearer and worn only in order to exert power. As a consequence, he argues, they “castrate”, and deprive him of his virility. So that symbolic castration “introduces a gap between what I immediately am and the function that I exercise (i.e., I am never fully at the level of my function)... [this is] the castration that occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order, assuming a symbolic mandate. Castration is the very gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic mandate that confers on me this “authority”. Leaving aside for a moment the gender implications of this statement although, of course, my symbolic mandate is more equivocal, authority in such terms is like a mantle that signifies office. Authority then resides in the symbolic order and likes to make its presence felt in the behaviour of a community, displays of potency, the destruction of difference. I could say more about this. After all, as Žižek argues, this constructed phallus is an “organ without a body... an excessive supplement” (Žižek, 2004:

87) and it demands deference. We cower under the power of the erection. To act with authority requires contradictions, discontinuities, collisions of meaning and so forth to be regulated to preserve the appearance of order. Meaning must be assumed (to take upon oneself; to take for granted; to appropriate; to usurp; to present the semblance of [L. ad, to; sumere, to take]). In other words, to be seen to act with propriety and with authority requires that ambivalence be subjected to order. Authority then attaches to the construction of the appearance: enforces itself through models and correctness, through rules of conduct, and through attempts to regulate sites of ambivalence. To function in this way, it needs to monitor; to issue warnings.

This is authority and it is definition. These are my greatest fears. It is the pronouncement which determines what is and what is not permitted. What constitutes science and what does not. What is authoritative writing and what is not. What constitutes knowledge. What can be admitted and what must be left outside. And, in its obsessive desire to maintain the *erection* it exercises a ruthless sway. And, yet this chapter demonstrates a series of deferrals to this power. It is conventional in its unconventionality. It lends itself authority through a series of citations. It has a rhetorical thrust.

Organizations: *Scientia Inflat*

Last week, I was one of three externals doing a Departmental Review at a Russell Group university. To undertake our audit, we were required to bring to bear the power of the phallus on the disordered community. The outcome of three days of interrogating staff on all levels, reading mountains of documents and negotiating complicated inter-personal politics and hierarchical posturing is the production of a review report: a work of pronouncement and judgement, an affirmation and a statement of validity. The question is to what extent is this report any different from what Michael Crichton has done in *State of Fear*. The scientific community would like us to believe that the way Crichton has assembled and interpreted his material is not science, that science is pure and uncontaminated. Science is reluctant to admit its own prejudices and fallibility. Here tables, appendices, footnotes, references all lend authority to a series of judgements. Well, of course, there is the question of intent. Clearly, in producing the review there is no attempt to produce fraudulent documentation or to mislead but having said that, the departmental review is not devoid of its own type of fiction. There are the issues which are glossed over to protect individuals, the imposition of a particular line of argument which complements the university's own strategic position, the priorities which attach to privileged positions and standpoints. This is how experience and pronouncement intersect and there is always a privileged interpretation. Such is the nature of organization.

Well, in the spirit of this book, this chapter is a series of bits and pieces. Again, such is the nature of organization. This weekend, my son who is in his first year at Manchester University studying history and economics told me he was working on an essay on the relationship between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the French Revolution. "What is interesting", he said, "is the confrontation with monstrosity; the monster as a disordered body as against the disorder in the body politic". I mention this because this chapter too is about disordered otherness, the disordered body. It is about disorganization and the fear of disorganization. On one level, this chapter might be about the relationship between science and nature – like *Frankenstein* – but, it is primarily about the assertion of order via pronouncement and definition and about the construction [*erection*] of "organization". Moreover, and it is this which achieves what Žižek sees as a symbolic castration, it is these erections which are organs without a body: abstract constructions which come to have power over the physical beings from which they are detached. Organizations regulate behaviour through a series of constructions which inevitably emerge from competing definitions of the nature of order as it applies to a particular set of circumstances. It is authority which privileges one version of order over another. The intention here is to raise doubts about rigid, phallic notions of order. A statistical analysis of patient through-put times for the Women's Clinic says nothing of the experience of passing through the clinic. There is nothing new in saying this. However, my point here is to speak of validity. I can no more verify the annual incidence of cervical cancer that the Women's Clinic detects than I can the dis-benefits of Hormone Replacement Therapy nor any one of a number of authoritative statements that issue forth from the clinic. I am at the mercy of expertise where fact and fiction are conflated. What I can say is that fear and fiction are frequently used in conjunction in order to achieve organization, to regulate organizations and to protect the interests of the privileged position. "I must warn you..."

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Unsteady Stone, Human Stain

Robert Grafton Small

The following is both screed and scree, a view with grains of sand. Little polish, then, but that's the point, in part at least: our common grubbiness gives us a grip on the world, the friction of dirty realism. The stains, too, the more than fingerprints, are on everything we do.

And the stone beneath us, though nothing else is. We mark our presence, and each other, with the graffiti of our cultures, our signal shifting standards. The question, now and always, is how we live with ourselves. The morning after, there's the rub....

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I have four candles and one evening in which to write this account. Tomorrow I will lodge these papers with my last true friend. If I survive the day, they will light our pipes. But should I not return, he has instructions to secrete this chronicle where it will lie undiscovered for a long span, in the hope that when these pages are found, the age will be different and my words may be judged by honest eyes.

(Welsh, 2004: 1)

Daylight is an ugly time of day. So many people are awake, and if I go outside, I know what they're all thinking. They are mainly doing **bad things**. White-collar criminals fucking up the world.

(Zappa, with Occhiogrosso, 1990: 250)

No one knows for certain how many lost their lives that night, or how many went mad before they died. When day broke, the summer dawn could not penetrate the leaden gloom above the city. The smoke had risen to a height of 8,000 metres, where it spread like a vast, anvil-shaped cumulonimbus cloud (sic). A wavering heat, which the bomber pilots said they had felt through the sides of their planes, continued to rise from the smoking, glowing mounds of stone.

(Sebald, 2003: 28)