



Ghostly matters in organization

ephemera: theory & politics
in organization

What is *ephemera*: theory & politics in organization?

ephemera is an independent journal, founded in 2001. *ephemera* provides its content free of charge, and charges its readers only with free thought.

theory

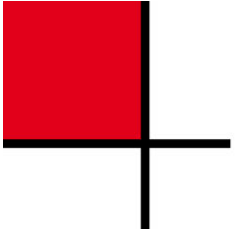
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. *ephemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics

ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization

Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.



ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ephemera 19(1), Feb 2019

Ghostly matters in organization

Justine Grønbæk Pors, Lena Olaison and
Birke Otto

in association with:

may f l y

www.mayflybooks.org

Published by the *ephemera* editorial collective: Bernadette Loacker, Birke Otto, Christian Garmann Johnsen, Christos Giotitsas, Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, Emil Husted, Helen Delaney, Justine Grønbæk Pors, Karolina Mikołajewska-Zajac, Kenneth Weir, Konstantin Stoborod, Lena Olaison, Lisa Conrad, Márton Rácz, Mie Plotnikof, Nick Butler, Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar, Randi Heinrichs, Rowland Curtis.

First published for free online at www.ephemerajournal.org and in print in association with MayFlyBooks (www.mayflybooks.org) in 2019.

ISSN (Online) 1473-2866

ISSN (Print) 2052-1499

ISBN (Print) 978-1-906948-46-7

Cover: Drawing by Asbjørn Skou, 2018

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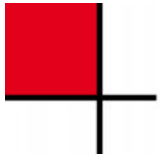
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Ghostly matters in organizing^I

Justine Grønbaek Pors, Lena Olaison, and Birke Otto

Assistens Cemetery, Copenhagen

If the digital realm of Word files and PDFs was more analogue, less hermetically sealed off from the surrounding world and thus in palpable touch with its messiness, you would be able to see the soil of the Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen, its mounds of damp earth, still clinging to our thoughts and words as you read this text. This image would probably look a bit like the smudges and marks on the drawings and the drawn statements found in this special issue. These smudges are traces of the hand that did the drawing, but also remains of the process of drawing itself. As Asbjørn Skou writes in his absent-present² commentary to his artwork in this issue: 'The act of drawing always embedded in the drawing as object; processual smudges and marks, called ghosts, of the movements of the hand that holds the pencil'. In our work with this editorial, we studied the Assistens Cemetery, and its various pathways, its plantation, its smells and its many told and untold stories have all left their marks on our thinking about ghostly matters in organizing.

We would thus like to start this editorial by inviting our readers to join us on a virtual excursion to the Assistens Cemetery to explore what both the cemetery and our special issue contributors can teach us about the ghostly matters of organizing. We will then turn to the variety of haunting methodologies contained in our contributions, for they address the question of how we might study those ghostly

^I As the title of the special issue reveals, our thinking is indebted to Avery Gordon's seminal work in her book *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*, first published in 1998.

² Absent because he refused to have it published, present because it speaks to us as we write and because we cite it and refer to it.

aspects of organizational life that escape articulation or even intelligibility. The third part of the editorial introduces the literature on ghosts, hauntology and ghostly matters, as we narrow our focus to two themes we view as relevant for organization studies: the collapse of linear time and the intimate connection between ghostly matters and affect. We conclude by suggesting that to encounter ghosts and engage with ghostly matters, one must not only direct one's scholarly gaze in certain directions but also allow the ghostly to bedevil and leave its smudges on our scholarly subjectivity.



The Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen

Established in 1760 outside Copenhagen's city walls – an area then called the Northern Suburb – Assistens Cemetery was used as a site to bury paupers and thus to ease the pressure on the overburdened churchyards of the inner city. Despite this humble beginning, the graveyard transformed rapidly, becoming a lush, green urban refuge where affluent Copenhageners favoured laying their dead to rest and thus erected imposing gravestones and commemorated the deceased with memorials and vaults that still grace the cemetery today. Now called Nørrebro, this city borough has evolved into one of Copenhagen's liveliest quarters and Denmark's most densely populated areas. The borough's mass of living bodies is

mirrored in the ground beneath the cemetery, where 250 years and more than 200,000 burials have compelled graves to be stacked on graves and thus the bodies occupying them to decompose in layers upon layers of soil.

Today, Assistens Cemetery is emblematic of the kind of space where a multitude of practices, temporalities and functions co-exist and intersect. It remains a cemetery where people come to grieve their lost loved ones, but in kinship with cemeteries around the world, it is also a historical site where prominent cultural, political or scientific figures have been buried. Every year, particularly in summer, tourists flock to visit the graves and monuments of famous Danes like philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, physicist Niels Bohr and writer Hans Christian Andersen. The cemetery also hosts a cultural centre, which holds events and exhibitions. However, what makes this sanctuary so unique and so popular among tourists and Copenhageners alike is its function as an urban green space where people are encouraged to sunbathe, jog, relax, read, walk their dogs or have picnics and small parties with friends and family ‘in the shadow of the area’s many historic gravestones’ (Københavns Kommune, 2019). These co-existing practices constitute the cemetery as, to borrow a term from Tim Edensor, a ‘thick place’, that is, a space ‘suffused with a sense of sensual, emotional and affective belonging that is embedded over time through repetitive practical embodied engagement’ (2012: 1106). The multifarious uses of the cemetery render it a place where distances or boundaries between public and personal, between public and private become difficult to maintain. It is hardly unusual for 15 tourists to be receiving an upbeat guided tour while just a few metres away a woman kneels in solitude, quietly mourning the loss of a dear one recently passed away.

The cemetery features a remarkably high level of biodiversity, replete with many species of trees, flowers and bushes, some of which normally only grow outside of Northern Europe. This makes strolling through the cemetery even more surreal, as the flora do little to situate you in geographical Denmark. While you may be no botanist, you will still have an eerie sense that the trees and bushes populating the cemetery are somehow out of place – or could it be you? Deep in the park, a fig tree has found a spot to drink in the warm sun. It seems right at home, there next to a beech – an almost iconic native of Denmark. The sight of traditionally Northern European trees juxtaposed with other exotic vegetation provokes thought about climate change, about how it might lead to new ecologies where plants once considered exotic will soon become common and other traditional flora will have to find new homes further north. As such, the cemetery’s biodiversity also gives rise to thoughts and concerns about what may be lost in the distant and not-so-distant futures that await us.

Multiple, intersecting temporalities

Gan et al. (2018: G1) have defined haunted landscapes as landscapes of overlaid arrangements of human and nonhuman living spaces and as something produced in gradual steps with more-than-human histories that make and unmake ecologies. The cemetery is indeed such a haunted landscape where the many disparate rhythms, processes and ecologies of the cemetery imbue it with an atmosphere of untold stories – a multi-layered collage of temporalities, sensed in the site's particular ambience and visible in the wide array of monument designs, statues and gravestone inscriptions – each testifying to the specific fashions, customs, politics and societal hierarchies of its time. Tim Edensor (2008; this issue) has insistently explored how traces of previous inhabitants, politics, ways of thinking and being and the modes of experience left behind intrude on the present, sometimes confounding, aligning and colliding with it (Edensor, 2008). Similarly, the cemetery is a dizzying meshwork of temporalities where past and present grieving, burial and recreation practices co-exist and intersect – sometimes with one temporality literally overlapping the other, such as when several teens celebrate the first day of summer holiday by hanging out on someone's neglected, half-forgotten grave. If you open yourself to the world around you, you will quickly come to sense how the cemetery is crowded with the lingering vestiges of former mourning rituals, of long-out-of-vogue cultural and political burial practices, of changing ideas about the organization of remembering, of failed attempts to plan and of materiality in varying stages of decay (see Hetherington, 2004; Maddern, 2008).

Thus, the first thing that the cemetery teaches us in our efforts to explore ghostly matters in organizing is to discern how different temporalities co-exist, intersect and collide. Ghostly matters in organizing have to do with how, every once in a while, something long forgotten, something now inappropriate, re-appears to disturb current orderings of past, present and future (Degen and Hetherington, 2001; Pile, 2005; Pors, 2016a). The call for papers for this special issue was an invitation to investigate moments in which different layers of time come to intersect and collide and thus reveal how, as Fredric Jameson (1999: 39) has phrased it, 'the living present is hardly as self-sufficient as it claims to be and we would do well not to count on its density'. Along these lines, the contributions in this issue explore moments where linear time collapses and something that was repressed, forgotten, misplaced, or is unfitting, has not willingly vanished or is now resurfacing. To explore ghostly matters, one does not necessarily need to adhere to the common narrative of a ghost as a person, animal or thing from the past that returns to haunt the present. The ghost is also a 'social figure' that points, for example, to the interstices that emerge between past and present (Gordon, 2008: 8), and also to the hauntings of the future. As Degen and Hetherington have

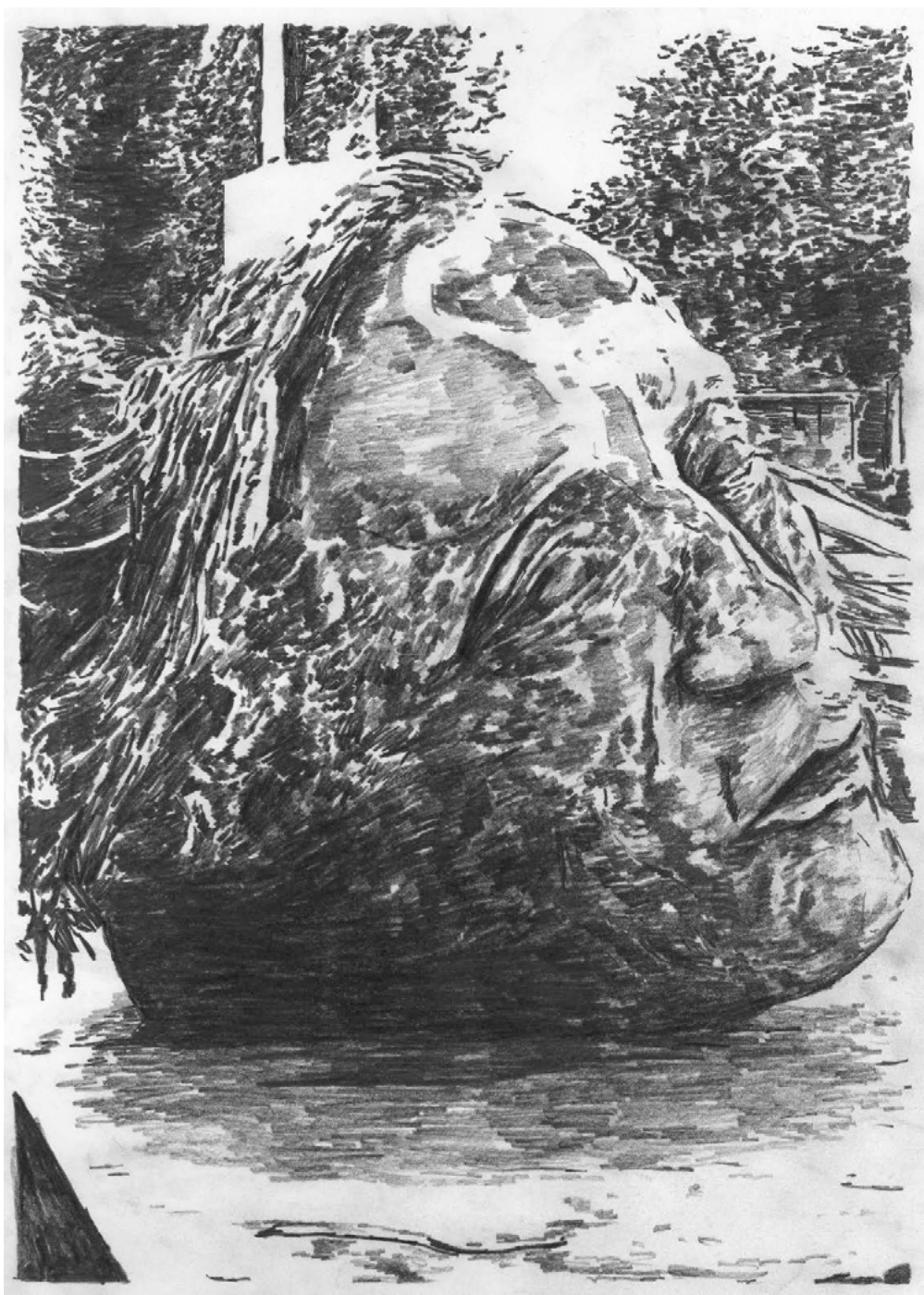
suggested, new building sites and developments are just as likely to be haunted by the visions and plans for the future, as cemeteries or abandoned buildings are to be by the events that once took place in them – not just because of what new buildings and developments rub out ‘but because within their expressions of novelty, pride, social engineering, we find the tragic, ghostly voice of the future evoking the inevitable failure of such spatial dreamings’ (2001: 4). Albeit in different manners, every contribution in this issue searches for and develops analytics apt for exploring how certain events, statements, moments or encounters come to have a capacity to open up for forgotten, silenced and lost futures as well as pasts.

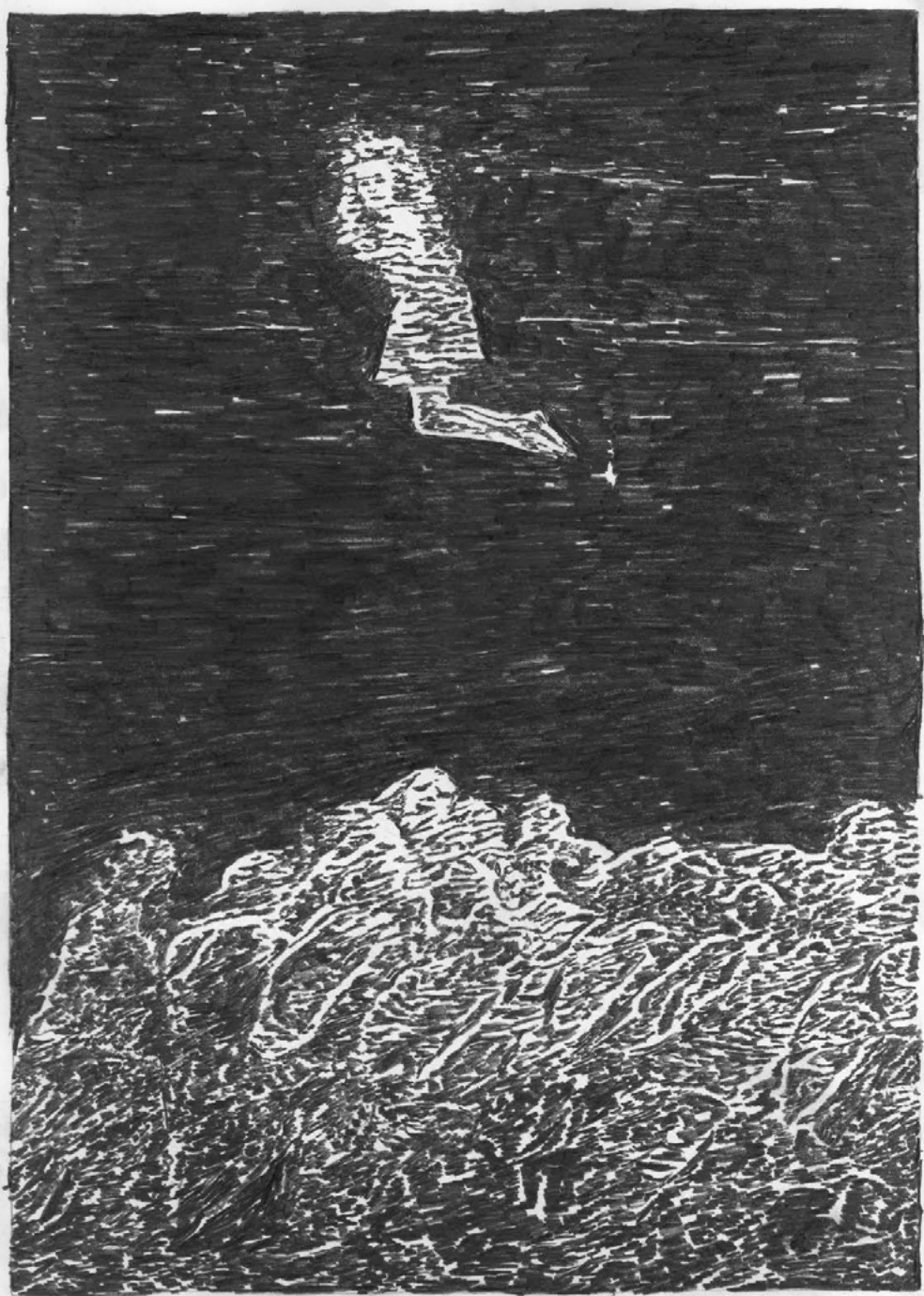
Remembrance and forgetting

A walk around the cemetery to look at the different graves, gravestones and monuments is a study in remembrance and, thus, also in processes of forgetting. Tim Edensor, in this this special issue, cites Nuala Johnson’s (1995: 63) work on how monumental statues serve as ‘points of physical and ideological orientation’ around which ‘circuits of memory’ are organized. In other words, the practice of engraving stones and monuments ensures that certain people are remembered for particular aspects of their lives. Because inscriptions must be brief, one has to capture the essence of a person’s life in a single sentence. Certain patterns seem to persist in what is worthy of remembrance. People’s roles and relationships with particular institutions of authority, such as someone’s service to the royal court or government, have often been etched into headstones. Visual symbols speak of the qualities to be remembered. For example, bees and beehives feature regularly on stones from the late 18th century, thus telling us that someone, often a craftsman, was particularly diligent and hardworking. More often than not those considered important enough to commemorate, or at least those that could afford to be so, were men, while the names of women were often written in smaller letters, and any virtues, deeds or achievements mentioned are likely to refer to their loyalty and wifely support.

A strikingly selective practice of remembering is revealed in the graves of young men slain in the battle of Dybbøl in 1864. In our investigation of cemetery ghosts we interviewed a cultural centre employee, who offered us this narrative:

Those people that died in Dybbøl, their gravestones constitute a goldmine of insights into how the terrors of war were sought repressed. This one, very young guy, who was probably shot to pieces, has a gravestone that reads: ‘His life was brief, his death was beautiful, an honourable grave he won’.





The battle of Dybbøl occurred during the war between Denmark and Prussia over the Dukedom of Slesvig. The Danish troops were badly prepared and greatly outmatched by the efficient Prussian war machine. In a short battle lasting only 10 hours, 5,000 Danish men lost their lives in what many considered a hopeless and even meaningless fight. Omitting the horrific realities of pain, blood, mud and terror, the gravestones at the Assistens Cemetery depict the deaths of the young men as utterly glorious and sublime.

While the choice of words and symbols bears witness to what was considered worthy of remembrance at specific points in time, it also shapes practices of forgetting inherent in such choices and raises political questions about issues such as power, gender, (in)equality, nationalism and colonialism. Yet, human practices of remembering and forgetting are not the only force to erase information. Moss and fungus have had their go at gravestones too, smothered them and their inscriptions over time, ultimately leaving them unintelligible.



Moss and fungus on a gravestone

Thus, the second lesson from the cemetery, for those of us interested in the ghostly matters of organizing, is to look for practices of remembering and forgetting and the politics these practices reveal and constitute. As Derrida (1994, 1995) also liked

to remind us, hauntology is an inquiry into the politics of memory. In this special issue, Lisa Blackman's contribution considers ghostly matters as particular organizations of practices of memory and forgetting, of attention and inattention. With a specific focus on digital archives and what she calls haunted data, Blackman explores how scientific knowledge production is haunted by events and forms of knowledge that have been disqualified and submerged. For Blackman, to be interested in ghostly matters is thus to be attentive to the ways in which the different pasts and the alternative futures that organizations manage to ignore, forget or derecognize occasionally come to resurface.

Also in this issue, Tim Edensor explores processes of remembering and forgetting in his study of how people, values and aesthetics are commemorated in old figurative statues that haunt public spaces by testifying to earlier historical processes. Referring to Angela Dunstan, Edensor draws attention to how these sculptures constitute a peculiarly haunting mode of representation: they just stand there – still, silent, largely monochrome and lifeless, a static model of a person once living and vital but now deceased, a sculpture sometimes unnoticed by the daily passer-by, sometimes changed or later refigured to embrace a different mode of remembrance and meaning. Through their specific performance of remembering and forgetting, these statues constitute a curious reminder not simply of the death of those they commemorate or the mortality of all individuals, but also of past and present power relations and injustices and their effects on people, societies and ecologies. Yet, remembering and forgetting are effected not only by the material substance of statues and memorials but also through the embodied practices of perceiving and ignoring. In his contribution, Edensor also unfolds the corporeal dimension of remembering and forgetting, drawing attention to how bodies move around and habituate public spaces and the statues in them, and thereby acquire a sedimented, embodied sense of their presence. In performing the habits and routines of everyday urban existence, bodies become adept at not seeing and at creatively circumventing the multiple resonances of the past (Edensor, this issue; 2012).

Thus, Blackman's and Edensor's respective contributions open up broader questions about how we learn to move around in social, material, digital and organized spaces by 'unseeing' and 'unnoticing' (Mieville, 2009) certain things, relations and political processes (Otto et al., 2019). This in turn raises the question of how our daily life in organizations depends on our adeptness at moving around without noticing certain things and without even noticing our not noticing. To be interested in the ghostly matters of organizing is to inquire into past and present processes of remembering and forgetting, practices of seeing and unseeing and patterns of attention and inattention. It is also to explore how choreographies of

‘unseeing’ occasionally collapse, enabling us to glimpse that which has become disposable, displaced or submerged.

Troubled categories

The cemetery’s cultural centre is located in the old chapel, a building that has seen much death and hosted many funeral rituals, but also provided the backdrop for concerts, theatre plays and exhibitions. The building has its own little oddities. As one employee told us, the lock to the door of the public restroom where a municipal caretaker once murdered an infant tends to jam, and every once in a while, the screams of some schoolchild trapped in the tiny lavatory will send a centre employee running to the rescue, screwdriver in hand to pry open the door. Usually, however, the teasing materiality of the door lock will already have produced a range of affects, such as surprise, fear or panic. Another unexplained phenomenon has occurred in the chapel ever since it held an exhibition about the life and untimely death of a young reggae musician, Natasja. One of the lights in the main chapel room can no longer be switched off. An electrician attempting to fix the problem fell from a ladder and injured his back. A cemetery employee recounts the difficulty of reporting this bizarre accident to the digital filing system of the Danish Working Environment Authority:

Those online schemes are constructed in such a manner that everything always requires a cause. You cannot continue to the next page before you check one of the many boxes ... But there was no cause. No, the ladder was not too old or damaged. Yes, he had a ladder certificate. No, the floor was not wet. No, he was not disturbed in his work. So I found a box saying ‘other issues’ and wrote ‘unknown causes’. Then the authorities called me up on the phone and wanted their cause, but after having talked to these people for many minutes without any progress, I explained to them that someone does not want anybody to stand on ladders in that room, and we have had problems with it in the past too. They hung up on me and I did not hear from them again.

The digital filing system where the incident was to be reported only works when incidents can be categorized and put into a scheme of cause and effect. In this case, none of the options fit, as the incident had no identifiable cause. The human-to-human phone conversation also failed to accommodate the messier scheme and mysterious cause. In the end, the employee’s insistent defence of the inexplicable took precedence over the rationality of the formal system, the report remains incomplete, and the incident itself remains as a ‘non-present presence’ in the cultural centre.

In his famous *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international*, Derrida writes about the spectre:

It is something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it is, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. (1994: 5)

For Derrida, the ghost is something that perhaps once belonged to knowledge but no longer does. It is something that (no longer) fits in any meaningful way with discourses, concepts and systems of categorization. As a sort of quasi-object/subject (Serres, 1991), the ghost brings with it a rather indecipherable message from a space beyond discourse and representation.

Thus, the third thing one can learn from Assistens Cemetery in this editorial is to keep an eye out for the incidents, events and moments that destabilize and trouble stable categories and categorizations. Ghostly moments, we would argue, are moments in which categories with the power to fix and organize, for some strange reason, fail to do so.

In this issue, Sine Nørholm Just 'sights' metaphors representing the financial crisis and interrogates their constitutive powers and capacities. The spectral vocabulary of supernatural figures like vampires ('bloodsucking bankers'), zombies ('dead banks') and ghosts (of 'financial speculation') serve to illuminate, or even shape, our understanding and hence responsive practices of what transpired in the crisis. The ghost of finance, she argues, is certainly more than a metaphor. Since trading debts entails buying and selling products that are never fully materialized but 'always already derivative, endlessly deferred. (...) a spirit without a body' (Just, this issue), finance is thus organized around ghostly matters. What is more, financial transactions, their assessments and evaluations are based on confusing relations between expert knowledge and (public) opinion, an interplay that generates their financial value – thus, troubling and disturbing those taken-for-granted institutions that have set up the financial system in the first place.

Similarly, Jannick Friis Christensen and Sara Louise Muhr delve into the disturbing capacities of concepts. Their empirical study investigates how the topic of female quotas haunts, that is, irritates and unsettles, the conversation that takes place in the interviews they have conducted with Danish business leaders. While these managers officially reject a quota policy, the subject keeps resurfacing in conversations and statements, often in affective registers such as hearty disavowals or as a secret, somewhat shamefully confessed approval. The authors argue that in the Danish context, quotas are a sort of non-topic, something excluded from how organizations make sense of and utilize concepts like talent, competence and leadership potential. However, the formal absence of quotas in the Danish work

system remains a powerful, seething presence in a topic that thereby questions prevailing notions of meritocracy and talent as well as the processes of leaders' identity formation and self-performance.

As we can see in Just's as well Christensen's and Muhr's contributions, ghostly matters can be explored as processes through which fixed categories and categorizations become unsettled (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Risberg and Pilhofer, 2018) and as disturbances of organizational attempts to capture and put things in certain places. The ghost disturbs neat discursive orders, narratives and explanations, causes them to collapse without offering any new, coherent and unambiguous narrative orders (Holloway and Kneale, 2008; Pors, 2016a).

Thus, in this issue we explore ghostly matters by drawing attention to how the categories and practices of categorization on which organizations rely to capture and control events, people and processes are sometimes disturbed and unsettled.

Organizing that which has become disposable

A couple of years ago, the northeast corner of the cemetery had to be excavated to make space for a new metro station. The graves of around 1,750 people, buried from 1805-1990, had to be cleared and the human remains in varying stages of decay removed. The cultural centre employee explained the process:

They said that it was a so-called ethical excavation because the graves were covered to prevent people in the surrounding buildings from standing in their windows and looking directly into the graves as skulls and thighbones emerged. However, cemeteries in the City of Copenhagen are run by the Office of Technology and the Environment, so ... It's a little bit like ... They consider dead people somewhat of a waste problem. Something that has to be handled. This is nothing like it was back in the days where the cemetery was run by the Office of Culture.

The office that normally handles road maintenance and parks, waste and building projects coordinated the action, eliminating the graves and moving all the remains to a single, common grave some 200 metres away. This series of events illustrates how different authorities, or different professions, have different techniques, programmes and routines for handling the material remains of that which no longer has a function, that which has become obsolete, that which is now disposable and even a waste problem.

In stark contrast to the gravestone inscriptions described earlier, which were heavily charged with sentimental, celebratory or honourable symbolism, a more recent gravestone near one of the cemetery entrances reads: 'In the year 2010,

coffins were moved from section G to section E and put down there due to the construction of a metro station by Nørrebros Runddel’.



The gravestone erected after human remains were moved due to the construction of a new metro station

Revealing a talent for storytelling, the cemetery employee tells us that one day, while the site was being cleared, a British woman who said she could sense and communicate with spirits came to the cultural centre feeling ghostly after an overwhelming encounter with numerous spirits in a state of agitation after having been disturbed in their deaths. As she walked past the building site where the bones had been excavated, she had been assaulted by the terrifying sound of a thousand screams and cries.

Perhaps human bones are not the everyday objects of organizational efforts to clean out the past and make room for the new. However, the event makes us think about how organizations deal with remnants from the past that are no longer conceived of as needed or valuable, and perhaps even as an obstacle to development. As the artist Asbjørn Skou (absent-present note, this issue) reminds us: 'It does not take death to make ghosts of some.'

Thus, the fourth and final aspect that Assistens Cemetery can help remind us needs attention is the processes through which something becomes disposable and how material and immaterial remnants are handled and gotten rid of (see also Gordon, 2008, chapter 2; Hetherington, 2004; Pors, 2016b: 4). What are the processes through which values, people, bodies, things, competencies, skills and habits become unwanted, considered outdated or unneeded? How are things once considered of value transformed into garbage-handling problems? How do organizations deal with and organize things like ideas, structures or human beings that have become disposable but continue to linger?

Nana Vaaben's and Helle Bjerg's contribution to this issue explores how an organization, a Danish state school, through a process of reformation makes some of those values, practices and perhaps even people once associated with teaching disposable. The paper starts with the story of an engaged primary school teacher who quit her job after being disappointed and disillusioned by the latest school reform, which seemed to make her 'spirit of teaching' dispensable (Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). From the organization's perspective, the teacher is unable to conform to the new, heavily formalized requirements. From the teacher's perspective, she 'get[s] really mad, when people tell [her] that now we have to put things behind us and move on...[she] can't!' She insists on her sense that the past's way of doing things is valuable, and this absent-presence carries an urge to act and to resist (Gordon, 2011, in Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). Here, Danish state schoolteachers inhabit, embody and, in this case, suffer from the performativity of policy through the entanglement of temporality, affectivity and imagination (of undesired futures) created by recent educational policy.

In Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera's contribution, the issue at hand is not how to dispose of unwanted ideas, values or other material, but how to go 'backwards to recover that which has been left behind'. The authors take us ghost hunting in a reading of foundational management texts, such as those by Frederick Taylor and Mary Parker Follet. This is a 'walk against the winner's tale', but it is not concerned with deconstructing texts to seek new meaning. Instead, the authors develop a different way of seeing the texts, one that allows ideas that are marginal, unwanted and cast-off yet present there in their own right to reclaim their voice. Reading and writing through the lens of Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, Kociatkiewicz

and Kostera develop a method of textual *flânerie* that provides a way of seeing and wandering in such texts. As with the other contributions of this issue, the goal is not to solve remaining inconsistencies or problems in management texts or to exorcise their ghosts, but to ‘learn to think through what these have given us to consider’ (Richer, 2002: 5, in Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, this issue). Through such non-linear reading, the authors aim to open up false closers, such as pathways to humane ideas of management theory that are hidden in plain sight.

Vaaben and Bjerg as well as Kociatkiewicz and Kostera’s contributions are examples of how ghostly matters in organization concern that which has become disposable, but also how that which has been disposed of can be redeemed.

Ghost hunting, ghost sighting and summoning ghosts

In the first part of the editorial, we used Assistens Cemetery as an ‘anecdotal case’ (Michael, 2012) for thinking through ghostly matters in organizing. The cemetery is not only a host of ghosts, spirits and spooks, it reveals how every organizing process is imbued with intangible, unintelligible and affective issues that escape, disturb or animate plans, strategies and institutionalized ways of doing things in unexpected ways. As our conceptual understanding of ghostly matters evolves and hopefully becomes more palpable, the question of the empirical and how to methodologically explore the limits of representation remains (Knudsen and Stage, 2016; Fotaki et al., 2017). The authors in this special issue have chosen various methods for and approaches to unearthing such haunting vestiges of narratives and events from the pasts or imaginaries of the future that shape the present way we organize. They evoke at least three notions for their ghostly methodologies – their ways of creating processes of collecting, analysing, presenting and perhaps changing that which animates in unforeseen ways: ghost hunting as a way to search for and identify absent-presences; ghost sighting as a way to explore what appears clearly present; and the summoning of ghosts as a way to create spaces and openings for absent-presences to emerge.

Ghost hunting

In some contributions, the authors aim to make an uncanny disturbance palpable, while also acknowledging that it can never be fully articulated, made sense of or located. Every account of ghostly matters will also always remain incomplete or indeterminate (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018: 34). The authors in this special issue reflect this in their various ways of engaging with the empirical: by pursuing forgotten data online (Blackman, this issue) or recovering forgotten ideas in academic texts (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, this issue); by tracing a disquiet felt in interviews as informants search for words (Christensen and Muhr, this issue); or

by juxtaposing an official discourse with the personal experience of someone affected (Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). Here, they identify and follow traces in the empirical material that haunt the texts, observations and themselves. Such traces appear as ruptures, confusions, gaps, silences, irritations and other failures of sensemaking that register in manifold, often affective ways but ‘exceed conventional modes of perception’ and therefore require one to have a particular sensibility for being attentive to such incidents and feelings (Blackman, 2015: 26).

Ghost sighting

In contrast, other contributions in this issue are interested in (aesthetic) textual, literary or figurative accounts of ghosts, spooks and the uncanny. These contributions explore what spectral concepts and ideas reveal to us and consider the power and performative effects of such symbolic representations. Sine Nørholm Just importantly reminds us that supernatural metaphors to describe the financial crisis ‘become[s] true when we have forgotten that it is a metaphor ... when the ghost is mistaken for the possessed body’. What follows is an understanding that the ghostly can be where we least expect it. We must therefore also look at the interplay of the above-mentioned affective irritations with that which is undisputed, which appears familiar and homely, which seduces or seems at first glance transparent and clear. Beyes’ reading of Kafka’s story ‘The Burrow’ in relation to discussions of space in organization studies is a performative gesture to become aware of this tension. It invites the reader to grasp the uncanny frailty of organizational space, both at an affective *and* a conceptual level. Organizational spaces are physically designed to achieve certain institutionalized ends and meanings – productivity, convenience, hierarchies, reputation – but the impossibility of living up to those intentional designs carries an inherent vulnerability that generates new animations. The perpetual affective forces arising from such tensions have a way of unsettling organizational spaces where one ought to feel safe, to know one’s way around, as an ‘unhomely’ feeling can creep in and will continually need to be handled (Beyes, this issue). These contributions mobilize and interrogate haunting metaphors to find ways to observe and describe uncertain, ever-changing and indeterminate worlds (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018).

Summoning the ghosts

Two contributions in this issue create a setting to mobilize the resistant or emancipatory potential of the spectral by collecting empirical material in a particularly ghostly-attuned way. Sharing an ambition to summon ‘common ghosts’ (Skou, absent-present note, this issue), the two notes by artistic researchers Asbjørn Skou and Sibylle Peters play an important role in enabling other kinds of socio-political imaginaries of organizing. Yet, their artistic methodologies and

presentations differ greatly. Drawings by Asbjørn Skou are scattered around the pages of this issue, as his work method for this specific project has been to produce a collage-like, ghostly stream of events, ideas, people, things. The project included a performative talk held in the lower basement of Copenhagen Business School at the *ephemera* workshop that launched this special issue. Following this engagement with the university, he embarked on a hauntographic search for ghosts in the everyday lives of academics in the buildings where such presences are found. Skou's work seems to suggest that knowledge organizations like universities are haunted twice – once by that which does not stay dead and then again by its disenchantment. In addition, the source material for Skou's images printed in this issue stems from microfilms of newspaper articles published between 1979 and 2001, with each of these dates being a 'magical number in an equation of paranoia and slow catastrophes'. To quote from the note, Skou declined to have published:

Here is a stage set from Hamlet in New York. Here is Casper The Friendly Ghost as seen in the obituary of his inventor. Here are stockbrokers and the precarious bankers, sex-workers and a radiated turtle. Here are colonial ghosts and a shadow in Lacan's mirror. Here are earthquakes and premonitions of a Fukushima melt down. Here is a Japanese lady who turned away from society to live with dolls. Here is Ayn Rand and an obsessive love, here is black Friday. Here are victims and victimizers. Here is Thatcher's flowerpot and a disaster zone, and they all say: *Welcome night, open the windows and whistle some invocation, some fluorescent spell – not to mourn for the futures lost, but to conjure up their meaning once again, and let all the dead, that ever died, live again (forever)*. Hungry, hungry spooks. From a delicate whisper to a furious clamour – they all sang: 'It is a bad day for investors'.

We encourage you to search the pages of this issue and see what you find, what ghostly messages the drawings transmit to you.

Peters' artistic note takes a different approach, offering a step-by-step description of the methodology deployed by the *Theater of Research*, a German-based theatre that creates experimental setups for collective performative practices to change the way children and teachers experience their daily school life. The note critically engages with the tension of (re)solving the ghost by calling it forth. This performative practice is inspired by accounts that link the Sisters Fox, three 19th-century mediums who started the spiritualist movement with practices of radical political and, in this case, feminist emancipation. The *Theater* experiments with summoning ghosts as an emancipatory practice by revealing and potentially changing affects that haunt, as in this case, schoolchildren and their teachers. Put differently, the aim of the artistic engagement is not only to disrupt, question and reveal troubled categories but perhaps also to create and offer new malleable orders able to actively engage with the uncertainties presented by organizational life.

Kristian Bondo Hansen's review of Lisa Blackman's book *Haunted data* touches on the impactful, yet often denied links between parapsychological phenomena and science that Peters' and Skou's work teaches us about. Engaging with the intellectual dispute over the psychic powers of Eusepia Palladino – a medium from Naples, Italy, whose public séances attracted and created confusion among many prominent scientists in the late 19th century – Hansen underlines Blackman's argument that 'science controversies are engulfed in power relations, with the preservation of boundaries between the scientific and the non-scientific being the battleground' (Hansen, this issue). He situates Blackman's recent publication in her long trajectory of 'embrac[ing] the weirdness in science without romanticizing or ridiculing it, but with an open mind towards what it might tell us even from beyond the grave' (ibid.). This is a theme that also re-occurs in her contribution in this issue, and that has most obviously inspired our editorial and our anecdotal excursions to Assistens Cemetery.

Bringing together the variety of approaches the authors of this special issue use to study and analyse ghostly matters in organizing, we learn that a ghostly methodology requires us to pay attention to the senses (Blackman, 2015). To perceive and unfold the many layers of sensual experiences and activities discerned in the data, the researcher needs the time, space and openness to be attentive to and let herself be affected by the animations that data creates. Here, MacLure reminds us of the familiar, though perhaps undervalued, situation we encounter in the process of data analysis – that of stumbling on data that 'glows' (2013: 661). This is the moment when the analyst is drawn to, struck by or cannot let go of certain fragments of information; when an encounter with data causes reactions that resonate with the body *and* mind; when data 'seems to invoke something abstract or intangible that exceeds propositional meaning, but also has a decidedly embodied aspect' (ibid.). Thus, the task for the researcher exploring ghostly matters is to become 'enchanted' – to have an experience of being captivated, inspired and affected (Bennet, 2001), and to become sensitive to what may be 'insubstantial', but is not insignificant (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018: 40). A ghostly-attuned exploration traces what generates affects *and* thoughts – both of which are always somewhat beyond the researcher's control.

Thus, the researcher must also stay with the ghost and go along with it, or, put differently, re-read and return to data that affects. An analytical attention to ghostly matters is thus one that invites hesitation and waiting (cf. Holloway and Kneale, 2008), one that also draws and dwells on memories, associations, fantasies, intuitions, visceral responses and more. Such attention allows the researcher, as Hansen so eloquently puts it in his account of Lisa Blackman's methodology, to 'immerse herself into the unbounded field that stretches out from the respective academic studies she makes her points of departure. It allows her to pick up clues,

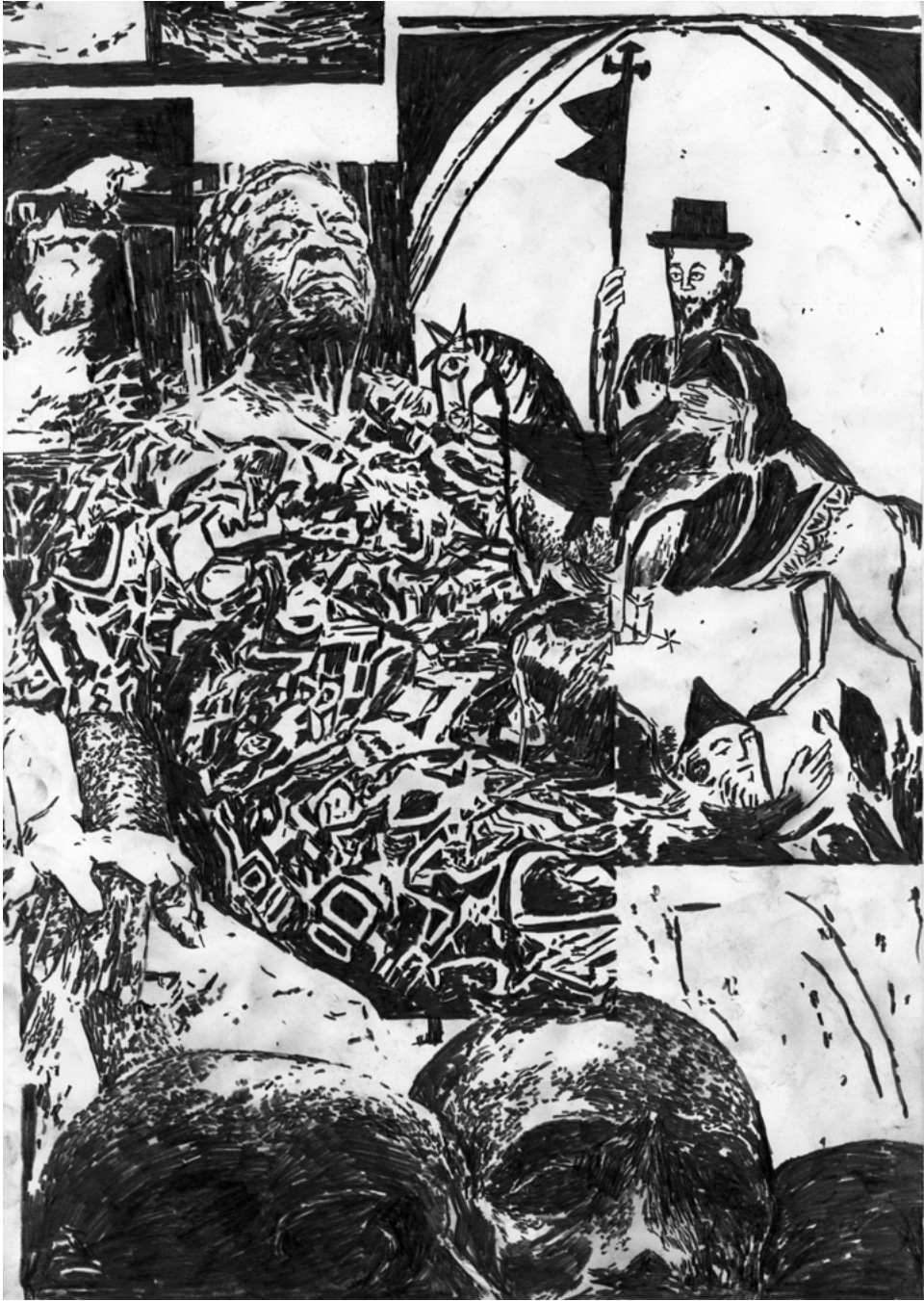
to draw connections to the past or into possible futures, and ultimately to engage with questions about what data are, how they come about and what they do' (Hansen, this issue). Following Blackman (2015, 2019, this issue), we might call this approach an embodied hauntology.

Such a methodology might thus be described as one that resists the temptation of resolving and explaining away, that avoids quickly reshuffling insights for the sake of a smoother or more inventive narrative. If hauntings remain uncertain, they must be 'incarnations which hover between secure accounting mechanisms' meaning that the interpretative criteria for understanding spectral occurrences can never be *fully* grasped or articulated (cf. Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 308; Lipman, 2014: 23). Along these lines, Cho (2007, 2008) develops a methodological approach for listening to the gaps, silences and contradictions in her mother's story, communication and behaviour after the Korean War. The capacity to 'see' the trauma that has been transmitted across generations, often through shame, secrecy and silence, cannot be seen or registered. Cho strives towards a form of inquiry where 'what is perceived is not located at any single place and moment in time, and the act by which this perception occurs is not the result of a single or isolated agency but of several working in concert or parallel' (2008: 66). A ghostly methodology can thereby be described as the analytical efforts to work with traces, fragments, fleeting moments, gaps, absences, submerged narratives and displaced actors and agencies that register affectively and that collectively might begin to tell some of the stories thus far untellable.

Lastly, although they have remained scarce in this issue, we aim to second Stevens' and Tolbert's (2018) call for not ignoring or forgetting literal ghosts and paranormal phenomena. The authors criticize academic scepticism toward such unexplainable incidents, even amongst those academics interested in ghostly matters. They argue that in seeking to metaphorize the spectral, 'scholars have tended to ironically strip experience of its immediacy in-place and in-body (as well as out-of-body)' (2018: 39). Engaging with the everyday experience of literal ghosts more seriously (rather than ignoring its relevance) through spatial-analytical expertise or situated, ethnographic studies, the authors argue, will enable a form of research that does justice to lived experience and the politics of everyday life (*ibid.*: 49).

Haunting and ghosts in organization studies

In organization studies, a few contributions have already called attention to the ghostly qualities inherent in organization and management (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Gabriel, 2012; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2010; see also Knox et al. 2015; De



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Cock et al., 2013; Muhr and Azad, 2013; Weiskopf, 2004). Particularly Orr's (2014) study of how local government chief executives encounter and live with ghosts has demonstrated not only that we find ghostly presences in mundane organizational settings but also that analytical curiosity about ghostly workings can enrich our understanding of organizational change and the transformation of organizational traditions. However, when compared to other social science disciplines like human geography, cultural studies and sociology, organization studies is only incipiently beginning to benefit from theorizings of the ghostly (e.g. McCormack, 2010; Gordon, 2008; Hetherington, 2004).

Particularly since Derrida's *Specters of Marx* from 1994, so much has been written about ghosts, hauntology and ghostliness in cultural studies, geography and art theory that any attempt to summarize contributions and discussions makes little sense. In the following, we will therefore focus on three questions we think especially valuable for organization scholars: 1) How thinking about the ghostly enables inquiries into organizational time and how organizational time is not linear. 2) The intimate connection between haunting and affect, and how thinking about ghostly matters invites a curiosity towards those intense moments in organizations when things that no longer hold a place in language, narratives and knowledge make themselves felt in affective registers. 3) Finally, how ghostly matters are entangled with complex questions of the politics of organizing and of justice and responsibility.

A conceptual framework for thinking about the ghostly begins with a dismissal of the idea that time is linear (Edensor, 2001: 42; Maddern, 2008). Famously, in Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) the figure of the ghost reveals that history neither begins nor ends and that Marxism endures despite the supposed triumph of capitalist liberal democracy. The ghostly draws attention to 'endings that are not over' (Gordon, 2008: 139), but also more profoundly interrupts linear time and thus any narrative trying to fix time in neat stories of progress, development or enlightenment. Derrida writes: 'It is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time' (1994: 202). He introduces the concept of hauntology in order to trouble the concept of ontology. The two concepts sound quite similar when spoken, but hauntology nevertheless reminds us that ontology is haunted by a corrupting and contaminating undercurrent: a spectral working that destabilizes, in a more or less subterranean fashion, any existence and any self-sufficient present (Derrida, 1994: 174; Jameson, 1999: 93). The living present is full of animate and animating pasts as well as futures. Ideas, concepts, subjects and things that should no longer be continue to exist as absent-presences, working to produce a 'sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself' (Derrida, 1994: 25). Thus, to attend to the ghostly is to explore the complexities of the present and the ways in which

multiple pasts and futures continue to linger in spite of how certain forces work to forget and derecognize them.

At the same time, the ghostly does not straightforwardly propose any new or alternative orderings of time. As Pile has suggested, the ghostly is not coherent; it can mean many things at once: 'Just like an element in a dream, the figure of the ghost is overdetermined – pointing in many different directions at once' (2005: 162f.). Ghosts rarely deliver clear messages (Holloway and Kneale, 2008), and ghostly matters may be about futures as well as pasts. For Derrida the ghostly is both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come). He writes: '(N)o one can be sure if by returning (the ghost) testifies to a living past or living future' (1994: 123). Ghostly matters are not about how one ordering of time is replaced by another equally fixed and meaningful narrative. Rather, the ghostly has to do with indeterminate foldings of time. Ghostly matters rarely involve a simple mourning over lost pasts, but work to remind us about lost futures too. In Avery Gordon's seminal work, haunting also centres on a contest over the future, over what is to come next (Gordon, 2011). Ghostly matters are therefore as much about how we inherit the future as about how we inherit the past (Barad, 2010: 257). An analytical sensitivity to ghostly matters means inquiring into those particular moments where linearity collapses, implodes or explodes into excess, and exploring those moments in different settings, where certain temporal orders are disturbed and other possible lines of flight open up.

For scholars of organization and organizing, a conceptual framework of the ghostly draws attention to how strategies, policies, vision statements and the like do not always succeed in capturing and ordering organizational time as linear. Often, such practices strive to order organizational complexity as narratives consisting of inadequate pasts that the organization should move away from and brighter, more efficient and prosperous futures that can only be achieved through certain requisite actions and efforts in the present. Attending to ghostly matters can involve following how strategies and policies become haunted when their implementation clashes with embedded local cultures, traditions, histories and storytelling (Brøgger, 2019). Thinking about the ghostly is a way of drawing attention to the fact that strategy narratives of change can forcefully replace some inadequate past with a glossy future, but also be fragile and precarious. Rather than creating linear progress, such narratives are more likely to produce collages of intersecting temporalities colliding and merging in a landscape of juxtaposed asynchronous moments (Pors, 2016a). Here, organization studies might learn a good deal from (post)human geography where much work has been done to show how modern imperatives to swiftly transform and renew are only partial attempts to remove the past (Degen and Hetherington, 2001; Maddern, 2008). For example, studies of urban spaces, underground sewers, commuting routes, industrial ruins

and metro lines have explored how supposedly renovated or improved social and material spaces remain crowded with lingering remnants of former ways of life, outmoded working routines, long-gone cultural fashions, failed city planning and materiality in varying stages of decay (Edensor, 2001; Gandy, 1999; Hetherington, 2004). Attending to the ghostly can attune us to how elements rendered homeless by the introduction of new organizational visions unwillingly disappear, and how this contributes to other, darker and more complex narratives that haunt organizational space like superfluous or additional inhabitants (Edensor, 2008).

Organization scholars might also learn from how the relationship between haunting and affect has been theorized. The relationship between organizing and affect has, perhaps, already been explored in organization studies, as well as in *ephemera*, through the non-representational, darkness and ambivalence, for example (see Fotaki et al., 2017, Kenny et al., 2011; as well as Karppi et al., 2016; Linstead et al. 2014; Linstead and Thanem, 2007; Höpfl, 2000). However, important insights may still be found beyond the customary boundaries of organization studies. Here, we begin in the assertion made by Meier et al. (2013) that absences, or absent-presences, are imbued with an affective quality that differs from experiences of present identities, from that which can be clearly articulated, seen and talked about. Ghosts and ghostly matters can never be fully understood, represented or brought into representation (Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 308; Lipman, 2014: 23). Instead, their lurking absent-presence is often felt, intuited or sensed in affective and embodied registers.

One route along which to trace the relationship between haunting and affect goes back to Freud's famous essay on the uncanny. The concept of the uncanny is also one of the better developed discussions about haunting and the quality of haunting moments in organization studies (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; see also Gabriel, 1995; Sievers, 1994; Cooper, 1987). As Timon Beyes explores in this issue, the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*, literally the unhomely, refers to a feeling of unease when something familiar suddenly becomes strange. Freud explores the uncanny lexicographically in his essay, tracing the origin of the concept and its historical development. He finds that the homely initially meant familiar and friendly – a place free of ghostly influences – but over time the concept became increasingly ambivalent, until ultimately it merged with its antonym, the unhomely (Freud, 2003: 134). Through this etymological route, the uncanny came to describe the confusing, yet itchy feeling that an encountered foreign world is vaguely familiar: that the foreign has a, however cryptic, pathway back to the familiar (Beyes, this issue; Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Freud, 2003: 148).

However, as many scholars have also noted (most famously Cixous, 1976; but see also Royle, 2003), the form and structure of the text is what makes Freud's essay

so striking. The text, or its author, seems haunted by a shadow of doubt and hesitation (Cixous, 1976: 526), and so constantly undoes what is sought established. As Cixous writes: 'What is brought together is quickly undone; what asserts itself becomes suspected' (*ibid.*). Just as a particular definition of the uncanny is stabilized, the surface cracks and the concept is thrown back into indeterminacy. The strangely incoherent structure of Freud's text mirrors the very essence of the uncanny, appearing even to become its doppelgänger. Through Freud's essay the uncanny comes not only to signify a strange combination of familiar and unfamiliar, but also to refer to the affective feeling of beginning to doubt the reality in front you – the affective quality of experiencing a doubt cast on what you think you know. As Beyes and Steyaert (2013) have argued the uncanny is located in a strange place between concept and affect, between theory and art, between genuine thinking and blocs of sensation (see also Beyes, this issue; Masschelein, 2011: 11). Here we want to stress how the notion of the uncanny points to the close relationship between haunting and affect (see also Blackman, this issue), and how it directs attention to the way haunting is an affective encounter with something so unknowable, uncertain and strange that an affective atmosphere becomes the main media through which one can engage with it.

Grace Cho's (2007, 2008) moving work on transgenerational haunting provides another seminal resource for thinking about the relationship between haunting and affect. Cho explores the story of her mother, who came to the USA from Korea as the wife of an American soldier she met in the Korean War. In Korea, Cho's mother had been a sex worker for American soldiers, and the trauma and shame she suffered as a result became a chilling story that could never be coherently told but that deeply affected Cho's childhood and upbringing. To engage with this, on the one hand, personal but also emblematic story for hundreds of Korean women, Cho draws on the psychoanalytical work of Abraham and Torok (1994). In their work, they propose the concept of transgenerational haunting to refer to how trauma and pain are transported in affective registers between generations. For Abraham and Torok what haunts us is not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others (*ibid.*: 75). Transgenerational haunting is the affective process through which we are touched by that which could never be told, by that which has no language. Here, the ghost is the gap that the concealment of some part of a loved one's life produced in us. What haunts is the 'burial of an unspeakable fact within the loved one' (*ibid.*: 76).³

³ It should, perhaps, be noted here that Abraham and Torok consider the ghost a symptom of a trauma that through processes of being dealt with in psychoanalytic therapy can be made to disappear. Contrary to this, in this issue, we do not try to expel

From folklore to Derrida, ghosts and justice are strongly connected. Ghosts are dead people coming back to disturb the living because of injustices and can be laid to rest once justice is done or the issue resolved. In the introduction to *Specters of Marx*, Derrida famously states:

If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, not presently living, either to us, in us or outside us, it is in the name of justice. (1994: xix)

Ghosts remind us that something is or was not right and that we have some role in the wrongdoing or in setting things right: ‘the absence of justice (as a presence) means that a structure/organization is haunted by the ghost of the undecidable and by spectres of justice’ (Weiskopf, 2004: 212). Here, we would like to further build on the connection between the ghostly, justice and responsibility (e.g. Jones, 2003; Weiskopf, 2004), but also on the role affect plays in this connection.

For organizational scholars, an attention to ghostly matters opens up inquiries into those things in organizations that we consciously or unconsciously ‘unsee’, that we no longer talk about or understand, but that still touch us now and then in affective registers (cf. Mieville, 2009; Otto et al., 2019). As we have tried to argue, an interest in ghostly matters means undertaking an exploration of those affectively charged moments, situations or encounters that allow us to engage with something for which we have been deprived of a language for, and that now operate at the limits of what is taken to be understandable (Blackman, this issue). An interest in the ghostly connects us to questions about how, when and why something came to be placed outside the boundaries of what is seen as sensible, intelligible or understandable in organizations. It connects us to questions about seeing, speaking and surviving for displaced subjects (Cho, 2007: 153) and to moments in which bodies suddenly become sensitive to suggestive and contagious atmospheres, attuned to however-small affective disturbances and invested in reading barely-there traces of what should no longer exist (Pors, 2016b). As Gordon puts it: ‘Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition’ (2008: 8).

Thus, engaging with ghostly matters may enable organization scholars to dismantle stubborn assumptions in mainstream organization and management literature (as Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera propose in this issue) that circumvent questions of ethics and responsibility. Take, for example, the

the ghost, but instead to invite it in and explore the analytical and political insights it may offer.

assumption that leadership and change is something achieved by superior and individual managers (to see this idea eloquently dissected, see Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015), or the assumption that organizations are disentangled from their natural, social and political environments (as identified by Gladwin et al., 1995: 875). Ghosts tend to disturb and unsettle the categories, boundaries, practices and strategies (of unseeing) that we use to individualize certain issues or disconnect ourselves from the socio-political effects of the ways we organize. A ghostly encounter may allow us to realize that 'distance' was always only a psychological and ideological construct designed to protect us from the nearness of things (Morton, 2013: 27), and that we are, indeed, entangled to global chains of capitalism, even in our daily organizational work and efforts.

Conclusion: Ghostly matters and academic subjectivity

In this editorial, we have proposed some possibilities for thinking about ghostly matters in organizing. Taking the anecdotal case of Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen, we have suggested that ghostly matters have to do with multiple temporalities, the collapse of linear time and strange foldings of pasts, presents and futures. We have also linked the ghostly to processes of remembering and forgetting. Moreover, we have argued that ghosts disturb categories and the processes of categorizations used by organizations to fix, stabilize and manage events, people and things. Finally, we have suggested that thinking about the ghostly opens up questions about how things, ideas and people become disposable and how organizations handle that which has become unneeded and considered as waste.

Although our exploration has been less exhaustive than perhaps warranted given how much has been written about ghosts and haunting in other disciplines, we have drawn attention to some of the work done in (post-)human geography, sociology and cultural studies that might inform current attempts in organization studies to attend to the ghostly. Specifically, we have presented work on ghostly matters as embodying multiple and intersecting temporalities as well as intimate links between haunting and affect and suggested some of the analytical possibilities this work might open up for organization scholars. We have pointed to connections between ghosts, affects and ethics by suggesting that ghostly moments are those moments where it becomes possible to come into contact with the broader social and political stakes of our daily doings, although this contact is often only felt in affective registers and provides no clear, decipherable message.

With these efforts we have tried, perhaps too hard, to tame the ghost. We have sought out and identified the ghost and endeavoured to take it seriously by making

identity. Lisa Blackman spoke about a hauntological methodology, not unlike daydreaming, of letting go of rational control over one's attention and analytical sensibilities, a process of losing oneself. Asbjørn Skou dismantled the human as a single contained individual by unfolding how bacteria and other alien organisms live inside us all, making us more-than-one, more-than-human. Similarly, if one theme cuts across the rich and diverse analyses in the work that we invoke with the title of this special issue, Avery Gordon's seminal book *Ghostly matters*, it is the complexity of personhood.

Ghosts remind us that the body that writes, the body that works, the body that orders and structures our texts, is not a superior, confined and independent subject (Skou, absent-present note, this issue). To paraphrase Jameson (1999: 39), the body that writes is hardly as self-sufficient as it claims to be, and we would do well not to count on its solidity and boundedness.

So, fellow scholars, let's call forth the ghosts! Let us unleash other sensuous capabilities to encounter it. Let us learn to listen to what ghosts might have to say about organization and management. Let us dare to be messed with by ghosts and ghostly matters.

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Haunted data, transmedial storytelling, affectivity: Attending to 'controversies' as matters of ghostly concern

Lisa Blackman

abstract

This article will explore the organizational dynamics of knowledge and scientific truths in a digital age and the hauntological implications inherent in such processes. It will consider the concept of haunted data and its methodological and performative force in relation to the question of what accrues power, status and authority within the context of changing conditions of truth-claims within digital archives. The article will focus on a scientific controversy related to priming, which largely took shape within the context of post-publication-peer-review. Post-publication-peer-review (PPPR) is a distributed form of commentary made possible by social and digital media. Different publics can now add their own commentary to published academic journal articles as they circulate across websites, blogs and weblogs, twitter, Google+ posts, in Reddit communities, in comments attached to Wikipedia, online science journalism articles, newspaper articles and so on. For some scientists, the digital disruption of the publishing industry is opening scientific conversation up to new publics and can help contribute to the impact of the article. For others it is dangerous and might damage the integrity of science and the concepts used to adjudicate truth-claims. What is missing from these debates are the hauntological consequences of these new publishing forms their implications for how we might understand the affectivity and dynamism of data and digital archives once thought fossilized or fugitive. This includes the particular organisation of practices of memory and forgetting, and attention and inattention within digital controversies.

Introduction

This article will explore the organizational dynamics of knowledge and scientific truths in a digital age and the hauntological implications inherent in such

processes. It will consider the concept of haunted data and its methodological and performative force in relation to the question of what accrues power, status and authority within the context of changing conditions of truth-claims within digital archives. The article will specifically focus on a scientific controversy related to priming, which largely took shape within the context of post-publication-peer-review. Post-publication-peer-review (PPPR) is a distributed form of commentary made possible by social and digital media. Different publics can now add their own commentary to published academic journal articles as they circulate across websites, blogs and weblogs, twitter, Google+ posts, in Reddit communities, in comments attached to Wikipedia, online science journalism articles, newspaper articles and so on. For some scientists, the digital disruption of the publishing industry is opening scientific conversation up to new publics and can help contribute to the impact of the article. For others it is dangerous and might damage the integrity of science and the concepts used to adjudicate truth-claims. There is much scrambling to shape the potential affordances of this new mode of organizing scientific debate, scrutiny and conversation. to practices of gatekeeping, censorship, secrecy, and anonymity, which characterise some peer review practices across the academic publishing industry.¹

What is missing from these debates are the hauntological consequences of these new publishing form and their implications for how we might understand the affectivity and dynamism of data and digital archives once thought fossilized or fugitive. This includes the particular organisation of practices of memory and forgetting, and attention and inattention within digital controversies. I have written about some of what is at stake in the emergence of post-publication-peer-review for humanities scholars elsewhere (see Blackman, 2016). In this article, I will explore the implications of these processes for analyses of what haunts modes of scientific knowledge production, and which often remain submerged, displaced, disqualified and foreclosed. The article will make an argument for the importance of attending to what is often rendered insignificant, nonsensical, insufficient or

¹ In an interesting article by Jane Hunter (2012) published in *Frontiers in computational neuroscience*, the evolutionary scientist Lynn Margulis is presented as one scientist who did not benefit from conventional practices of peer review. As the article recounts, despite going on to invent the ground breaking endosymbiotic theory, one of the most important articles outlining this theory was rejected from over 15 journals before it was eventually published. Margulis was considered by many scientists to be a rebel and a maverick and was continually embroiled in controversy https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynn_Margulis. This example of scientific gatekeeping and exclusion is used by Hunter to argue for the importance of new forms of post-publication-peer-review, including what is known as the *F1000* publishing platform, which in Hunter's words 'take openness to the next level'.

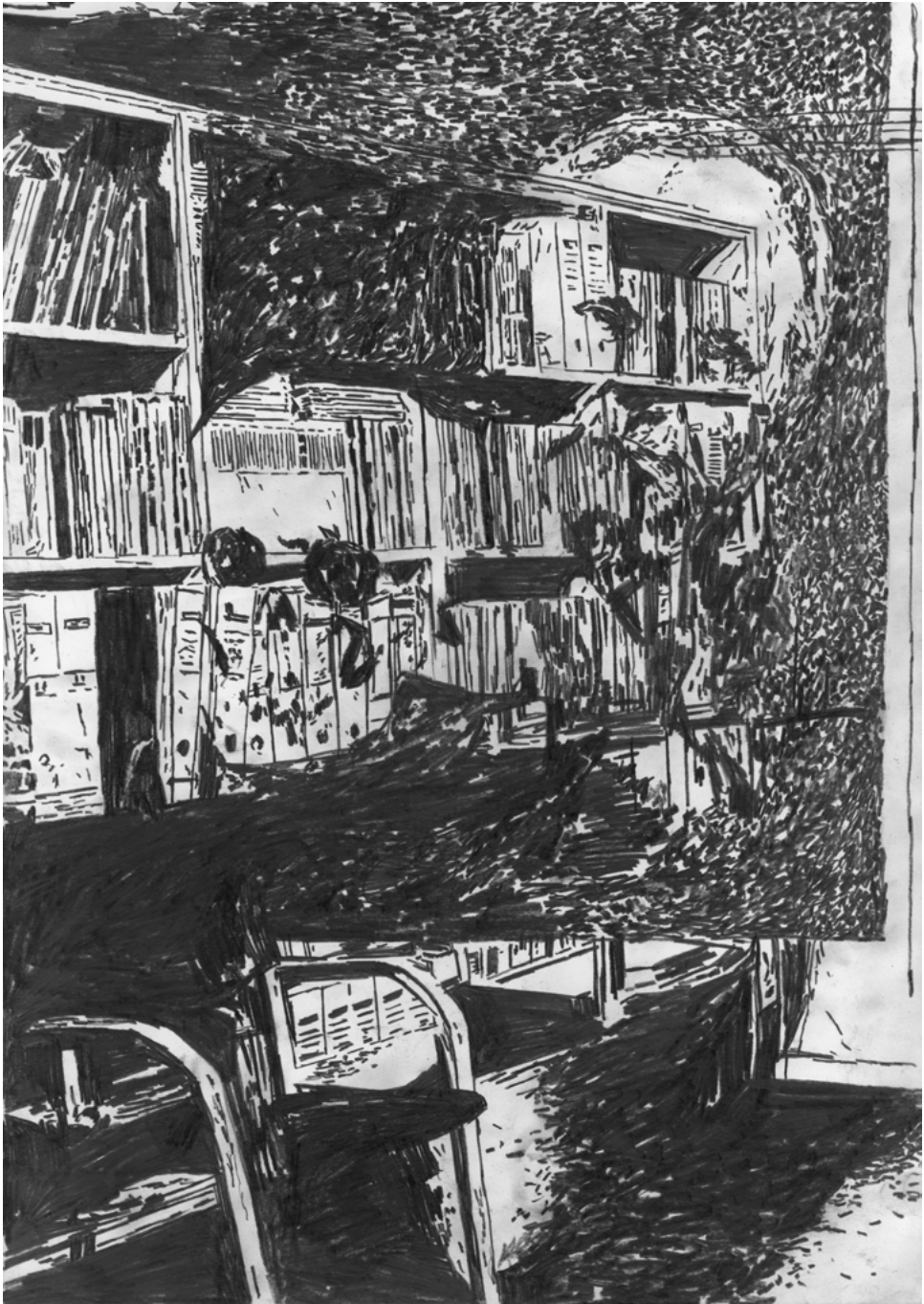
what often exists below the radar never becoming part of accepted narratives or official versions of events. Why might it be important to attend to ghostly data, to those links or traces of ‘something else’ (of what we might call future-potentials) that sometimes open to detours, often to dead-ends and to submerged and displaced actors and agencies? What does the concept of hauntology and haunted data bring to our discussions of time and temporalities (to organisational time, for example), to what is often disavowed, or disqualified, to that which remains unspoken or speaks through different mediums? This is what I call the haunting potential of different organisational structures and processes (what we might call mattering processes), which reveals the close relationships between haunting and affect.

The case study I will use to explore some of these issues is taken from my recent book, *Haunted data: Transmedia, affect, weird science and archives of the Future* (2019). The book engages in a form of transmedial storytelling, which explores how digital archives have the potential to re-move – that is put back into circulation –, marginal agencies, displaced actors and entities, and temporalities once thought fugitive or fossilized. Transmedial storytelling is typically framed as storytelling, which

uses multiple media platforms (to) tell a narrative across time. Each media piece – whether it’s a comic, novels, video games, mobile apps, or a film – functions as a standalone story experience – complete and satisfying. Like a giant puzzle, each piece also contributes to a larger narrative. The process is cumulative and each piece adds richness and detail to the story world, such as character backstories and secondary plotlines.²

The focus on allure, appeal and what commands attention within a media landscape increasingly shaped through an overload of information and ubiquitous, pervasive, networked media is of interest to organisational life and concerns. How to shape and ‘grab attention’ and the relationship of this to regimes of remembering and forgetting, which govern what can be said and not said, seen and not-seen, felt but not easily articulated, extend studies of organisation and management processes into hauntological and affective realms. With this in mind I will extend some of these introductory arguments by transposing discussions of the affective and the transmedial into more ghostly matters that have been the subject of hauntological analysis and method. This will move discussions of transmedial storytelling beyond a particular media psychology or neuroscience of affect and emotion to explore the new forms of power, status, hierarchy, visibility

² This is a quote from <http://athinklab.com/transmedia-storytelling/what-is-transmedia-storytelling/>.





and invisibility, memory and forgetting, which are shaping practices of attention and inattention.

Hauntology and ghostly matters

Hauntological analysis extends across the arts and humanities, has a particular place in philosophy and has entered into discussions of media, such as film, photography and television. Hauntology has a particular place in the lives of oppressed and marginalized peoples and those suffering from traumatic memories that blur the historical and the personal and the past and present. Avery Gordon (2008) suggests that hauntological analysis is a way of focusing on how people sense, intuit and experience the complexities of modern power. It focuses on 'what is usually invisible or neglected or thought by most to be dead or gone' (Gordon, 2008: 194). There is a sense that 'we' already know, in some form or way, what haunts as a ghostly presence, but that the paradigms we have for animating these ghosts operate at the limits of what is taken to be understandable. Gordon suggests that as researchers, readers, citizens and persons we are implicated in particular hauntings, but that we might need companions in thought, such as novels, photographs and other media to help articulate our concerns (also see Ahmed, 2014).

Hauntologies are also histories of the present; of how particular presents have materialized in relation to specific and contingent normative horizons and what is relegated, excluded, disavowed or consigned to pathology. In that sense, hauntologies have a relationship to work which has explored how social norms become social goods or truths and the social figures who carry what is excluded from such norms; the feminist killjoy, the melancholic migrant, the unhappy queer and so forth (Ahmed, 2010). However, the aforementioned figures might be said to have a hyper-visibility in that they can be found, tracked, analysed and allowed to speak through the animation of particular archives of wilfulness perhaps (see Ahmed, 2014). The ghost might be said to be a different kind of social figure, which is both 'there and not there, past and present, force and shape' (Gordon, 2008: 6). It takes form and crops up in places, relations and shapes, which exert agency or an affective force without obvious definition. The ghost requires a host; someone, something or perhaps a controversy, which allows it to surface and demand our attention. Haunting can impose and then retreat; leave traces of its visit and invite us to take notice and 'imagine beyond the limits of what is already understandable' (Gordon, 2008: 195)

Media time(s) and haunted socialities

Haunting is an invocation of ghosts, of those entities and things which live among us in both social and imaginary forms. Ghosts and ghostings are often associated with particular places, the haunted house or landscape, and are the stuff of the 19th century Gothic novel. They are particular animations, usually associated with the dead coming alive, or the liminality of death in life when the past lives on in the present as a 'seething presence' (Gordon, 2008). Hauntologies have a particular place within studies of the transmission of intergenerational trauma. There is an assumption within this tradition that 'intergenerational trauma is transmitted from one generation to another without the next generation necessarily even knowing what it is that causes the anxiety they experience' (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012: 10). It is assumed that the transmission of trauma often occurs through practices of shame, secrecy and silence, rather than being talked about. To that extent the forms of mediation that are seen to underpin such processes are not symbolic or transmitted through language. The body of a particular host is connected and linked to others (human and nonhuman) who perhaps cannot be known, talked about or articulated in any straightforward way. It is no coincidence perhaps that performative approaches to the question of how to listen to voices, apparitions and ghosts in this context have been developed.

For example, Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012), take inspiration from the work of the French psychoanalysts Davoine and Gaudilliere (2004) whose work is influenced by dramaturgical enactments of trauma, where they draw an analogy between particular forms of theatre (Artaud and Japanese No Theatre) and the action of analysis. In her piece, *The characters of madness in the talking cure* (2007), Davoine equates the position of the analyst as being akin to a conjurer, summoning the characters of madness to speak through another character as a double. She argues that the analytic scene is akin to a stage and the analyst should attempt to create a mis-en-scene through which the analysand's voices or ghosts can speak through another, so that it can be acted out and spoken. She likens this process to interacting with ghosts, hallucinations and apparitions setting in motion a moment or event that is no longer situated in time. The concept of the double, which she takes from Artaud's *Theatre of cruelty* (1932), refers to ghosts, which are taken to have a long memory, and require a hospitable host in order to come to the stage. She uses various concepts to describe the experience and enactment of time disclosed by such practices, including 'time quakes', equated to stoppages of time.

Although this practice has primarily been developed to work with people experiencing psychosis within particular therapeutic contexts, there has been some success with the use of social media to extend how we might listen to and

interact with the voices of others (see Blackman, 2014). These dramaturgical approaches to staging and re-enacting the voices of others (human and nonhuman) connect with other performative approaches that might allow particular forms of listening and interacting. These might be considered *extensive* and *intensive* in the way that media forms are often described. Hauntologies do not conform to a representational logic and are more akin to forms of mediated perception. Grace Cho's (2008) seminal and moving account of her own experience of intergenerational haunting develops how we might understand mediated perception as an assemblage of human and non-human actors and agencies distributed across space and time. The capacity to 'see' the trauma that has been transmitted across generations, often through shame, secrecy and silence, cannot be seen or registered

in any single place and moment in time, and the act by which this perception occurs is not the result of a single or isolated agency but of several working in concert or parallel. (Cho, 2008: 156)

Thus the I/eye of perception is not a distinctly human and singular eye, but rather is made up of 'an assemblage of eyes, tongues, and other parts distributed in time' (Cho, 2008: 157). Cho equates this, following John Johnston (1990), to a form of 'machinic vision', where the ability to see is 'distributed across bodies and generations' (Cho, 2008: 57). Cho equates this to a form of haunting, related to traumatic histories that have not been officially documented, or only in particular ways. These disavowed or discredited histories might leave traces, fragments, repetitions of movement, gesture and inchoate feelings, which speak in and through other's bodies – human and non-human – that become distributed across space and time.

This is a form of diasporic machinic vision, which she suggests is perhaps the only means by which haunted histories can be 'seen'. She asks the important question, what does it mean to see, hear and listen through another's voice? This is related to what she terms an 'ethics of entanglement'. This question requires the re-staging of absent-presences through a distribution of the senses. Thus distributed perception brings together a range of actors and agencies, human and non-human, to shape a technology, which might allow one to 'see' what usually remains submerged, displaced or occluded. Such a technology of attention blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, past and present, material and immaterial, and therefore the work that particular media might perform. This might include the conjoining of semi-fictional film images, artwork from second generation subjects, official historical documents, social work literature, memoirs, witness stories and accounts, newspaper accounts, interviews and secondary histories, which all constitute a 'kind of story-telling machine' (Cho, 2008: 165). Distributed perception enables a performative re-staging or enactment of what might have

been, and therefore could be. It opens to apparitional hauntings in the present and to the production of different possible futures.

Within hauntological approaches the question of what might count as media is extended beyond particular media and technical forms. All of the above actors and agencies, from individual witness accounts, newspaper articles, fictional film, accounts from social workers, an individual and even collective sense of being haunted, and the phenomena of voice hearing, for example, are all forms of media. They all mediate and allow one to see by connecting up a trauma that has been distributed across space and time, and which require an assemblage of relationships to be enacted or staged in order to create the possibility of seeing. Mediated perception should not and indeed cannot be judged according to veracity – fact or fiction – as it is how elements are combined and performed as a particular ‘story-telling machine’. It is this story-telling machine, which enables vision and the possibility of new understanding to emerge. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that hauntology as a method can be found within art, film, literature, photography, performance, dance and drama for example; where the emphasis on staging, curation, choreography, orchestration and working with, and performing different intensive and extensive imaginaries, has perhaps been more advanced than in studies of media and communications (see Blackman, 2019).

Although beyond the scope of this article to include in any detail, there are many different examples and practices of hauntology across the arts and humanities. This includes the seminal work of the black British artist and filmmaker John Akomfrah who has used the term hauntology to describe his own films and aesthetic. Akomfrah’s practice combines archival footage (often from sanctioned media archives such as those of the BBC including documentary TV and radio), with imaginative re-stagings and enactments of the gaps, silences and absences in such footage. These require the action of myth, fiction and fantasy as companions in thought. In a commentary in relation to a 2012 art installation of Akomfrah’s work, which mobilized hauntology as its title, the author acknowledges Derrida’s use of such a term and its reference to those multiple pasts in the present, which remain as absent-presences (Allsop, 2013);³ what Allsop terms the ‘many pasts present in the present’. Akomfrah’s subject is the colonial histories of Jamaican and West Indian migrants to the UK and a staging of those stories erased by official histories and forms of mediated perception. Akomfrah’s film of Stuart Hall,⁴ the late and great Black British cultural studies scholar and public intellectual, whose story is told through the conjoining of archival footage and interviews, punctuated

³ <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/review-john-akomfrah-s-hauntologies>.

⁴ The Stuart Hall Project <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/interviews/stuart-hall-project-john-akomfrah-interview>.





A Time of Fires, Fatigue, Hard Cash and the

by the music of Miles Davies, shows just how effective and important hauntology as a political and artistic method can be.

Hauntological approaches to the many pasts in the present are also carried by the figure of the ghost as a socio-cultural and political phenomenon. This assumption is part of the curation of an ongoing interdisciplinary arts project led by the British artist Sarah Sparkes. GHost Hostings⁵ was initiated in 2008 and has to date curated 14 events, bringing together artists, performers, dancers, academics, filmmakers and other kinds of ghost-hunters to conceptually interrogate and manifest the idea of the ghost. GHost takes its title from Marcel Duchamp's (1953) work, 'A GUEST + a HOST = A GHOST'. As Sparkes argues, the guest is a host inside the ghost, which points towards the success and effectivity of the experimental apparatus to stage or summon ghosts for interrogation. In March 2014 GHost Hostings 14 staged 3 performance pieces, which all used sound, embodied performance and mediated images in order to conjure the experience of displacement through forced migration and traumatic histories. This included the work of Stasis 73⁶ who animated found archival images and testimonies of people forced to migrate, sometimes by foot, or train or boat, to another place, leaving behind abandoned buildings, homes and villages, personal items, lives and the dead. Through a form of mediated perception they attempt to stage the unspoken trauma of such displacement through image and sound, in order to raise the ghosts and re-animate what they term the dead camera-eye, which captures such images frozen in time. They return perhaps captivation to captivity.

Digital hauntology

In my book, *Haunted data*, I have developed an affective methodology that brings hauntological analysis into studies of data and computation. My focus has been on returning storytelling to science or what Rheinberger (1994) has termed *historiality*. The concept of historiality draws attention to the multiplicity of times that intrude within experimental systems. It also draws attention to science as a story-telling machine, where as he argues; 'an experimental system has *more stories* to tell than the experimenter at any given moment is trying to tell with it' (Rheinberger, 1994: 77). He equates this dynamic potential to older narratives that persist in the future, as well as 'fragments of narratives that have not yet been told' (Rheinberger, 1994: 77). I have explored this in the context of new forms of scientific data that blur fact and fiction, self and other, human and technical, material and immaterial, and the popular and the scientific (see Blackman, 2016).

⁵ <http://www.ghosthostings.co.uk>.

⁶ www.stasis73.com.

The data that are generated within post-publication-peer-review have provided the archive within which I have worked and have allowed a productive and I hope inventive way of attending to a statement's *liveliness*. In the book, *Affective methodologies: Developing cultural research strategies for the study of affect* (Knudsen and Stage, 2015) I argued that attending to a statement's liveliness sets in motion an ethnographic orientation, where what a researcher might encounter is not just texts, statements or practices (in the Foucauldian sense), but spectres, displacements, disjointed times, submerged events, and multiple temporalities (perhaps in the more Derridean sense – see Derrida, 1995).

Unlike practices of research located within particular archives and technologies of inscription, including the (paper) book and journal article, (as well as newspaper reports and cuttings; scientific reports held by particular institutional bodies; ethnographic research and interviews with research subjects, etc.), my research data consists of a dizzying array of hyper-links. These links extend across blogs, tweets, on-line science discussion forums, on-line science journalism, comments on websites and open-access science journals. The links are related to specific url's and their after-lives. It is what some media theorists have called cross-platform data, as the data is not generated by particular application programming interfaces. All of the data is digital, in the sense that I am following the fate of particular journal articles as they are transformed post-publication within and across different digital platforms. I liken my role to a ghost-hunter with an obsessive compulsion who focuses on what sometimes appear as insignificant or minor details to the plots that take form.

I specifically attend to outliers, gaps, or links, which insistently return, whilst at the same time they are subject to processes of redaction or recoding. They set in motion trails, which sometimes end at dead-ends and which are often obscured by particular regimes of remembering and forgetting. This kind of method requires the development of new habits of academic attention; what I liken to becoming an embodied instrument open to the rhizomatic quality of digital data. With tenacity, training, perseverance and specific forms of affective comportment (absorption, dissociation, daydreaming, reverie etc.) one is able to apprehend multiplicities. These might be conceived as distributed and non-hierarchical entry and exit points. They can be thought of as having no origin, genesis, beginning or end.

These trails are difficult to account for in terms of graphs, data visualizations, index cards, over-views of the data sample, taxonomies of research materials, categorizations of methodological protocols, or as an account of the dispersion of texts as they relate to each other in an archive delimited by particular conditions of possibility and existence. The method is perhaps closest to an example of embodied hauntology (see Blackman, 2015), where the data is shaped and re-

shaped by my own actions. I have often experienced this reshaping and re-moving as akin to a form of daydreaming or reverie. It is the closest account I can give for the absorption I have experienced as I move through and experience the logic of what Bolter and Grusin (2000) have termed hypermediation; that is acts of mediation, which draw attention to their construction. Bolter and Grusin explore this logic in relation to the hyper-linked design of the Internet and the remediation of graphic design within its aesthetic construction. This aesthetic is perhaps closest to practices of montage and collage found in modernist and postmodernist art, and is a visual logic that they argue emphasizes process, fragmentation, indeterminacy, and heterogeneity (in that it does not emphasize one unified point of view).

This hypertextual style means that lots of things compete for attention and reverie is perhaps one affective style that is suited to the remediated research environment that digital hauntologies engage. This feeling of syncopation and compulsion is as much about paying attention to absences, gaps, silences, contradictions and places where data trails coalesce and become *attractors*. Attractors relate to statements, texts, objects, events or entities that become entangled through discord, discontinuity, a temporal clash or collision. These collisions often create moments of affective intensity – anger, incredulousness, disbelief, or an insistent belief that there is something more to say. These entanglements might set in motion a genealogical trail that resurrects the spectre of past controversies. These ghosts might undo the present and open to those lost-futures, which are still very much with us, albeit as repressions, displacements and movements in submerged forms. The method illustrates the challenges of working affectively with particular archives when genealogies explicitly confront hauntologies.

The specific approach I develop to transmedial storytelling based on these ideas is indebted to the work of the post-colonial theorist, Rey Chow (2012). She frames transmedial storytelling as a distributed and performative strategy. The method works with particular entangled relations, or what she calls ‘scenes of entanglement’, entering into the scene and attempting to open up the potential to think otherwise. Transmedial storytelling has the potential she suggests to unfix the past bringing multiple temporalities into discussions of mediation. It also has the potential to blur distinctions between past and present and space and time.

She explores different strategies that might enable this, including montage and de-familiarization. It is what she equates to a post-human form of reflexivity. Chow suggests that ‘shadow media’ or social and digital media, are both atomized *and* increase capacities for connectivity and interactivity, which she suggests allow new realities to happen. She equates this to the setting in motion of different times and temporalities; no longer fugitive, fossilized and anachronistic. It is this setting in motion or *re-moving* that I develop within the context of the writing of the science

studies scholar Hans Jorg Rheinberger (1994) as outlined earlier. I will try to illustrate some of this by engaging in a brief transmedial form of storytelling that I hope will highlight what might be at stake in attending to ghostly matters in formation.

Science controversies as matters of ghostly concern

The transmedial storytelling I engage in the book takes two contemporary science controversies (*John Bargh priming controversy/Feeling the future*), which cross cognitive science, anomalistic psychology and psychic research as its subject matter. They also appear in a different form within the field of affect studies, speculative philosophies and new materialisms. Both controversies also speak to current debates, which cross affect theories, studies of media and mediation and the question of how we can do critical research within the context of computational culture? They also open to some marginal and marginalized ways of articulating what it means to be embodied, a human, a citizen, and to communicate when the singularly bounded and unified psychological subject is displaced from its sovereign status. Both controversies also took form within the context of post-publication-peer-review. They are shaped by a dizzying array of hyper-links, some of which have been assembled and re-assembled into accepted versions of events, and others, which remain as haunted data. My argument in short is that science and computational cultures might be haunted by the history and excess of their own storytelling and that these excesses surface in 'queer aggregations' or *haunted data* to be mined, poached and put to work in newly emergent contexts and settings.⁷ The book points to the propensity of *straight* or legitimate science to sanitize or excise or even exorcise narratives, actors, agents and entities, which 'contaminate' it with queerness.

In order to partially illustrate some of these arguments I will make links to work in sociology on controversies as potential sites, which de-stabilise linear conceptions of time. They offer up the potential to disclose what Derrida (1995) called archives of the future; that is the possibilities of imagining alternative futures, which are recovered or re-moved by minor traces found in the past. They

⁷ Clough et al. (2015) frame big data as the 'performative celebration of capital's queer captures and modulations'. The queerness of such queer capture and modulation is aligned in the reach of big data beyond number to the incalculable. *Haunted data* engages in a different form of 'queer capture' and modulation, which attends to those 'queer aggregations' which are present in a corpus of data associated with post-publication-peer-review, but which are discarded from attempts to 'storify' or modulate the data within specific algorithmic and computational practices, including the Google PageRank algorithm, for example.

exist as absent-presences in the present and therefore as potential-futures. Haunted data I will argue operates according to a kind of re-forming dynamic or tendency that can be modulated, attended to and worked with.

Usually controversies are considered public events, which disclose or reveal patterns of disagreement and opposing viewpoints linked to particular events or issues. It is assumed that controversies can be mapped and there is, for example, an established tradition of work that comes out of Science and Technology Studies linked to the work of the French sociologist, Bruno Latour, which uses digital and other methods to produce a cartography of controversies⁸. Within such approaches, which take data and the digital as their object, it is assumed that controversies can be made visible, that they are mediated in different ways, and that there are human as well as non-human actors and agents who shape what comes to matter. To that extent the controversies that are mapped are not simply considered representative, but rather the mapping also potentially becomes another agent that might enter into and change the setting and scene of the controversy.

However, arguably these approaches are rather rationalistic. Although it is recognised that a researcher is likely to be confronted with an overwhelming array of digital data and traces, it is still assumed that by using digital methods, which remediate quantitative forms of semantic and content analysis, one can map the key players and explore how controversies become shaped as particular matters of concern. As a metaphor for organisational life, controversy or issue-mapping as it is often referred to, assumes that dynamics shaping social life are knowable and can be scraped, attended to and transformed into other kinds of data in order to effect change and transformation. After all, controversy analysis is about making a difference as much as it is about revealing dynamics of public and organisational communication, power and life.

New media environments are seen to disclose the dynamism of controversies and allow for the mapping and representation of the complexity of science, which is usually covered over by positivist forms of science writing. As Venturini (2012: 808) has argued, positivist forms of writing and argumentation often present disagreements as technical points - problems with replication, the experimental set-up, statistical analysis and interpretation; but rarely as 'conflicting visions of the world.'

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mapping_controversies.

However, what is missed in these rather rationalistic versions of controversy mapping are the hauntological forces that are not so easily mapped, and indeed which are likely to be obscured by particular digital methods based on semantic and content analysis (also see Blackman, 2016). How then does one confront these hauntological forces and what and where might they direct us if only we could listen and attend? In the next section, I will open up some of these questions with a short case study, outlining some of the parameters of a science controversy in the area of priming. This more-than-one event opens up interesting questions about behavioural change and transformation linked to versions of behavioural economics that draw from studies of priming. These theories have contributed to understandings of how to effect change and transformation within organisational life. However, as the dust settles and the ghosts retreat the interesting questions and more innovative propositions re-moved by this controversy are largely left going nowhere.

John Bargh priming controversy

Let's imagine I am Professor John Bargh, an eminent Yale cognitive scientist who recently became the subject of a controversy. As a reader you might never have heard of John Bargh although you might be familiar with a classic psychology experiment known as the elevator walking study, which has been remediated many times on Youtube. This is one of the most highly cited social psychology experiments.⁹ This study argued that experimental subjects would walk more slowly to a lift after being shown words associated with ageing on a scrambled language task.

Priming was popularized by Malcolm Gladwell (2005) in his book, *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking* and is an interesting subject matter for hauntologies as it links hypnosis, subliminal forms of persuasion and behaviour change found in advertising and marketing, with what are often considered unconscious motivations of action, thought and feeling. Priming has also been linked to nudge behavioural economics in Thaler and Sunstein's (2009) book, *Nudge: Improving decisions about wealth, health and happiness*. Gary Gutting (2015) has argued that although the authors draw on scientific studies of priming to authenticate their behavioural economics their approach chimes more with common sense than established science in this area. The controversy under hauntological investigation confirms the epistemic uncertainty surrounding what priming is and how to

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAlTlx8lmlQ>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIofFEffDd8>.

understand, analyse and even experiment with priming effects as a way of enacting processes of change and transformation.

Priming is already controversial as it unseats the rational cogito from its Cartesian throne and draws limits around the concept of free will. This however is not what became controversial in 2012 about John Bargh and his studies of priming. Rather what became controversial was a particular replication study of his classic elevator study, which failed to replicate the priming effects (see Doyen et al., 2012).¹⁰ This incensed Bargh and led to him writing three posts for his blog for *Psychology Today*, which had lain dormant for two years. These posts are at the centre of what has been described by many commentators as an ‘Internet drama bomb’. This controversy became somewhat of a media event, creating a reach and traction across social media. However the centre that the blog posts occupy is a bit like a vortex, which has sucked them in and spat them out in a different form. The blog posts were later redacted and what is now left are trails and hyper-links to these redacted blog posts, which end in either detours, dead-ends or re-codings. This trail of haunted data re-activate minor agencies and actors within psychology’s pasts, which have largely been disqualified, disavowed and discredited. These pasts are re-moved and re-activated by this failed replication study and the redacted blog posts. The data invite interesting speculative questions about what it means to communicate when understood through a more distributed, relational and embodied ontology. However, these speculative questions end in dead-ends.

One set of speculative questions and propositions relates to the re-moval of Hans the Horse or ‘Clever Hans’, an early 20th century equine celebrity who could famously tell the time and solve fairly complex multiplication puzzles by stamping his hooves. The links made between Bargh and Hans the Horse were what incensed Bargh. He was compared to Mr von Osten the owner of Hans the Horse by the science journalist Ed Yong¹¹ implying not that priming did not exist, but priming effects could only be found when the experimenter *knew* the aims of the experiment. This equated the priming effects to a curious form of experimental bias or effect associated with the experimenter and not the experimental subject. Bargh’s incensed and uncivil discourse contained in the blog posts became an *attractor*, which re-moved this earlier entangled controversy. Bargh referred to this comparison as the ‘Clever Hans slur’ in one of his redacted blog posts, and it was this statement that became an *attractor*, accruing agencies as it moved on from the original scene of enunciation and became *lively*. This corpus of haunted data raised important questions about what it might mean to enter into suggestive relations

¹⁰ <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0029081>.

¹¹ <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/notrocketscience/2012/03/10/failed-replication-bargh-psychology-study-doyen/#.WLL1uhBZrqU>.

with another, and how mind and cognition might be distributed, shared, and extended through registers which exceed conscious awareness and attention. For example, the case of 'Clever Hans' has been revitalized in contemporary cultural theory to ask questions about what it means to affect and be affected and raises important questions about what it means to be open to the other, human and non-human (see Despret, 2004).

As Despret has argued in relation to the case of 'Clever Hans', Hans provides a wonderful opportunity to explore a fascinating question. Indeed, the horse could not count, but he could do something more interesting: not only could he read bodies, but he could make human bodies be moved and be affected, and move and affect other beings and perform things without their owners' knowledge. And this could be experimentally studied. Hans could become a living apparatus that enabled the exploration of very complicated links between consciousness, affects and bodies. Hans could play the role of a device that induced new articulations between consciousness, affects, muscles, will, events 'at the fringe' of consciousness (Pfungst, 2010: 203); he could be a device that, furthermore, made these articulations visible. Hans, in other words, could become a device that enabled humans to learn more about their bodies and their affects. Hans embodied the chance to explore other ways by which human and non-human bodies become more sensitive to each other (Despret, 2004: 113-114).

These are questions that are considered closed within the history of Psychology's past and that although consigned to history are re-moved by this controversy. Is this a story about Hans's capacities or the story of a relational connection that extended and distributed mind as a collective, shared process, even if Mr Von Osten was seemingly oblivious to his unwitting participation? If priming alters thought, action and behaviour, where in this case a horse can be made to add or subtract or tell the time through its connection with another, then who is mediating who? In whose mind should the capacity to imitate be located or is this the wrong question to be asking (see Despret, 2004)? However, these questions are foreclosed by the representationalism that comes to stand in for the controversy, and which appears in a Google search of the controversy. What remains in excess to this representationalism is a ghostly trail of haunted data. This data is lively and re-moves minor agencies, unsettled debates and more relevant questions and innovative speculative propositions about the nature of communication, change and transformation. These are largely occluded by the version of events, which have become assembled and that are illustrated by what appears at the top of page 1 when using Google as a search-engine (see Figure 1 below).

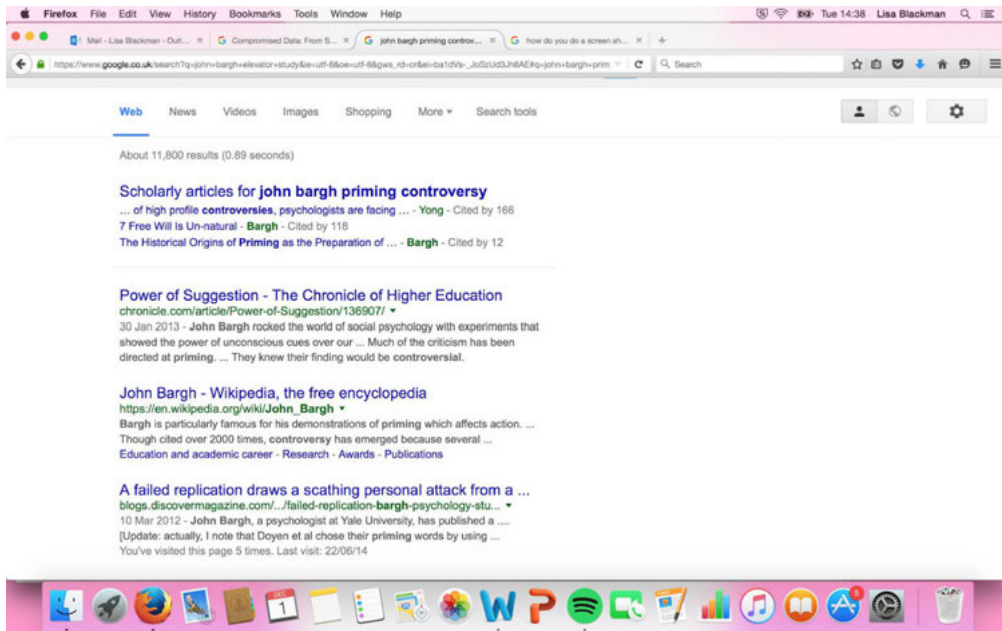


Figure 1: Google search for 'John Bargh priming controversy'.

The top article, *Power of Suggestion*, published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* is written in the manner of a confessional or redemption narrative where John Bargh regrets taking down the blog posts and reflects on the series of events, which led to what is constituted by him as being a very bad year. He did go on however in 2014 to win the Distinguished Award for Scientific Contributions by the American Psychological Association, so this was a blip in an otherwise illustrious career! When I started the project on *Haunted Data*, I like many other people, were looking for the blog posts that had been redacted and like others asked, why had the posts been redacted? Why had there been such a furore over a failed replication study? Surely replication studies and non-replication is part of the cornerstone of the scientific method? I could find links to the posts, particularly via the science journalist Ed Yong who had written about the failed replication study and Bargh's subsequent posts and their redaction but the posts remained elusive. I did however recover them using digital methods and other users had circulated the posts on digital platforms, such as Twitter. The recovery of the posts and my capacity to attend and re-move marginal and minor agencies and actors, has provided the conditions and source material to engage in this form of transmedial storytelling. Also as an example of my own temporary denouement to what is far from a static version of events, a publication of mine based on my transmedial reading of this controversy now appears on page 2 of a Google search using the search terms 'John Bargh priming controversy' (see result 4 in figure 2 below).

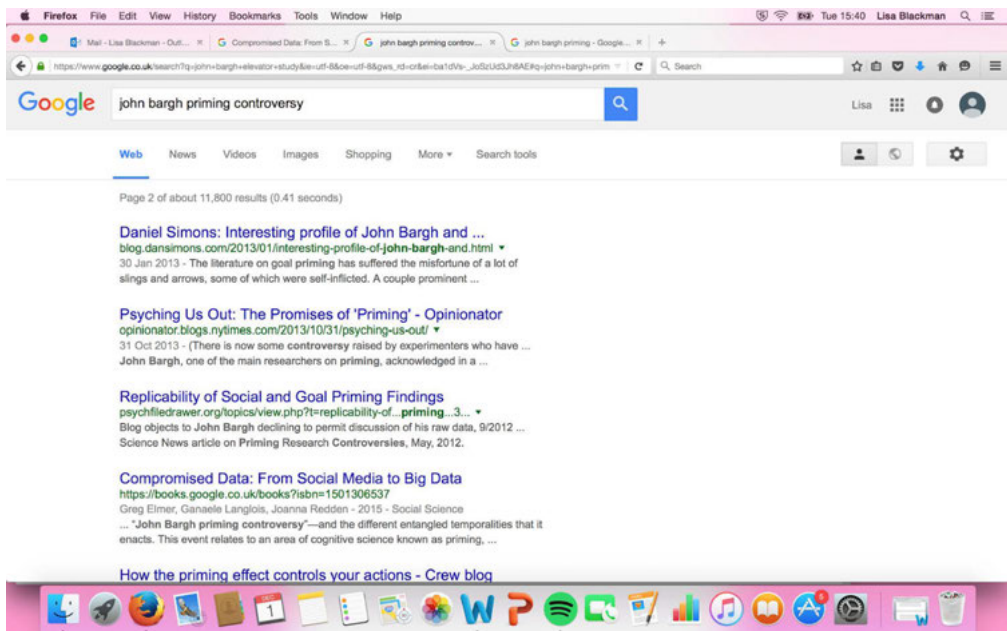


Figure 2: Google search for 'John Bargh priming controversy', page 2.

And on the same page, further down now appears a chapter I wrote for a book edited by Knudsen and Stage (2015), in their already cited collection *Affective methodologies*. In the chapter I contributed to the book, I also briefly mention the John Bargh priming controversy (see Blackman, 2015). This more-than-one event now extends and makes links to a vibrant Danish context of research and to a symposium on ghostly hauntings, which inspired this special issue of *Ephemera* on ghostly matters! (see Figure 3 below) It also shows how entering into a scene of entanglement can shape what comes to matter. However, despite the appearance of these publications on a Google search, Bargh's account remains number 1 on Google page rank if you search for the controversy. His version of what this means for the field of priming endures. As I argue in *Haunted data*, it is largely 'business as usual' that continues, where the potential of 'Clever Hans haunting' is closed down and disqualified, replaced with discussions of conceptual replication and the importance of proliferating replication studies. This is despite the epistemic uncertainty surrounding the field of priming and how to conduct science within this area. This haunted potential opens to more speculative and inventive propositions regarding mimetic processes (as I explore in the book), and to the question of what it might mean to enter into suggestive relations with another, human and non-human.

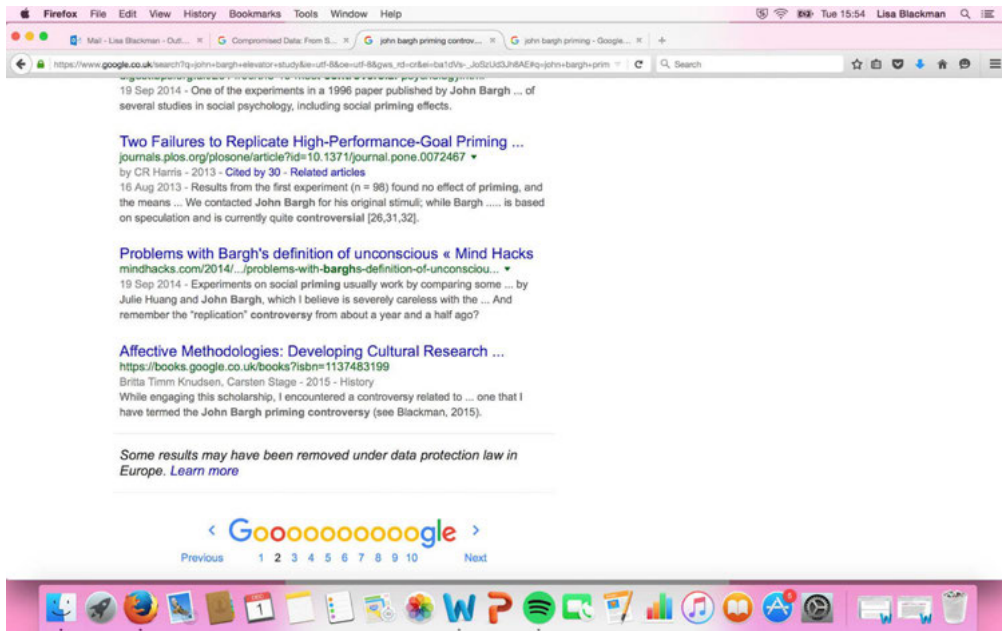


Figure 3: Google search for 'John Bargh priming controversy', page 2.

Conclusion

There is of course a lot more to say about this controversy including a possible discussion of the algorithms (specifically Google page Rank) that have allowed Bargh's versions of events to largely dominate search engines. I have written about this elsewhere (see Blackman, 2016). In relation to the theme of this special issue, I will conclude by drawing attention to the traces of the various labours -technical, symbolic and computational-; which Bargh or Bargh's digital proxy have engaged in in order to try to repair Bargh's on-line reputational economy. These digital traces have been transformed and translated into a more acceptable data double, which corresponds with his standing as a prestigious Yale cognitive scientist.

This is another way of saying that Bargh's standing and his own networks of prestige, status and hierarchy have also entered into this particular scene of entanglement, allowing Bargh's version of events to shape how this controversy is likely to endure and settle in the future. It is these relations of prestige, status and hierarchy that Google page Rank supports, amplifies and modulates, and illustrates the new forms of power that we encounter in digital environments. However, as I hope to have illustrated, as a strategy of research and intervention I have found a hauntological method really important and useful in helping to map what might be at stake in developing the concept of haunted data. By taking in this case a failed replication study in the context of post-publication-peer-review I have

shown how the experiments travelled, and in their travels and curious forms of time reversal have accrued their own agencies. They have moved from the original scene of experimentation and become an actor within a mutable scene of entanglement. The experiments and the associated ghostly data trails open to multiple leads, criss-crossings, loopings, back-tracks, movings and re-movings.

As I tease apart the entangled relations set in motion by this controversy, we see how different temporalities and media times are knotted, spliced and enacted. In this respect, I follow those traces, deferrals, absences, gaps and their movements within a particular corpus of data, and attempt to re-move and keep *alive* what becomes submerged or hidden by particular regimes of visibility and remembering. These movements are simultaneously technical, affective, historical, social, political and ethical and are distributed across a variety of social media platforms, actors, publics, agencies, bodies and practices. My own research now has the potential to enter into and change the scene of entanglement opening to those lost-futures, which haunt this controversy.

The research opens to some interesting more speculative propositions about the nature of behaviour change and management and to forms of behavioural economics, which are informed by the field of priming. It also discloses those hauntological forces that govern regimes of visibility and invisibility and remembering and forgetting. It illustrates the need for the creation and shaping of collective apparatuses and modes of storytelling, which might allow for new relations of association to take form and attract attention. It importantly helps to foreground the importance of attending to ghostly matters in the shaping and management of the organisation of scientific knowledge production, and the potential of hauntological analysis to critically analyse those 'truths' which shape specific digital archives. In the case of this specific scientific controversy, it allows us perhaps to understand why 'Clever Hans' really is a horse who won't go away!¹²

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¹² *The horse that won't go away* is the title of a book analysing the endurance of Clever Hans written by three psychologists Tom Heinzen, Scott Lilienfeld, and Susan Nolan (2014). They argue that Clever Hans is an example of a mass delusion showing how even supposedly rational scientists can be fooled. This is a typical example of the psychologist taking up the role of adjudicator and judge closing down on more speculative and inventive propositions (also see Despret, 2015).

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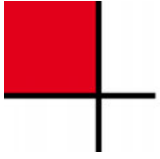
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The haunting presence of commemorative statues

Tim Edensor

abstract

Modes of commemoration include a plethora of stone and bronze figures installed in the squares, parks and streets of many city centres. Created and installed many decades ago, these statues continue to constitute a consistent element in mundane public space. This privileging of selective individuals historically reflects the diverse symbolic values expressed by state, military and religious powers who endeavoured to fix ideological meanings in space. Despite this continued presence, their aesthetic qualities, symbolic importance and political relevance often remain utterly obscure in contemporary times. By investigating three very different commemorative statues in different locations, this paper explores the various ways in which they haunt the spaces in which they were erected with their obsolescent values, outmoded styles and incomprehensible meanings.

Part of the ongoing production of space involves a politics of commemoration through which groups endeavour to construct material reminders of esteemed, figures, events and processes, contemporaneously in complex, diverse and contested ways (Sumartojo, forthcoming). Invariably, these strategies evidence how the powerful impose selective meanings and sentiments across space. Such memorials may include the erection of abstract edifices and cairns, the establishment of museums and halls of remembrance, the naming of streets, squares and parks, and as is discussed here, the installation of particularly valued individuals wrought in stone or metal. As Nuala Johnson (1995: 63) declares, these monumental statues serve as ‘points of physical and ideological orientation’ around which ‘circuits of memory’ are organised. In organising space in this fashion, as Avril Maddrell (2009) contends, like other memorials, these metal and lithic figures act as a kind of ‘spatial fix’, a concrete place in the landscape where

the dead can be eternally 'located'. Evidently, such monuments and memorials are situated in very particular places in order to reaffirm, underline and transmit individual and group identities and the values, achievements and symbolic importance that they express (Johnson, 2002). These commemorative statues are enduring fixtures in most British and formerly colonial cities, and although they were largely created in a historically distant era with its peculiar values, styles and politics, they remain an integral element in the normative organization of public space, constituting part of the mundane fabric through which urban dwellers and visitors pass. They remain present because they retain a value that is esteemed by city planners, conservationists and heritage professionals, a contemporary organizational force that militates against their removal. Yet they also testify to an earlier historical process through which particular people, values and aesthetics were routinely commemorated, a process which has almost entirely vanished from the contemporary city but which continues to haunt it.

The ubiquitous presence of these statues ensures that they are rarely subject to any critical scrutiny; indeed, they are usually part of the taken-for-granted, commonplace geographies that form the backdrop of the everyday, habitual routines of inhabitants (Taussig, 1999). Yet in enduring, they retain the potential to stimulate understandings about the past and its relationship to the present, perhaps in accordance with the meanings intended by those who created them and organised their erection, but also in soliciting alternative and idiosyncratic interpretations. Alternatively, as I discuss below, they may also be unrecognized or impervious to contemporary understandings and values. This mystification may focus on the apparent strangeness of their metaphorical significance or sculptural aesthetics, or arise from a complete ignorance about the person or historical event commemorated. This is unsurprising considering that historical methods of commemoration change, especially with regard to the demise of endeavours to erect public monuments as devices to transmit dominant memories, meanings and values, and the corresponding loss of the interpretive skill required to make sense of them.

Thus, omnipresent stone and bronze statues, usually male figures stand atop plinths in western and postcolonial city squares, parks and graveyards, adjacent to railway stations and civic buildings. Though a lingering presence, they are often part of the un-reflexively apprehended routine environments in which we work, play and consume, objects that are habitually passed by but rarely considered, part of the design of the urban fabric, regularly maintained and only occasionally relocated. This ongoing presence instantiates the notion that stony and bronze figures are a normative element in the organization of everyday space and materiality, and constitute an inviolable heritage. As part of the built environment, they only infrequently suffer the indignity of destruction, perhaps when they

symbolize a historical event that is now deemed politically unacceptable or embody discredited regimes or currently reviled persons. Current examples include the Rhodes Must Fall campaign that calls for the removal of statues of the colonial icon, Cecil Rhodes, in Cape Town and elsewhere, and the vociferous campaigns for the removal of memorials dedicated to the Confederate states of America that are accused of perpetuating and glorifying ideas of white supremacy, racism and slavery.

Most public statues originate from the 19th century or the early years of the 20th century, an era in which it was commonplace for groups of citizens to raise funds to commemorate and celebrate selective figures. Most prominent, in an age when the British Empire extended its influence, was Queen Victoria, omnipresent in the cities and towns across the United Kingdom and liberally scattered across colonised urban realms. A host of statues commemorating men, typically scientists, philanthropists, statesmen, explorers and military heroes, accompanies this historically real female figure. Feminine forms also exist as stony emblems that symbolize 'Victory', 'Britannia' or other abstractions and they are supplemented by figurative idealisations of unknown soldiers in war memorials.

Typically, these sculptural forms were fashioned in classic realist style derived from Ancient Greece and Rome, and towards the end of the 19th century they were augmented by romantic and pre-Raphaelite renditions and the more realist representations of the 'new sculpture' (Beattie, 1983). Their affective impact was enhanced as they were installed as part of collective memorial displays at iconic sites such as London's Trafalgar Square, reinforcing symbolic meanings about imperial power, national aspirations and exemplary heroic achievement (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015a).

Yet while this lithic and metal horde were devised to celebrate, commemorate or exemplify the cherished aesthetics, values and achievements of their era, in contemporary times, these are frequently and profoundly outmoded, obsolete, wholly forgotten or incomprehensible. Yet according to Angela Dunstan (2016: 3), this inscrutability is not merely a 21st century impulse; she argues that for the Victorians themselves, many sculptures were 'hauntingly present but rarely interrogated, monumental yet mundane, and, above all, disconcertingly difficult to read'. If this was the case at the time of their erection, this impenetrability is multiplied for contemporary urbanites. Despite this obsolescence, however, Dunstan (2016) points out that commemorative figurative sculpture is nonetheless a peculiarly haunting mode of representation, still, silent, largely monochrome, and lifeless, a static model of a person, once living and vital but now deceased. Statues thus constitute a peculiar reminder of the mortality of all individuals as well as the death of those they commemorate.

In this paper, I explore the ways in which three very different statues that exist in different states of absence and presence haunt the spaces in which they were erected. As the dynamic city rapidly transforms, continuously emerging according to changing economic phases, architectural fashions, planning strictures and popular tastes, it leaves behind traces of previous inhabitants, politics, ways of thinking and being, and modes of experience that interject into the present, sometimes confounding, aligning and colliding with it (Edensor, 2008; Pors, 2016). As Maddern and Adey (2008) claim, exploring the ghostly is about being curious about those obdurate elements that somehow remain amidst ongoing processes of urban becoming. These enduring material figures conjure forms of haunting that are not especially phenomenological in soliciting vicarious sensations amongst onlookers (Frers, 2013) nor saturated with loss, trauma and deep emotion (Bille et al., 2010). Rather, these statues embody the sheer otherness of what has been and is no longer, and the unreachability of cultural meanings and practices that seem incomprehensible to the contemporary mind. This historical passing of prior commemorative conventions, aesthetics and values carries a tinge of uncanniness generated by the distance that we now feel from them, in the disjuncture that exists between present and past ways of feeling and thinking (Lowenthal, 1985).

This unknowability about a past in which groups of largely high status people called for the commemoration of a living or deceased person through the media of a statue, is no longer a common impulse, save for the recent plethora of realistic, less elevated sculptural endeavours that celebrate sports stars, popular entertainers and popular musicians. These are also accompanied by subaltern political gestures to honour forgotten or neglected figures by creating a monument to reinscribe the historical record and public space with their presence. These recent statues rarely stand high on a plinth above the throng, gazing into the middle distance and possessing an expression that connotes a nobility of mind and purpose. This attempt to bestow a certain aspect upon a statue exemplifies Daniel Sherman's (1999: 7) assertion that all commemoration is cultural: 'it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives'. But the world in which such codes and meanings prevailed has passed, and is more or less unreachable. This is especially arresting since such forms were intended to be remembered in perpetuity but have, after a century or so, become obscure, underlining how transient are the endeavours of the powerful to inscribe meanings on space that circumscribe gender, class, religious, national and ethnic identities. As I explore further below, the particular power of the figurative statue atop a plinth carries an uncanny trace of the once extant human that it represents, linking the figure with the onlooker as connected embodied individuals.

The little known Bishop of Manchester

Central Manchester's Albert Square is an archetypal urban commemorative space, a large, municipal square that in essential details has remained unchanged since the late 19th century. Sited in front of the city's imposing Town Hall, the square remains an important civic space, the site of political demonstrations and rallies, annual festivals, triumphant sporting celebrations, seasonal markets, art events and religious gatherings. It is also a space that connects important administrative and commercial streets in the city centre and as such, constitutes an important thoroughfare as well as a space to linger, to meet friends and consume food and drink. Its cobbled surface is punctuated by five 19th century statues that have resided here since Victorian times. They all stand atop plinths, endowed with a gravitas bereft of irony or humour that does not resonate with contemporary tastes.

Centrally positioned is a white marble likeness of Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, after whom the square is named, that derives from 1867. Housed in a neo-gothic sandstone shrine with a tall, elaborately carved, canopy and spire, and bestowed with imperial symbols, the figure stands on a pedestal above five surrounding steps. Albert is accompanied by a statue of renowned Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone, the radical politician John Bright, and the less celebrated banker and local philanthropist William Heywood. The fifth figure is a bronze rendition of Manchester's reforming bishop, the almost completely forgotten James Fraser, who was in office from 1870 to his death in 1885. Few passers-by would possess any sense of familiarity with this character, yet he continues to preside over the square, an authoritative patrician figure who seems to be placating those who he appears to be addressing from upon his lofty Aberdeen granite plinth. All these figures belong to a remote public realm and hierarchical world in which large sums of money were raised through public subscription to honour them.

These memorials are part of a larger infrastructure through which the nation is signified across everyday space, an integral element of what Michael Billig (1995) terms 'banal nationalism'. Such banal expressions of nationhood are entangled with the usually unreflexively apprehended mundane spaces and routine quotidian experience that are part of urban life. These statues are akin to the 'unwaved flags' to which Billig refers, always present but not part of overt, ceremonial ceremonies, part of the backdrop to everyday life. As a site that is crossed by thousands of people during their everyday routines, Albert Square constitutes what Doreen Massey (1995) terms an 'activity space', like parks and transport termini a realm of intersection and meeting, a shared space that is part of what David Crouch (1999) calls 'lay geographical knowledge'. Habituated to such settings and the statues in them, locals have acquired a sedimented, embodied sense of their presence

through repetitive encounters (Waterton, 2014). In this shared public space, symbolical national figures – most specifically Prince Albert and Gladstone – stand alongside figures deemed important in the local political sphere. Besides their obvious celebration of particularly masculinist qualities and characters, they underline the hierarchical position of members of crown and state, and values of tradition, majesty and political struggle. Such traits and figures are also widely commemorated across the nation in other local settings and contribute to the common sense sustenance of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) of the nation. In the case of Bishop Fraser, the centrality of religion is imprinted on space.



Bishop James Fraser, Albert Square, Manchester (photo courtesy of Paul Hepburn)

The erection of a statue of any contemporary cleric in a prominent public space in Manchester would be a surreal imposition. The civic impact made by campaigning religious leaders such as Fraser is now much diminished as is church attendance and the social and political role of the church. The respected leadership, and

extensive pastoral and cultural influence of such a public figure are part of a vanished age, and yet the proliferation of pre-second world war churches across the city and other ecclesiastic signifiers haunt the largely secular city of the present. This was an era in which the Bible was a widely familiar text, biblical allusions were commonplace and most people regularly attended church, and would have been accustomed to the solicitations of vicars and bishops. Church bells, processions and special services would have repetitively resonated across urban space. In the contemporary city, such effects are a pale echo of the quotidian religious influences of yesteryear.

The durable qualities of stone and bronze as well as sustained maintenance through the decades have ensured that the figures remain in their original setting and continue to mark their presence on space. The fame of some – like James Fraser – is fleeting while a wider awareness about others endures. They have not been destroyed or relocated to a place of collection, such as at Budapest's Statue Park, where the obsolete sculptures of state socialism are gathered as tourist attraction (Foote et al., 2000). In considering this continuing presence of Fraser and his companions, it is pertinent to ask just what it is about these installations that makes them inviolable. Why has the space of Albert Square been historically frozen in this way? Similar scenarios are evident throughout urban space: such statues appear sacrosanct.

Since the time that they were erected, no new intrusions have been sited here, though monuments to the Peterloo massacre and a statue of renowned suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst are to be installed nearby, following many years of campaigning for their presence. Until recently, they have not been deemed worthy of commemoration by the powerful though their historical and political significance is widely acknowledged. Yet they will not be permitted to unsettle the venerable commemorative configuration of the square. By contrast, the inviolate Fraser haunts the present with his obscurity, a religious figure stranded in a largely irreligious world. An outmoded form of commemoration, he lingers in space, haunting the present with his inscrutability like numerous other Victorian statues (Gordon, 2008).

The enduring presence of the Bishop of Manchester and his four companions contrasts with the nameless hordes who laboured in the construction of the Town Hall. Surrounding the already built Albert Memorial in the square were a host of masons and artisans whose numbers expanded to around 700 as the building neared completion, along with an assortment of steam engines, cranes, polishing tables and saws. This multitude have not been recorded as having made a significant contribution to the building though their presence is visibly signified by the abundant marks of saw and chisel marks embedded in the stony façade of

the Town Hall (Edensor, 2012). Paid off after finishing their work, they are part of a historically anonymous transaction that evaporates, though it may occasionally be rescued in an archive. This vividly testifies to how certain subjects such as Fraser have been historically valued while others are consigned to oblivion. Yet once envisaged in the mind's eye, they are difficult to banish from the imagination. Collectively, they would have constituted a vast, noisy scene of hard work, as muscular men sawed beams, chiselled at stone and hauled loads back and forth, thick stone dust suffusing the air and the shouts of foremen and the banter of the workers ringing out.

In contrast to this neglect, the Bishop of Manchester and his still and silent colleagues have been granted institutional forms of protection in being listed on the statutory list of structures of special architectural or historic interest, the Albert Memorial conferred with Grade 1 listed status, the others granted Grade 2 status. This assignation expresses official understanding that such material commemorations are deserving of preservation, and conforms to the aesthetics and ethics of the organizational body that bestows this protected status, Historic England. Yet this temporal freezing of Albert Square to honour the urban designs of Victorian Manchester also signifies the ongoing affective, symbolic and sensory power that the statues impart. Though these static figures may be outmoded, unrecognized or barely understood, there is something about their materiality and design that deters their erasure. Their stony or metal materiality, suggestive of immobility and permanence, along with the maintenance that has been organized to prevent their decay, has ensured that they endure. They express a physical solidity that conveys import, and this is undergirded by their positioning on a raised plinth so that they overlook the everyday passage of pedestrians and the activities staged at the square. Skilfully rendered to assume a verisimilitude to the humans on which they are modelled, but also echoing Dunstan's (2016) point about their contrasting stillness to the living bodies that preceded their erection, their memorialization of actual bodies suggests that removal would be improper. This all-too-human affective impact is further entrenched by the styles in which they are rendered and by the personal qualities and charismatic persona this conjures up. James Fraser's commanding left arm seems to authoritatively settle a point of contention, or calm an assembly, while his right arm is braced against his side as he thrusts out his chest in a dominant posture. Given extra potency by his sturdy boots, his thick over-garment and his stern demeanour, this skilfully rendered, dramatic presentation suggests that the bishop is participating in a ghostly public debate but also carries conviction as a recognizable human stance and disposition. He was designed to inspire onlookers and these capacities remain even though he is cloaked with now obscure allegorical symbolism. The figure conveys resolution and authority; even though the man he represents is long departed, he embodies a presence that discourages his removal.

Paradoxically, while the religious, patrician, canonical, political and religious values that they embodied at the time are outmoded, and the commemorative practices and aesthetics through which such men were honoured are thoroughly obsolete, these statues remain highly valued elements of the contemporary urban fabric, supported by institutional and doxic power. They radiate ghostly resonances of the extensive influence of the church, the struggles for political reform and the patrician institutions of Victorian Manchester. Yet while the meanings and values that these bronze and stone men embody have evaporated, highlighting the almost inevitable failure of attempts to secure meanings in urban space in perpetuity, like so many others of their kind, they remain esteemed fixtures in the contemporary city.

The queen's plinth: An unexorcised vestige of colonial rule

The second statue that I consider is absent, but the plinth upon which it stood is still situated in a different kind of public space, namely Melbourne's Edinburgh Gardens in Australia, a large park in the suburb of Fitzroy, created from a grant of land in March 1862 by Queen Victoria. In a central part of the park, amidst a rose bed, lies the empty plinth that once hosted a wooden statue of the imperial queen, similar in design and style to the numerous other statues of Victoria scattered across the British Empire. The oval-shaped park is extremely popular and on public holidays is full of picnicking and game-playing crowds. Other features include the cricket and football oval and large grandstand that once accommodated the fans of Fitzroy AFL club, children's playground, community centre, bowling greens, tennis courts and cricket nets, skate park, two playgrounds, venerable trees and well-trimmed lawns.

Like the statue it once housed, the park's name was bequeathed to commemorate the visit to Australia of Victoria's young son, Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, in 1867. The former presence of Victoria in this urban park testifies to what Dunstan (2016: 6) refers to as 'the global and colonial reach and network of Victorian sculpture', and its display in the colonies as 'an important imperial vehicle'. The queen's reign from 1837 to 1901 witnessed an expansion of sculpture on a scale not seen before, thanks to royal patronage, commissions for new buildings and public squares, and innovations in casting and reproductions, and like the figures in Manchester's Albert Square, these statues were an integral part of everyday urban experience. Queen Victoria is by far the most popular figure rendered in stone and bronze during this period and statues of her extend across the UK and beyond to colonies of diverse kinds.

Yet the statue of Victoria was only present in the gardens for three years before mysteriously going missing. She has been absent for more than a century yet the plinth endures. Close to the rose bed there is a small cast iron plaque on which underneath the caption 'We are not Amused', the following is inscribed:

Following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, George Godfrey MLC, presented a commemorative statue to the people of Fitzroy

The statue was mounted on the base in front of you amidst a decorative garden bed of cabbage palms and roses. Queen Victoria, in a typical pose, carried the orb and sceptre of royalty

After a tumble, the royal statue went missing and was never replaced

Would Queen Victoria have been amused?

For most of the time since the wooden Victoria's disappearance, the plinth has remained unoccupied. No effort has been made to install a substitute nor to erase the plinth from the park. Indeed, the plinth fell into disrepair only to be reconstructed in 1972, though it remained unoccupied by any statue. It is as if the commemoration of a figure of such import and the statue's subsequent absence has deterred any administrative attempt to alter the status quo. Yet this stasis has surely amplified the power of the queen, for rather than the predictable, ongoing presence of a commemorative figure scarcely noticed during passage through the park, her all too clear absence calls forth her presence once more: the vacant plinth draws attention to what is not there.

In recent times, the plinth has been successively occupied by a selection of surreal, absurdist and conceptual sculptures wrought out of a diverse range of materials as part of a programme organized by City of Yarra Arts. Like the Fourth Plinth Programme in Trafalgar Square, where a plinth constructed in 1841 intended to hold a statue of William IV was a site for diverse artistic exhibits, this scheme uses the structure as an opportunity to exhibit contemporary public works (Sumartojo, 2012). From March 2013 until April 2014, the program featured ten specially commissioned artworks that aimed to engage both art lovers and the usual inhabitants of the park. The plinth has remained empty until the installation of its current occupant, Adam Stones' 2015 sculpture, *A Fall from Grace II*, composed of polyurethane, fibreglass, steel and automotive paint. This figure, as with those earlier forms that temporarily occupied the plinth, stand out markedly from those sculptures that usually occupy supportive structures of this kind. As such, these temporary occupants draw attention to the plinth and also summon up its original resident.



Adam Stone, A fall from grace, Edinburgh Gardens, Melbourne (photo by author)

The absent statue and plinth belong to a spectral imperial network that connects places formerly associated by their inclusion within the British Empire. These statues, most of which are now unmoored from the colonial regimes that erected

them, ensure that the ideological impress of empire continues to echo across formerly colonized space. They are part of a wider infrastructure installed by systems of colonial rule that deployed symbolic as well as military, legal, bureaucratic and political sustenance, and besides numerous statues also resounds in neo-classical architecture, street names and public parks and squares. This everyday geography in which squares, parks, streets and official buildings are saturated with signifiers and monuments was integral to the geographical imposition of colonial power. As with the symbolic impositions of national statues exemplified in Albert Square, these widespread commemorative features express a banal colonialism that exceeds the spatial confines of the nation.

Whether temporary artistic installations are present or not, the absent presence of Queen Victoria resonates through the park whose existence she granted and whose name commemorates her son. Surveying what was her colony at the time from the elevated position of the plinth, this absent presence marks this space out as indelibly marked by her power and that of the British Empire that she represented. Crucially, her long lingering absence amplifies Australia's unsettled relationship with this colonial past. The emergence of temporary occupants of what was once Victoria's plinth and the derisive inscription on the message board suggests that the reverence once accorded the imperial queen is fading. Yet at present, the British monarch remains the Australian head of state, a situation reiterated following a referendum in 1999, ostensibly because a convincing alternative electoral system was not proposed. Thus an archaic vestige of institutionalized colonial rule continues to haunt the present and it also haunts the future, for in all likelihood, the issue will be raised again and once more Australians will be required to choose whether to cast themselves adrift from this royal connection. On such an occasion, perhaps the ghostly presence of the wooden queen will be exorcised from Edinburgh Gardens, overwhelmed by a succession of temporary installations or replaced by a more enduring artistic fixture situated on the plinth originally intended for her majesty.

Scotland's warrior hero: William Wallace as *Braveheart*

The final statue I discuss is more recent in origin though it commemorates a much represented figure in Scotland. In 1998, as part of the National Wallace Memorial complex in Stirling, Scotland, a more singular commemorative site than a square and park, a new statue was installed. The Wallace Monument was completed in 1869, a 67-metre sandstone tower in the style of the gothic revival. Containing a statue of Wallace, an exhibition space and audio-visual accounts, a replica of Wallace's mighty sword, a viewing platform atop the structure, and a 'Hall of Heroes', containing other male Scots esteemed during this era – busts of religious

reformers, explorers, statesmen, poets, engineers and scientists. The monolithic tower, radiating grandeur and import from the summit of the wooded Abbey Craig hill, specifically commemorates the 1297 Battle of Stirling Bridge close to the site of the monument, where a Scottish force commanded by Wallace defeated an English army (Edensor, 1997a; 2005a). The site has remained a popular tourist destination and has progressively become tinted with a more contemporary nationalist allure. What was intended as a site of Victorian romantic nationalism that simultaneously celebrated Wallace's heroism in overcoming English military dominance but also the claim that the subsequent raising of Scotland's self-respect and pride through achieving independence was essential to the eventual union of the English and Scottish crowns. 19th century celebrants of Unionism thus devised the monument. In underpinning my assertion that the symbolic values that accompanied the design and installation of memorials do not necessarily persist, these meanings have been largely replaced with a contemporary understanding that Wallace is an exemplar of Scottish valour and prefigures a future national independence. The power of those who originally funded and installed the monument to impose meaning on space has weakened.



Tom Church, Spirit of Wallace with the National Wallace Monument in the background, Stirling, Scotland (photo courtesy of Rosemary Williams)

The new addition does not accompany the fantastic gothic structures that adorn the Abbey Craig but occupies the more mundane space of the visitor centre's car park, nor is it akin to their aesthetics. Rather, it is an example of vernacular creativity wrought by a local stonemason, Tom Church, who embarked on the project as part of undertaking effortful physical labour to overcome illness. The 12 tonne, four metres high *Spirit of wallace* is fashioned from two blocks of sandstone. The statue is garbed in rough medieval dress of tartan jacket, belted tunic, cape and thick leather boots, and features a shield emblazoned with the word 'Braveheart' and two weapons: in one hand the figure holds a short claymore or stabbing sword, in the other, he grasps a large ball and chain flail. The head of the decapitated Duke of York lies at his feet, upon a base upon which are inscribed in large letters, the word 'Freedom'. Most strikingly, the roaring face of the figure is rendered in the likeness of Mel Gibson, the director and actor who played the role of Wallace in the 1995 Hollywood blockbuster, *Braveheart*. The statue thus simultaneously honours Wallace as well as Gibson and the movie; indeed, the sculptor explicitly states that the work expresses how the spirit of Wallace is expressed anew via the movie.

At the time of its installation, the work reverberated with the political acclaim and media commotion that greeted the release of *Braveheart*. The popular impact of the film generated a wealth of media commentary that prompted much reflection about the constitution of contemporary Scottish identity, which chimed with the imminent vote in support of the formation of a devolved Scottish Parliament, with contesting arguments staged that considered whether Wallace was a progressive or regressive icon (Edensor, 1997b). *Braveheart* played upon renewed desires for Scottish autonomy and independence, and was eagerly grasped by politicians and commentators of all political hues for its metaphorical message. Socialists claimed that Wallace was a 'man of the people', nationalists drew strong parallels between the medieval English colonization of Scotland and current Scottish subservience to Westminster, whereas Tories were willing to consign him to insignificance.

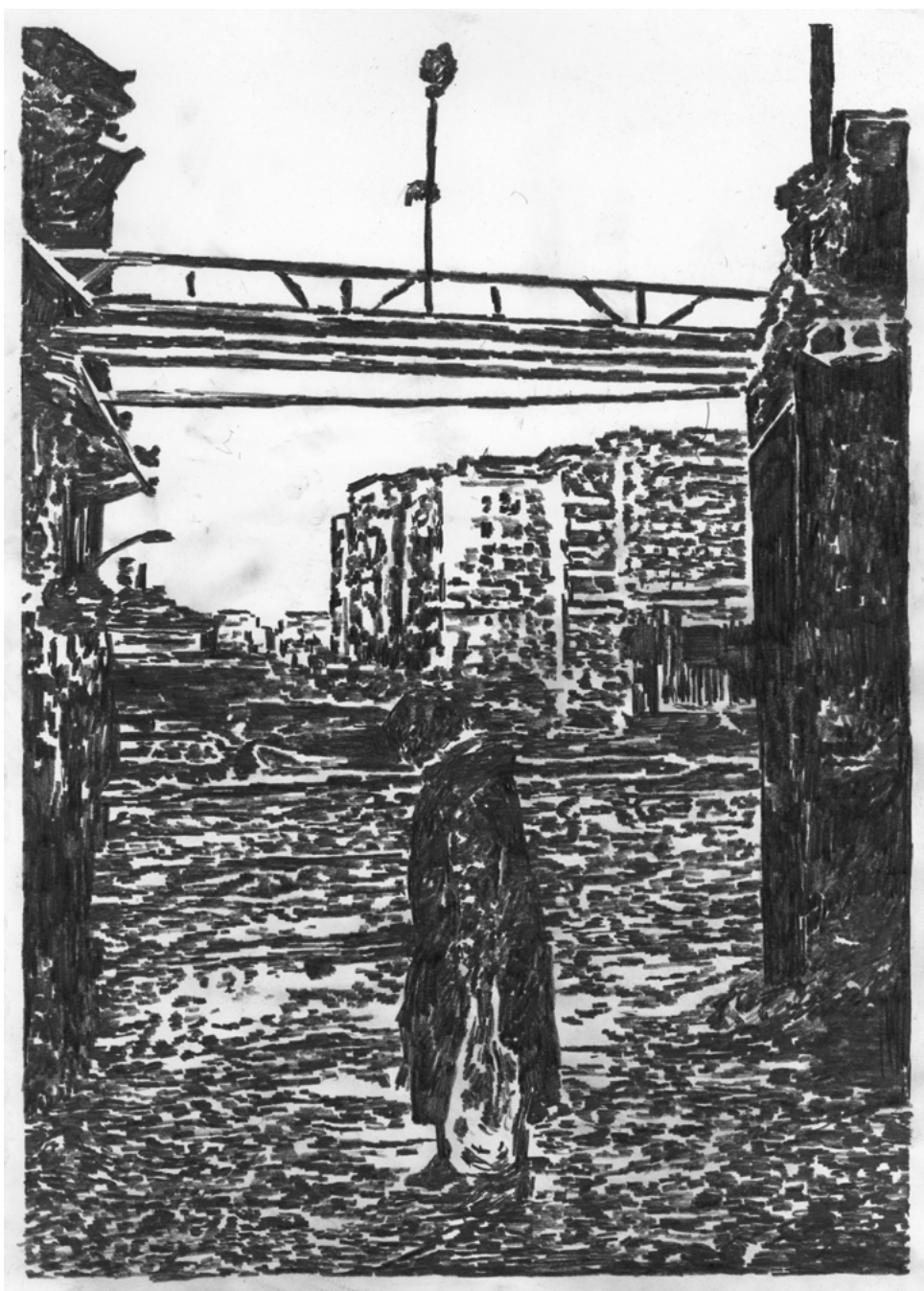
However, in subsequent years, after the commotion around the film subsided, the statue became subject to greater controversy, generating an especially visceral and affective response to the representation of this lauded nationalist figure. It was labelled in some sections of the media as Scotland's 'most loathed monument' (Hurley, 2004) and rather hyperbolically claimed to be 'the most controversial symbol of Scottish culture in recent times'. The *Stirling Observer* (Wilson, 1997) bemoaned that the memory of Wallace was being exploited, and he reported that a local SNP councillor declared that the statue would 'detract from the *true*, very important history which the monument stands for' (my italics). Though popular amongst many visitors to the centre, others vilified the work, which they accused of exemplifying cultural mediocrity and banality.

As a consequence of this opprobrium, the statue became subject to regular vandalism. Its face was gouged out, it was covered in white paint, it was struck with a hammer, and the decapitated head of the Governor of York that graced the statue's base was chipped away. In response to these attacks, the statue remained in situ but was enclosed by a security fence. In 2008, following development plans to expand the visitor centre to include a new restaurant and reception area, the statue was removed and returned to the sculptor who has sited it in his Brechin workshop. Here it has remained, though it will be relocated at a new visitor attraction in Ardrossan to commemorate a legendary military battle led by Wallace against the English occupiers in that town.

The several episodes through which the statue was defaced and that solicited the erection of a protective fence contrasts with the lack of any violent damage meted out to Fraser and other Albert Square statues over the decades and the ongoing maintenance that ensures their perpetually unblemished appearance. Yet in contrast to the common disregard of people towards these Victorian memorials, the hullabaloo created by the vandalism towards *Freedom*, including the extensive media coverage of these acts, made the statue the object of intense attention. Accordingly, as Michael Taussig (1999) has observed in detailing the outcry and physical attack that greeted the installation of another controversial piece of sculpture, such defacement initiates the animation of an inert form, wherein the statue becomes hyper-visible. Instead of being part of the ignored horde of fellow statues, following the attacks, *Freedom* was haunted by the swirling, vigorous debates that focused upon the appropriate way in which this key national figure should be commemorated, the contemporary symbolic value of this medieval warrior, and the identity of Scotland itself.

The absence of the notorious statue at the visitor centre has been regretted by some and un lamented by others. What is fascinating about the controversy is that the representational rendering of Wallace, the work of a stonemason rather than a sculptor, did not meet the artistic criteria usually mobilized around public statuary. Why might this be so? The uproar seems especially peculiar since Wallace, who has continuously remained one of the greatest mythic heroes of Scotland despite (and because of) the dearth of historical knowledge about his life and times, has been represented in a great range of sculptural styles. The potency of the Wallace myth depends on this flexible quality in being able to transmit a variety of cultural meanings and values, for as Samuel and Thompson have asserted, he is somewhat of an ideologically 'chameleon' form (1990: 3), possessing the capacity to transmit contrasting messages and identities. Accordingly, the mythic figure has been (re)appropriated by different groups to provide antecedence and continuity to a diverse range of identities and political objectives. Thus there is no dominant representation of Wallace but rather many Wallaces. He appears as a huge and





imposing warrior, an elegant statesman or a neo-classical figure garbed in robes, with some commemorative statues emphasising his physicality, others honouring his humble clothing to emphasise that he was a 'man of the people', and yet others suggesting an elevated and noble disposition. No visual or literary records testify to the physical appearance of Wallace, and because details about him are vague, representations of the national hero in sculpture and painting have been shaped through the predilections of artists and reflect the aesthetic tastes of their era.

Despite this diversity of representation, nearly all of these stone and bronze memorials have followed traditions of memorialisation. The audacious rendering of a national hero in the likeness of a Hollywood star does not accord with any of these conventions. Yet even though contemporary expressions of these diverse styles are almost entirely absent, their institutional power lingers: they continue to haunt understandings in delimiting the range of what styles and motifs are deemed appropriate in commemorating an esteemed national hero. We have not yet moved on from their influence because these Victorian statues continue to radiate their power across our public spaces in such numbers.

In addition, though immensely popular at the time of its release, perhaps the present is also haunted by a now outmoded, somewhat recursive expression of Scottish national identity, values that saturate the content and ethos of the movie. Retrospective concerns about the cruder representations of English depravity and Scottish heroism seem simplistic in the light of the far more sophisticated political culture and more inclusive nationalist discourse that have subsequently emerged alongside the successful advance of the Scottish National Party. Another possibility is that the belief that the movie portrayal should not be allowed to contaminate other, more serious cultural forms is grounded in fears that Scotland will resemble a tartan theme park whose production is disembedded from a local and national context (Edensor, 1997b). There clearly remain popular notions about cultural trivia and substance, which appear to differentiate between 'art' (in this case, exemplified by serious memorial commemorative tradition) and the more ephemeral mass culture of film and television.

However, I think that the key issue is that conventions about how particularly esteemed figures ought to be represented remain haunted by conventions that otherwise have fallen into obsolescence. The contemporary sculptural representation of a nationalist hero therefore, cannot assume the form of a Hollywood star, even though this very same actor / director was responsible for rekindling enthusiasm amongst many Scots for the mythic figure. Perhaps the response has emerged from sentiments that Wallace is not sufficiently symbolically and physically elevated; he remains too closely bound to the representation of an identifiable Hollywood star rather than an abstract stone

figure that stands aloof from worldly and contemporary tastes and trends. These archaic yet still powerful sculptural conventions that linger in the multifarious presence of stone and bronze Victorian figures across public space have yet to be supplanted by representations that adopt different aesthetic and symbolic forms.

Conclusion

Authoritative institutional and organizational modes of commemoration have become decentred, so that contemporary expressions are now fragmented and multiple. There are no official, established conventions for erecting statues comparable to those of Victorian times. The established custom of erecting a larger than life sized bronze or stone figure upon a substantial plinth has become outmoded. Not only has this form of memorialization become outdated, but notions about who should be commemorated and how has become widely contested (Sumartojo, forthcoming).

The inscrutability of many venerable statues partly lies in contemporary obliviousness to the stylistic conventions that informed their creation and the cultural values they expressed. This resonates with Marina Warner's (1993) discussion about how a post-revolutionary elite sought to materialise particular ideals in the statuary along the Champs Elysees in Paris to provide an enduring testament to revolutionary values. However, the classical allusions upon which such monoliths depend for their meaning are no longer familiar to contemporary onlookers. This reveals that despite the desires of the powerful to imprint enduring meanings upon urban space, forms of knowledge, aesthetic conventions and political contingencies that supersede those of earlier times often thwart such aims. A contemporary example is the ensemble of the huge, heroic socialist realist statuary of post-socialist Bucharest, which remain despite the absence of the political and social conditions under which they were erected and which gave them legitimacy. According to Hedvig Turai (2009), in this setting, the past remains 'unmastered' by the totalitarian endeavours to fix its meaning.

Yet as Avery Gordon (2008) claims, such ghostly traces reveal that the power of such practices and meanings has not yet slid into obsolescence. In remaining part of the furniture of the city these ghosts have not been wholly exorcised. The statues I have discussed continue to haunt urban space with religious power, colonial power and national(ist) power respectively. Despite the disappearance of the tastes, styles, cultural values and motivations that once made the memorialization of these particular people customary, these statues continue to trouble the present in distinctive ways, spookily emerging at diverse junctures and moments.





I have discussed how a very much present statue has lingered for over a century in Manchester's Albert Square, haunting the present with its strange, outmoded religious values and style, and the wholesale passing of the social conventions and agencies that culminated in its erection. Yet this statue, along with its companions in the square, exerts a powerful influence on local power-holders that ensures that it remains in situ. Meanwhile the earlier marks made by stonemasons' chisels in the fabric of the nearby town hall remain unrecognized. The capacity of the statue of Bishop Fraser to haunt the present is intensified by its material solidity and by the very powerful, performative human form that has been created by the sculptor, inducing a phenomenological and affective response for those that engage with it (Waterton, 2014).

I have focused on the no longer present statue of Queen Victoria from this same era in a Melbourne Park and the persistence of the plinth upon which it stood, arguing that her long standing absence summons up the queenly figure once mounted upon it. This haunting absence is reinforced by the installation of temporary artworks in their unlikely juxtaposition with the plinth upon which they stand. The absent monarch also signifies the wider imperial geography to which it once belonged and Australia's unsettled relationship with its colonial history that continues to haunt the present. Yet the installation of the temporary artworks and the irreverent reference to Queen Victoria on the plaque inscription suggest that the site is finally in the process of being resettled in ways that exorcise the ghosts of colonialism (Muzaini, 2014).

Finally, the also currently absent statue of William Wallace adjacent to the National William Wallace Memorial in Stirling, sculpted to assume the likeness of Mel Gibson, is also haunted by the Victorian statues I have discussed. For it is caught in a present in which no conventions of commemoration are, or perhaps can be, agreed upon (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015a). There is no consensual institutional framework or organizational practice that fosters such a process, though the memorials that commemorate the First and Second World Wars and the coming of national independence continue to allure and solemnify space. Indeed, the multitude of national commemorative emblems and statues belong to the host of signifiers that remain part of a banal nationalism, which pervades everyday spaces and routines. In aggregation, they continue their largely unnoticed work in reproducing the nation as a common sense spatial container for identity.

In contemporary times, there are a medley of approaches that commemorate significant figures, most of which veer away from figurative representations. Other technologies and materialities are deployed to memorialize people and events. For instance, the most prominent memorial to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, is a circular watercourse that flows around an area of Hyde Park, while the 9/11 atrocity

in New York has periodically been represented by two pillars of light ascending to conjure up the vanished twin towers. Contemporary figurative sculptures continue to be installed in a variety of locations, celebrate distinctive different public figures, and are typically rendered in a different, more realistic and communicative style that adopts a far less elevated approach. The sporting heroes, pop music celebrities or comedians who are currently memorialised stand atop plinths of more modest size in contradistinction to the imposing bases granted to the aforementioned philanthropists, explorers, military commanders and statesmen. These less didactic memorials that are typically more closely integrated with everyday public space, incorporate natural elements and encourage close multi-sensory engagement (Stevens and Sumartojo, 2015b).

It is here that we might grasp why desires to fix meaning in place frequently fail, for this could surely hardly be otherwise if we consider the dynamism of the city, with its vagaries of fashion and taste, the creative destruction wrought upon its fabric by the impulsive decisions of politicians and bureaucrats, and the changing conventions of urban planning and architecture. Wide social accord would have greeted the erection of the Victorian monuments I have discussed; here, the effective transmission of memory in space depended upon the social practices and emotional bonds that connected communities to their environments. However, there is little equivalent contemporary emotional and affective connection to such modes of commemoration, in contrast to the broader enthusiasm for the memorial tributes to locally born, popular cultural celebrities.

The urban spaces that I have discussed are not like the spaces of rural abandonment at which Justin Armstrong (2011: 244) carries out his spectral ethnography, spaces that he argues are 'largely unimpeded by the continual and rapid accumulation of new and competing images, artefacts, and interpretations'. A dearth of dynamic spatial remaking allows the traces that are left to stand out with greater force. Neither are they akin to the industrial ruins that I have discussed in previous work where traces that would usually be removed proliferate to raise up multiple spectres of skilled and manual work, social exchange, playful creativities, outmoded styles and obscure industrial processes (Edensor, 2005b). They are also not comparable to the more marginal working class spaces in which a host of ghostly remains of travel, play and domesticity survive to haunt a present in which they have been superseded (Edensor, 2008).

On the contrary, these statues remain solidly present in everyday sites of vibrant movement and social activity, settings in which their dissonance with contemporary values and meanings means that they haunt the present with their outmoded values, their archaic styles and their unsettled political meanings. For those who regularly move among them, they are part of a common sense, banal

reality that extends from the local to the national to the colonial. Their very evident looming material presence or absence has an affective and phenomenological force that impresses itself upon the experience of space, and raises up the spectres of the often incomprehensible commemorative practices of the regimes that put them in place.

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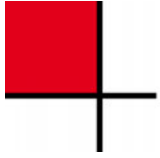
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H(a)unting quotas: An empirical analysis of the uncanniness of gender quotas

Jannick Friis Christensen and Sara Louise Muhr

abstract

Despite years of gender equality research and initiatives, women are still highly under-represented in top management positions. In Denmark, the number of female top managers is particularly low, despite Denmark's public image of being a country of equal opportunities. In several European countries, quota systems are proven to have a positive effect in increasing the representation of women in politics, as well as on corporate boards, but they are met with resistance from both men and women in Denmark, especially among Danish business leaders. Through empirical analysis of interviews with 45 Danish top managers, this paper investigates such resistance. Although the initial focus of the research agenda for the interviews was not quotas per se, but identity, gender and leadership more generally, the resistance towards – and even fear of – quotas was repeatedly brought up by interviewees, thereby unsettling the conversation. Based on this disturbance, we theorise gender quotas in organisations along a ghostly methodology as something uncanny. The analysis shows how the mere idea of quotas haunts the managers, who, in return, try to hunt down the quota ghost, as it apparently poses a threat to the current understanding of meritocracy. The fear of quotas seems to be what holds back the realisation of sustained gender equality. We argue that this fear is irrational and illogical and therefore suggest an approach of appeasement. Listening to the whispers of the ghost, we outline new present-understandings of merit. We hope that even if this paper does not bring legitimacy to quotas in the way that has happened in politics (in some countries), it will at least bring legitimacy to the discussion.

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that women remain under-represented in management positions (e.g. Acker, 2006, 2012; Ashcraft, 2013; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2013). It is also well documented that this misrepresentation is *not* due to the lack of skilled

women in the labour market, *nor* to the lack of women's ambition to become managers as many managers and politicians otherwise tend to use as an explanation for the lack of female managers (e.g. Roseberry and Roos, 2015). Rather, most research indicates that a historically and culturally normalised gender hierarchy produces systematic as well as systemic discrimination against working women by casting them as caretakers and nurturers rather than breadwinners, and thus they are not seen as 'management material' (Ahonen et al., 2014; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Koenig et al., 2011; Leicht et al., 2014; Muhr, 2011). Promotion criteria that rest on meritocratic values are therefore obstructed by such ideologically constructed (often unconscious) power dynamics, but also kept in place by those who benefit from them (Dover et al., 2016). As a result, women are, despite many years of organisational initiatives to change this, still systematically discriminated against in most lines of work (Beirne and Wilson, 2016; Kalev et al., 2006).

Due to the lack of success in changing the gender composition in organisations by meritocratic methods, gender quotas are mentioned more and more frequently as a possible way to overcome the ideological deadlock that seems to keep women in inferior positions (e.g. Noon, 2010). The argument for quotas is that instead of working to change people's attitudes in order to bring about different behaviour, quotas force organisations to change their behaviour at a much more fundamental and systemic level (Krook and Zetterberg, 2014). A direct change in behaviour, then, is argued to lead to a change in attitude much more efficiently than various attempts based on meritocratic values (Sacchet, 2008). The hope is that once women have reached a more equal representation in managerial positions, multiple ways of being a woman and a leader will be more visible and the risk of marginalisation and stereotyping should decrease compared to today, where women are heavily under-represented and opinions about women managers therefore come from very small samples of 'token women' (Kanter, 1993/1977) or socially constructed expectations as to how they will be as managers (Muhr, 2011; Muhr and Sullivan, 2013).

Despite positive results (in terms of changes in both behaviours and attitudes) from electoral quotas in the political arena (e.g. Murray, 2013; Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Zetterberg, 2008), organisations are reluctant to take up quotas as a way to ensure change. This reluctance seems to be especially strong in Denmark, where this present study was conducted. In the study, we originally set out to interview 45 top managers in 37 Danish organisations about identity, gender and leadership. However, a recurring theme in the interviews turned out to be the discussion of quotas, or rather a strong rejection of quotas. Although all interviewees worked explicitly to increase the number of women in managerial positions in their respective organisations, none of them expressed support for the use of quotas. In

fact, they instead regularly expressed anger, fear, discomfort, distress or the like when talking about quotas. They all saw quotas as a sign of (their) failure to obtain equality through (in their opinion) fairer methods. And this is despite the fact that Denmark has recently been found to rank among the lowest in the EU, with women making up only 15% of top managers in listed companies in 2015 (up from 10% in 1995), and a mere 6% of board chairs (up from 3% over the same 20-year period) (Larsen et al., 2015). According to a recent random sampling among the 1,200 largest companies in Denmark, 54% had not a single woman represented in top management (Erhvervsstyrelsen, 2015).

However, with all the evidence of how ongoing (subtle) discrimination of women hinders their career possibilities as well as all the evidence for quotas' positive effects on women's careers in politics, it is interesting (and somewhat odd) that people (both men and women) still seem to be so dismissive of quotas for management and/or organisational board positions. This paper investigates the reasons for this dismissiveness and asks: why are gender quotas so unpopular, and why do people keep believing in the myths of meritocracy? If we assume that people in our study tell the truth when they say they want – and work for – change, there is little 'rational' explanation for why they are so reluctant to use quotas (e.g. Noon, 2010; Zetterberg, 2008). Thus, there must be less rational reasons as to why they keep prioritising and spending a lot of money on methods that do not produce the results intended (Dover et al., 2016; Kalev et al., 2006). In exploring such 'irrationality', this paper will try to explain the reluctance to use gender quotas along more 'ghostly' lines, which try to go 'beyond the rationalistic accounts and the focus on individual identity struggles of the existing research' (Pors, 2016: 1647).

Analysing a phenomenon along a ghostly methodology means that if the rational explanation to a research problem or a puzzle (in this case, why gender quotas are not used more widely) seems insufficient or leaves us with a feeling of being unsettled (Blackman, 2015), we must look elsewhere, in this case in the shadows, the hidden areas, the places that make people uncomfortable and where people prefer not to look: the uncanny. In our case, following a ghostly methodology means that we track the utterances around quotas where interviewees become uncomfortable, secretive, angry or even scared. In walking down this ghostly avenue, we theorise how the suggestion (for some even threat) of gender quotas in corporate Denmark is indeed a ghostly matter in the sense that it emerges to haunt, disrupt, distort, trouble and bother the functioning of organisations.

To revive the discussion of gender quotas, we, in the next section, start out by positioning our paper in the extant body of literature on quotas, including looking at the outcomes of quotas and reactions to their implementation. We then

introduce our research methodology of analysing quotas through the metaphor of the ghost. That is, besides outlining the research context and our data collection, we also present how the ghostly methodology affected the analysis of the empirical data. Following this, we analyse the fear of quotas, which we, eventually, challenge in a concluding discussion where we dare to suggest letting the ghost haunt us (instead of the other way around, cf. the analysis) to get a more nuanced view on the merits of gender quotas.

Quotas: Early life, maturity and death?

There are many different types of quotas and different – and often conflicting – reactions to quotas. In order to be able to give a voice – and possibly life – back to quotas, we need to understand where they come from, where they have been implemented and with what effect.

A few facts

Quota systems are defined as a form of positive discrimination and were developed in order to change the possibilities for specific groups, which were defined as having disadvantages, based on their minority status in a particular setting, that the majority in this setting was not subjected to. Here the difference between positive discrimination and positive (affirmative) action is important. Positive action schemes target under-represented groups in a way that seeks to redress their existing disadvantage without granting them the *right* to have these disadvantages specifically taken into account in a selection process. Positive discrimination, on the other hand, is an explicit acknowledgement of the fact that certain characteristics (typically sex, race/ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age) are prone to disadvantage a specific group of people. The difference between positive action and positive discrimination, then, is that in positive discrimination, these characteristics can be legitimately used as criteria for evaluating candidates (Noon, 2010). Quotas are thereby used as a type of ‘fast track’ to equal representation (Dallerup and Freidenvall, 2005), as the neo-liberal market model has proved inefficient in increasing the number of women (and other minorities) in senior political and managerial positions – despite the availability of qualified candidates (Noon, 2010: 729). The idea of positive discrimination, for example in the form of quotas, is to circumvent the effect of unconscious bias that produces the endorsement of men over women (Scholarios and Taylor, 2011).

The literature generally speaks of three types of quotas: for advisory committees, for business and for politics (Meier, 2014). The latter is by far the most widespread as well as researched. While electoral quotas have been introduced more or less formally in more than 130 countries worldwide (Krook, 2014; Krook and

Zetterberg, 2014), gender quotas for management positions represent a much more contested terrain. In Denmark, even talking about quotas as a political option has stopped. As shown by a survey study done by the Danish Institute for Human Rights, only 2% of Danish managers suggest that gender quotas should be used to increase the number of female managers and board members in organisations in the Danish labour market (Larsen et al., 2015).

Most of our knowledge about the structure and functioning of gender quotas therefore comes from the political rather than the managerial sphere. Although some of the legislative quotas appeared as early as the 1930s, most of the quotas before 1990 were installed on a voluntary basis by the individual political parties and were, as such, party quotas (Krook, 2008). Today we see a broad distribution of all three kinds. Interestingly enough, though, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East are generally far ahead of the European countries when it comes to electoral gender quotas. While Denmark does not apply any form of political quotas, countries like Burundi, Colombia and Afghanistan have legislative quotas for women of 30%, 30% and 27% respectively (Krook, 2008).

Outcomes of quotas

There is a general agreement in the literature that quotas work (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009). Some find major changes, others that quotas only ‘led to a modest increase in the numbers of women elected, but did little to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation or bridge the gap between nominations to traditionally “feminine” and “masculine” portfolios’ (Oñate, 2014: 351). However, no studies that we came across reported negative effects. In fact, several studies have investigated the assumed negative side effects, such as marginalisation of quota women, but have found no evidence to support the existence of such effects (e.g. Zetterberg, 2008). Quota women are, as a matter of fact, often found to be just as – or even more – qualified than their non-quota counterparts (both men and women) (Josefsson, 2014; Murray, 2010; O’Brien, 2012).

Studies also show that adopting gender quotas has broader societal/cultural impacts, as it seems to have spillover effects that help to increase women’s rights more generally (Sacchet, 2008). Sacchet (2008) emphasised the more subjective impacts quotas can have on social and cultural levels of society by also addressing the problem of unconscious bias. Similarly, both Davidson-Schmich (2010) and Shin (2014) found spillover effects, showing that quotas not only benefited women working in political offices with quotas, but also positively influenced women working in political offices without quotas. For example, in Belgium, which has progressive quota legislation, politics is known for becoming increasingly ‘women-friendly’ (Meier, 2012). Additionally, studies emphasise organisational outcomes.

For example, Kirsch and Blaschke (2014) found positive effects on identity and image, equality bargaining, and political activity in the unions they investigated. Likewise, Stark and Hyll (2014) suggested that quotas for top management positions are socially gainful, following the assumption that employees invest in human capital to get a chance at landing top jobs. The authors' aggregation showed that the increase in human capital of the previously under-represented group (women) 'more than offsets the reduction of the human capital of the over-represented group [men]' (Stark and Hyll, 2014: 177). In the absence of quotas, on the other hand, women are assumed to find their odds of getting senior positions to be lower than men's, meaning even men of relatively low ability are induced to engage in human capital formation at the expense of some women of relatively high ability who do not expect to make it all the way to the top and therefore do not engage themselves in human capital formation. There is, for that reason, a business case for installing gender quotas, as these affect the chances of promotion and, for that reason, allegedly increase human capital overall, given that the newly encouraged women are more efficient in forming human capital than the displaced men (Stark and Hyll, 2014).

As Nugent and Krook (2016: 117) elegantly concluded: 'these results suggest that quotas are not a threat to "merit" at any stage of the political process – but rather, may foster diversity while also contributing to positive democratic outcomes'. Therefore, as Sacchet (2008) indicated, gender quotas should not just be seen as the end result of the debate. Quotas may in fact be the start of a process of renegotiating women's position and the social construction of gender in general.

Reactions to quotas

Despite their proven success, quotas receive massive resistance and opposition, which make them difficult to implement (Kirsch and Blaschke, 2014). As people do not seem to accept the basic diagnosis that women face greater barriers than men, most people (men and women alike) do not consider gender quotas legitimate or even find them fair (Dallerup, 2008). Consequently, as Dallerup put it, 'quotas are questioned again and again' (2008: 324). However, several researchers have also proven this resistance wrong (Noon, 2010; Nugent and Krook, 2016; Zetterberg, 2008). Noon (2010), for instance, provided counterarguments to four common protests against positive discrimination, including gender quotas, and in doing so presented a much more nuanced view on quotas when deconstructing the pseudo-scientific rationalism of having 'objective' standards and measures of a so-called best fit for any given position. Assessment processes, whether these are for recruitment or promotion, often include subjective elements such as interviews, not to mention the fact that finding the best candidate for a job is a question of comparative, and hence normative,

judgement. If social justice by means of equal representation of women in corporate leadership is an objective for companies like the ones presented in the analytical section of this paper, then gender equality ought to be a fully legitimate criterion for determining what constitutes 'best'. This ideological issue of selecting the 'right' *man* for the job does not get any less problematic when adding the concept of merit, which is not value neutral either, for as Noon (2010: 734) asked rhetorically:

How is merit to be measured? Should it be focused on talent and ability, or should it also reflect effort and achievement? If elements of the latter category were included then merit would recognise personal achievements against the odds; for example, someone from an underprivileged background, state schooling, and a low ranking university might be more meritorious than a middle-class person from a private school and a top university, even if the latter had better qualifications.

In the case of this article, if merit is to reflect effort and achievement, then female candidates can be 'better fits' in comparison to their male counterparts, as they do not enjoy male privilege that exists as a function of one's group membership – or in this case lack of membership. Men benefit from privileges due to their gender. Eagly and Karau (2002), for instance, point to a prevailing perceived incongruence between the 'female gender role' and leadership roles (see also Powell and Butterfield, 2012). This is not to say that men do not suffer hardships; in some cases, they perhaps even suffer them to a greater extent than certain minorities. The point is, however, that men's non-gendered hardships are irrelevant to male privilege, meaning women making it to the top as potential candidates for senior management may be considered more meritorious than the men they compete against if recognising women's underprivileged position in that regard.

However, evidence of such privilege, as Phillips and Lowery (2015) argued in their study of racial privilege, may motivate members of privileged groups to believe that meritocratic systems and personal virtues are what determine life outcomes. Claiming not to have benefited personally from systemic racial privilege, 'Whites' (*sic*) are found to dismiss policies designed to reduce inequity on those grounds (Phillips and Lowery, 2015). If the premise holds true, then some of the anxiety towards quotas is to be found in the dissonance arising when men are confronted with their in-group advantages. This does not, however, explain why some women also fear the quota ghost.

The mixed reactions to quotas could have something to do with the fact that they seem to counteract other more neo-liberal trends – also in feminist thinking. As Krook (2008: 346) aptly puts it:

While the global diffusion of any policy is a notable development, the rapid diffusion of candidate gender quotas per se is particularly remarkable. This is because positive

action for women in electoral processes contradicts – or at least appears to challenge – a number of other recent trends in international and feminist politics, namely rising neoliberalism, supposed decline in women's movement activity, growing scepticism about the unity of 'women' as a category, and ongoing challenges to links between descriptive and substantive representation.

In this way, it seems like recent feminist trends, which argue for the independency and strength of women, thus reject the notion that women are in need of 'help' or 'fixing' (Ely and Meyerson, 2000) and therefore perceive quotas as degrading for women. Career women in particular, who usually view themselves as independent and strong, are therefore likely to reject quotas out of a fear of being viewed as 'weak' or 'in need of help' (Muhr, 2011). For these women – and men who support this (post)feminist point of view – the neo-liberal values of meritocracy are thus much more attractive, as they fit the desired norm of independent and strong women. Quotas today therefore become scary because they render the common understanding of having a meritocracy a myth (McNamee and Miller, 2013). If we are to support quotas, we also have to admit that meritocracy is a myth and that ideological constructs, such as unconscious biases, control us much more than we are willing to admit. As Noon (2010: 730) commented:

This criticism [of quotas] is based on two assumptions that can be challenged: the assumption of a single form of positive discrimination [quotas] and the assumption that there is an objective measure of the 'best candidate'.

Sacchet (2008: 381) noted that 'the advantage of quotas is that they create *real* political opportunities. Other initiatives pay only lip service to gender equality, but quotas can change the gender composition of decision-making bodies by forcing women's entry into those spaces' (emphasis added).

Returning to our research question, then, the puzzle is now even greater. With this much evidence, how can such a strong reluctance to use quotas still persist? Do quotas still stand a chance, or are they dead? And if quotas were killed by a lethal consensus of disapproval from the very business world they wanted to create a more promising future for, are they now haunting us, trying to go about the unfinished business of gender equality? If that were the case, would it be possible to somehow revive quotas by bringing the ghost back to life, and what happens if we all make ourselves mediums for the ghost to speak through? What messages would it convey? Analysing quotas through the metaphor of the ghost allows us to ask new questions and in that way hopefully bring back to life if not quotas themselves, then at least a legitimate discussion of quotas.

Methodology: Analysing quotas through the metaphor of the ghost

According to Blackman, analysing something as a ghostly matter begins with ‘a feeling of being unsettled or wanting to unsettle’ (Blackman, 2015: 27). Drawing on Barad (2007), Blackman unfolded this by arguing that a ghostly methodology requires that ‘texts, events, actors, and agencies are read “intra-actively” through one another’ (Blackman, 2015: 37). The use of the term intra-action, she explained, ‘signals that texts are not separate and then brought together, but rather that texts (or statements, events, actors, and agencies) are always-already entangled in complex ways in practices’ (Blackman, 2015: 37). The ‘ghostly’ focuses not on bringing clarity to the narratives and utterances identified in organisations, but rather on analysing what it is that makes them complex. Analysing a research problem as a ghostly matter is therefore a question of paying attention to the fact that there is much more going on in organisations than what is suggested by ordinary explanations (Pors, 2016). We must instead seek explanations in the shadows, the darkness, the uncanniness of organisations (Gabriel, 2012; Linstead et al., 2014; O’Doherty et al., 2013), and be receptive towards ‘attractors’ (Blackman, 2015) that lure us down another analytical path with different theoretical resources from the initial ones. In the case of this paper, gender quotas represent such an attractor, as they encouraged us to do a second reading of the empirical material to better understand the uncanny and unsettling moments that the quota ghost presented. So unlike our first reading of the material, in which our analytic gaze was locked on how the interviewees’ positioned themselves in relation to issues around gender and leadership more generally, we, with the second reading, allowed ourselves to be more receptive towards the atmosphere created in the interviews in the immediate presence of quotas. We will revert back to this coding process in the section about data analysis.

At the centre of this relatively new interest in the dark sides of organisations lies Freud’s concept of the uncanny (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Muhr, 2011; Pors, 2016). The uncanny is not to be mistaken for the unfamiliar, despite its linguistic roots in the differentiation between *Unheimlich* (unhomely) and *Heimlich* (homely). So, the uncanny according to Freud *cannot* simply be translated from *Unheimlich* and mean unhomely or scary, as the German word *Unheimlich* carries deep historical relatedness with its ‘opposite’: *Heimlich*. *Heimlich* does mean homely, known, familiar, but it has also gained other meanings in German over time, such as secret or hidden, which is why, according to Freud (1955), it will always have a connection with the uncanny. ‘*Unheimlich* is in some way or other the sub-species of *Heimlich*’ (Freud, 1955: 226). So, in the *Heimlich*, the familiar, the comfortable, lies the uncanny, the hidden, the things that unsettle us, to go back to Blackman’s words. The uncanny understood as an interrelation of *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich* means that it is ‘nothing new or alien, but something which is

familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (Freud, 1955: 241). The uncanny therefore describes how something supposedly familiar can suddenly seem unfamiliar and strange, but also how something unfamiliar and scary can seem oddly familiar and comforting. The concept of the uncanny in this way embraces ambiguity and paradox.

Freud's notion of the uncanny is the first step towards a conception of the ghostly that Pors (2016) aimed to develop. In doing this, she stressed the performativity of uncanny experiences or 'what uncanny moments might do to the people who experience them' (Pors, 2016: 1645). Pors combined Freud's notion of the uncanny and Gordon's discussions of the ghostly as a 'something-to-be-done' and a 'socio-political-psychological state when something else, or something different from before, feels like it must be done' (Gordon, 2008: 3). This does not necessarily mean, as Pors (2016) also pointed out, that people who have such experiences know exactly what to do, how and when. Nor does it mean that people act out the need for action that they feel. The reason for this, as Pors continued to elaborate, is that the ghostly is not a coherent vision, but is more like a question, because it represents unresolved tensions and hence is always-already about to happen, rather than an actual event that is happening.

Analysing talk about gender quotas along the metaphor of the ghostly is therefore to take the ambiguity and the paradoxes of the uncanny seriously. Rather than taking the words of our respondents literally, we aim to listen to the whispers of the ghost in order to be able to address the underlying norms and structures of privilege that hold back women and hinder the realisation of sustained gender equality. A methodological framework based on the ghostly in this way moves us 'beyond the rationalistic accounts and the focus on individual identity struggles of the existing research' (Pors, 2016: 1647) and towards the underlying norms and structures that make up inequality and, more importantly, keep one of the most efficient tools to fight inequality in the shadows, uncanny and feared. Therefore, our interest in the ghostly, as Pors (2016: 1649) also stressed, 'directs [our] attention to minor changes in register and to fleeting collapses of customary narratives' in order to expose the cracks and ambiguities that construct gender quotas as a ghost, as scary and unwanted. Below, we will, through elaboration of the research context, data collection and analysis, explain how we do so.

Research context

Unlike some of its Nordic neighbours (in particular Norway), Denmark has no quota system for women either in politics or in business (Nordic Labour Journal, 2013; European Commission, 2012; Quota Database, 2011). Rather, there seems to

be a strong belief in a meritocratic system, where the best person gets the job regardless of their gender. Moreover, there is a general reluctance in Denmark to discuss gender quotas politically; if mentioned, people tend to get offended or angry at the possibility of introducing quotas.¹ In fact, in a recent debate about the replacement of a charter for more women in management (which we will explain in detail in the next paragraph), quotas were used as a derogatory term to describe how the country's 1,200 largest companies were required to set a higher target figure for the gender composition in management *if* current target figures were met.² This requirement has, however, been abolished, and there are no sanctions if the target figures are not realised, as the only requirement remaining is for the companies to have the target figures (Larsen et al., 2015). Interestingly, despite the fact that Denmark has one of the lowest numbers of female top managers in the EU, the widespread public opinion is that Denmark is an equal society and that we are both gender and colour blind (Rennison, 2009; Muhr and Salem, 2013). Equality is therefore taken for granted as a Danish value that pierces through the welfare society (Holck and Muhr, 2017). In that light, the ghost of quotas may appear as a terrifying matter from another world, a spectre from a distant past threatening the egalitarian idyll. According to a recent representative survey by the Confederation of Danish Enterprise (2013), Danes believe that men, to a greater extent than women, want to be managers, while the tendency is for women to choose family life over careers. However, analyses measuring male and female middle managers' actual career aspirations find no such difference (e.g. Diversity at Work, 2011). The first type of surveys, therefore, dismiss gender inequality in the labour market as merely being a question of men and women having inherently different priorities because of their gender, which is problematic to say the least, given that differences among individuals in either group are much larger than between women and men. They are also very indicative of the strong Danish belief in meritocracy, despite what other analyses might say (Roseberry and Roos, 2015: 57-86).

Data collection

This paper is based on interviews with 45 top managers in 37 different organisations. The original study was initiated as one of the authors was granted access to interview top managers in 37 (out of the total of approximately 110) Danish organisations that had signed the 'Charter for more women in

¹ One example of this media reaction can be seen by following this link (in Danish only): <https://www.b.dk/kommentarer/koenskvoter-er-koensdiskrimination>.

² An example of this recent debate can be seen by following this link (in Danish only): <http://www.altinget.dk/arbejdsmarked/artikel/advokat-godt-at-ministeren-dropper-koenskvoter>.





management' (see Christensen and Muhr, 2018 for a different analysis of the same empirical material). The charter was an initiative introduced by the Danish minister for equality (Kvinder i Ledelse, 2013). Signing the charter was voluntary, but when an organisation did so, it agreed to comply with the following seven guidelines: 1) have a strategy or a plan for gender equality, 2) have numerical goals for improving the number of women in management positions, 3) have gender equality written into the personnel policy, 4) change recruitment processes to become more gender equal, 5) headhunt women, 6) have career development targeted women, and 7) report measurements, experiences and results. Once a year, a so-called baseline report had to be submitted to the ministry addressing the current status of women in management positions, what the goals were regarding how to increase the percentage of female managers and how these should be reached. Signing the charter, however, had no sanctions and was merely meant as a form of nudging, to remind the organisations of their challenge with regard to women in management. This also meant that the commitment and results varied a lot between the different organisations.³

Interviews were held with the CEO – and, depending on the size of the organisation and their willingness to grant us more than one executive interview, an additional executive or top manager – from each organisation. When possible, both a man and a woman were interviewed. In total 23 men and 22 women were interviewed. All interviews lasted between one and two hours and were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were not centred around quotas directly, but as they were conducted in an open-ended and non-structured way about identity, gender and leadership, quotas came up as the respondents themselves brought them up. Most respondents mentioned quotas in one way or another. What made gender quotas a ghostly matter in the interviews was first of all how they became topical in our interviews – even without the interviewer asking for the interviewee's opinion on the issue – and second of all how they seemed to almost haunt the respondents and make them very uneasy when the topic fell on quotas. This guided the data analysis, as described below.

Data analysis

As the interviews were conducted in an open-ended fashion with the broad aim of gaining knowledge about Danish managers' opinions about gender and leadership and how they placed themselves in this debate, the first coding of the interviews was also very broad, with the bottom-up aim of coding the data for emerging themes around gender and leadership. The interviews were therefore not coded in

³ See the website where the results were reported: <http://www.kvinderiledelse.dk/om-charteret.aspx>.

NVivo or similar programs, but read from start to finish. Reading through the transcripts of the interviews, a pattern quickly started to emerge: many respondents suggested that quotas were diametrically opposed to – the very antithesis of – the charter under discussion. The charter was perceived as voluntary and progressive, gender quotas as repressive and a step back. In other words, gender quotas, without being a specific topic on the research/interview agenda, still became topical momentarily, only to disappear again from the conversation a few moments later. This is what Pors (2016), establishing a framework on the ghostly, has described as ‘changes in register’ and ‘fleeting collapses of customary narratives’ (Pors, 2016: 12). Analysing the interviews along a ghostly methodology therefore became particularly interesting, as this would allow us to focus on these changes in register and fleeting collapses. Had we had a more traditional and closed coding process from the beginning, looking for predefined codes/themes in for example NVivo, this theme would probably not have made itself present.

What caught our interest in the first coding process was the atmosphere created in the interviews in the immediate presence of quotas, as all respondents reacted negatively – often strongly so – to the possibility of quotas. Because of these ‘changes in register’, we began a second – and more directed – coding for when and why such discomfort arose. Eventually, we ended up with the following codes, which the interviews were systematically coded for: 1) the fear of quotas, 2) the way merit was used as an explanation and 3) how gender quotas emerged as a ghost irrespective of their non-existence in the corporate reality. These three aspects then guided our selection of quotes for the paper. The citations presented therefore did *not* become part of the analysis merely because they mention gender quotas. Rather, the analysed citations were selected because they exemplify the awakening of quotas as a ghost that, when talking about it without acknowledging its presence, reveals more about the speaker than that which is spoken of. That is to say, even though significant work was being done to repress and make absent the possibility of quotas, it continued to linger everywhere in the interviews; it is present in its absence. The absence-presence of the ghost reveals how quotas are *not* causing certain prejudiced views to be held about women in relation to leadership. On the contrary, the ghost can tell a story of how it is misunderstood and misused as an excuse for these prejudicial views to be expressed. Constructing quotas as the antithesis of merit, thereby creating a false dualism in which both appear to be mutually exclusive, allows for the respondents to stick to the view that ‘some social groups fail due to inability (typically a biological essentialist perspective) or personal choice (typically a preference theory perspective)’ (Noon, 2010: 734). The ghost, in this way, unsettles the conversation, as it indicates there is more to the issue of gender quotas than what is said.

Analysis: The fear of quotas

As mentioned above, although the interviewer never directly asked the respondents' opinion about gender quotas, gender quotas still became topical in our interviews when talking about women in leadership (or the lack thereof). A good example of how quotas suddenly entered the conversation is found in the below statement by Paul. Note how quotas are described as an evil force that will take over as a last resort if the companies fail to do the right thing and solve the problem by their own methods:

If we don't find a solution to increasing the number of women leaders, then we will end up with a quota system, and I don't feel comfortable about quotas. I think that [quotas] would be a shame and I consider it problematic for the men that are pushed out – and actually also for the women that get in because of quotas. Basically, I see it as if I had a fever; I do not get cured from breaking the thermometer, but that is what quotas do. But I am afraid that if we do not solve this issue and advance more women to the top level, then at some point quotas will be forced upon us. (Paul)

Quotas are, like this, most often talked about as something negative, something the respondents are afraid of, and something we should therefore try to avoid. However, what if, to stick with Paul's metaphor, the thermometer is already broken? In that scenario, the interviewee can, for obvious reasons, not break it, but will in fact have to fix it instead, because clearly it does not serve its purpose. We see how the ghost sends shivers down the interviewee's spine: the argument of having more women is not for the sake of having more women; it is provoked by a sheer fear of quotas. Paul thinks it is unfair – if not even oppressive – both for the men that do not make it in a quota system (for women), but also for the women who will get to climb the ladder because of such a system. However, he does not see the opposite perspective: that the current systematic (subtle) discrimination holds women back and obstructs meritocracy. The current ideology works as an invisible quota system (for men), but because it is invisible, it can be denied.

This is the part where we as researchers became unsettled and felt we had more to say; for would quotas not simply be a way of regulating the labour market, as in many other cases, where it is acknowledged politically that the market fails to reach a satisfactory equilibrium? Why is it that people seem to be so afraid of them? The ghost poses these questions to Paul. He is for the same reason trying to refute any arguments for a gender quota system, even though none have been presented to him during the interview. John, another interviewee, extends such fear of quotas and uses the ghost strategically as a scarecrow to intimidate his employees to do more work for gender diversity:

We have approached these terrified old men [about gender diversity issues] – and there are quite a few of them! – and have told them: 'If you don't increase the

number of women in your management team,] then the quotas will come. So if you don't like the thought of quotas, then you'd better [swearing] do something else!' (John)

This commandment of doing something (to avoid the ghost) seems symptomatic of the respondents' (re)actions to the ghost that keeps haunting them. Note, however, how this 'something' is exactly that: some activity or initiative that will keep the interviewees from having to deal with the ghost. Doing something else than implementing a quota system does not necessarily entail any real change in terms of gender diversity, and it reduces a discussion of fairness and equality to a bad excuse for not supporting quotas.

The uncanny paradox of quotas

So quotas can, as paradoxical as it may sound, become topical as a safeguard against quotas, because they are expected to become superfluous in the long run once organisations reach a certain critical mass of women. What makes it extra uncanny, however, is that there is no consensus on what 'critical mass' seems to be. Thus, 'critical mass' appears to be a cover for not really knowing what is a satisfactory number. The horrific absence-presence of quotas, in other words, pushes companies to do something about the very problem to which quotas are a potential solution.

My interest in women and management began in the trade union. As I attended international conferences and congresses, it became very obvious to me that women were almost not represented at all. So I worked to increase the number of women, and we succeeded in getting some women in, for example, executive committees, and that was actually through a quota system in the beginning. As the presence of women gradually became more natural because some of the women advanced, we no longer needed the quota system. But in the beginning, in order to even acknowledge the existence of women, I was a strong advocate of quotas. (Barbara)

As Barbara goes on explaining, a quota system has the benefit of forcing people in organisations to change their behaviour instantaneously in order to accommodate a new corporate reality with a large(r) influx of women professionals. People's attitude will have to adjust accordingly. This is instead of the long haul of working to change attitudes, which would, allegedly, also change behaviour over time. Paradoxically, however, although she is very much in favour of quotas, they still haunt her, as she is astutely aware – and concerned about – others' fear of quotas.

I am certainly not scared of quotas. But I have to admit that I cannot make myself a spokesperson for quotas on behalf of [company name]. However, if you ask me personally, then I am pro-quotas, because I think they are necessary for a period of time to change some things if these things cannot change by themselves. We have worked with getting women into management for 25-30 years and yet nothing has happened. (Barbara)

There are two interesting aspects in how the ghost of quotas haunts her here. She is personally in favour of quotas and knows that what they are currently doing in her company does not work. Still, she cannot make herself a spokesperson publicly *for* quotas. Even though she claims not to be scared of quotas, they still haunt her enough that she does not dare utter her support out loud. And if she is not scared of quotas, why does she need to say so? Who is she trying to convince? Herself? The quote illustrates how Barbara, in spite of her outspoken personal support, still has a tense, nervous and awkward relation to the mere idea of quotas, as she does not want to be stigmatised as the mad person who believes in ghosts – that would probably hurt the company image. Quotas are at best portrayed as a necessary evil that the company needs to get rid of as soon as possible because they come to distort the existing mechanisms of hiring and promotion. This fear of quotas, however, seems also to be what puts an end to the very gender initiatives that the fear itself may have given birth to, rendering efforts ineffective:

I think that by virtue of having some goals, I am not saying that it is easier for women to get access, but I think the charter sets a clear target for how many women we want. That is, if we cannot meet the quota target for women that we have decided on, then I think we just don't take in any more male employees. That means we keep the numbers for men and women at the same level. So it is not easier for women to get into our talent programme, but there is a target for women to make up a certain share of the talent pool. (Karl)

Note how the target for women is just that, namely a target. If you do not hit the target, there are no sanctions; you simply have another go. We see how the charter, as a likely response to the spooking sounds of quotas, brings about concrete targets for how large a share of the total pool of talent women should account for. However, you can embellish the numbers, which are set up as a sex ratio, thereby reaching the goal artificially by keeping the influx of men low if the number of women candidates is inadequate. Some are, however, more explicit in showing their anxieties towards quotas than others:

I think there is great resistance to quotas in companies. You can feel that. People get insanely frightened just from hearing the word. There are also a lot of male leaders who are extremely tired of discussing quotas. The discussion almost makes them vomit, and I do understand why they are tired hearing about it. It is not their fault. They are just who they are. Now, I can empathise with the male leaders who would have got the job if a certain quota for women hadn't needed to be met. So in a company like [company name], which really attaches importance to advancing women and so on, it is likely that men feel that their odds get worse if women are in the game too. (Nicole)

So targets for achieving a fixed percentage of women in management seem to offend everyone's illusion of having a meritocratic organisation. The haunting quotas bring about an experience of discomfort, as the socio-ideological order of

merit is challenged. There are, however, targets – that need to be met – for almost every other objective in businesses. Interestingly, no one seems to find *that* problematic. Why, then, the reluctance to appoint a specific number of female managers through gender quotas if gender equality is indeed a corporate strategic objective? It cannot be because equality is *not* a business issue, since the business case for equality, e.g. tapping into a greater pool of talent, is repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as a driver for change. Yet, the myth of meritocracy seems to be the lifeline of anti-quota arguments; it quickly becomes an either/or question of equality vs. merit, as if the two could not come together:

Our CEO will say that he is not for quotas. Well, it might be that we as a company are, but personally he is not. He always wants the best. (Kaspar)

The ghost unsettles us as researchers in the sense that we see the limitations to organisations' willingness to walk the talk, to turn the plethora of platitudes into concrete action when stating that they want more women in management. They know it is the correct thing to say. The statements could be interpreted as what Christensen et al. (2013) labelled 'aspirational talk', i.e. a form of auto-communication of a desired future place for organisations to be, meaning that a discrepancy between talk and action is to be expected. In the case of the present analysis, however, the talk seems to be kept from becoming performative and thereby from making this desired future a reality, for as we shall see in the following section, our respondents prefer to stay within their comfort zone of meritocracy.

Merit as the expression of quota antipathy

What we can deduce from the comments that mention always wanting the best is how companies conveniently construct a false dichotomy of women and quality as if they were mutually exclusive, thereby keeping the anti-quota argument alive artificially:

The biggest hurdle is the social acceptance of the quota – that is, the way in which one gets a position: do you get it due to merit or due to biological coincidence? How do you get the individual as well as the smaller and larger communities of people surrounding the individual candidate to accept that it is okay to hold a quota position? That would, for me personally, be a sign of [mumbling something that expresses dissatisfaction]. Also, if I had to hire: I have a quota that I need to meet, but I actually have a better candidate, regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. Business-wise, specifically, I would find that difficult. (Ethan)

Again, quotas and competencies are considered each other's opposites. The assertion seems to be that quotas obscure the smooth functioning and disturb the order of the meritocratic organisation, angering the interviewee, as his sense of entitlement is challenged, and making him uncomfortable in the situation due to

a lack of social recognition of quotas. But what if there is already a built-in quota system to the very focus on always hiring ‘the best’ based on merit and not gender? What if this myth renders management ignorant of the current subtle and invisible, but still de facto, quota system for men – one that works in reverse by limiting the advancement of women? Quotas for women are not considered necessary, meaning there is no need to bring them back to life.

I would say that in recent years we have employed more women than men or at least an equal number. But that is not something we talk about, because every time we hire we agree that we want the best candidate. That is for sure what guides us. We have never had, or I cannot recall, a situation where we discussed whether to select this person or that person and where we then considered gender or skin colour or religion or something else, because we are pretty clear about wanting the best. And not just professionally, but also personality-wise with respect to whatever that is. (Keith)

As should be evident by now, ‘wanting the best’ seems to be the go-to phrase, the very expression of quota antipathy, and the reason why quotas have no business in this world. None of the interviewees, however, argues why that must be the case – it just is. The quota ghost disrupts the narrative of having an objective measure, especially when personality is introduced to the conversation, at which point it is not only us as researchers but also the interviewee who gets unsettled, given that he cannot see how a clearly subjective measure of personality-fit can be aligned with the idea of objectivity. As the conversation turns to quotas, the interviewee comes to face the liminality of merit, the strangeness of a system that purports to deliver the ‘best’ based on objective measures, which is, of course, problematic if the contemporary labour market is better viewed as a ‘personality market’ (Hanlon, 2016: 15). However, rather than having to deal with these ambiguities, quotas are relegated to the shadows.

Quotas lurking in the shadows

A shadowy underground is all there is left of the unwanted quotas, as organisations try to make gender equality a pure business case by stating it is not a matter of equality at all.

I think this whole issue of women in leadership needs to be taken out of the hands of the Ministry of Equality. This is not a question of equality. It is a pure bottom-line question for society and for each and every company. Make this equality conversation a business conversation because from a societal perspective, it is absolutely terrible that we fail to benefit from one half of the population. I don’t find it strange if people are led to believe that a quota system is the road to take. But I do not think that is the right way to go. If organisations apply quotas, women will be evaluated based on their sex and not their competences. I would say there is kind of a quota [system] today because men have got access through [invisible] quotas. But I think it would be a sign of failure if we cannot select competent women in a

different way. However, I see the political pressure and I understand it too. It is reasonable to say that the politicians have to regulate if we as companies cannot figure this out ourselves. (Beth)

The attempt to turn a matter of equality into a business case is, paradoxically, what forces gender quotas to make themselves known as a ghost. The business case, as Knights and Omanović (2016) posited, tends to displace alternative approaches and generally neglects social-historical contexts. The ghost – as a balancing force – tries to bring back the issue of fairness and equality by highlighting historical and cultural inequalities that need to be taken into consideration – aspects that are not captured in the business case approach and, as a result, are repressed only to return as something uncanny. If companies really believe in the business case for diversity and equality, why are they not racing to be the first to reach these objectives in order to reap the advantage of gaining a competitive edge? It appears that not even the business case translates into sustained efforts for gender equality, even though it is thought to deliver competitiveness.

Having signed the charter, the interviewees all seem to agree that they share a common problem of not having enough women in management. Whether there is an issue or not is not what is discussed; instead of doing something about the problem, discussions revolve around what *not* to do:

The charter is the alternative to quotas; to try to do something that way around [voluntarily]. It has, however, not really changed much if we look at the share of female leaders. (Beth)

Or as John put it:

I think we need more women in management, and I usually say at conferences and the like that [name of company] is very much against quotas, and if we want to avoid the emergence of quotas, then we simply have to make sure it becomes unnecessary to talk about them. If we develop in the right direction, which we appear to be doing ... Well, the bottom line is: we cannot afford *not* to consider roughly half the labour market when recruiting. (John)

It seems the organisations have found sanctuary in simply doing something, although this *something* is really *nothing*, as it just means to do *anything* as long as it does not involve quotas. However, this something that they are doing does not produce the change they desire. There is little real change, as many of the respondents admit, but that still seems to be better than having to deal with the uncanniness of gender quotas. Gender quotas trouble and bother existing procedures, whereas the voluntary nature of the charter is easily aligned with current practices. Quotas would, in other words, turn already familiar processes into uncanny repetitions and reproductions of inequality. The perceived smooth functioning of organisations could no longer be perceived as such. The

meritocratic system practised would be exposed as a liminal state of organising. The uncanny moment of the ghostly allows us as researchers – and the respondents if receptive – to ‘come into contact with the broader social and political stakes of work’ (Pors, 2016: 1654) and of organising gender ‘diversity’. If taking the accumulated responses at face value, it appears there is nothing companies will not do to avoid quotas. In the following section we discuss what is likely to happen if, instead of beating about the bush, we dared to acknowledge the gender quota ghost and allowed ourselves to be mediums for its messages.

Concluding discussion

Our analysis shows how quotas are a ghostly matter, as the mere idea of quotas haunts the managers, who, in return, try to hunt down the quota ghost, as it apparently poses a threat to the current understanding of meritocracy. Beirne and Wilson (2016: 232) argued that the aversion to and fear of quotas force the interventionist approach to ‘be more focused on grassroots concerns and material conditions than contemporary debates on either positive discrimination or trade union action’. We would like to add another angle to this. What if we, by looking the ghost in the eye, could find a more peaceful relationship with it? The quota ghost’s uncanny ability to unsettle the business-as-usual mentality does not mean we should not try to better understand it. Quite the contrary, as Beirne and Wilson argue, we need to be able to influence public and political opinion. Although we know we cannot do that in one article, we would still like to explore the possibility of beginning to do so through the metaphor of the ghost.

Our analysis of Danish managers’ viewpoints on quotas along a ghostly methodology has yielded insights that we would like to discuss further. Firstly, the organisations presented are always on the defensive – never on the attack. Their focus is on getting rid of the ghost, i.e. proving once and for all that quotas have no place on Earth – probably because they fear that embracing quotas would be political suicide. Actions taken are thus reactionary – just what is needed to keep the ghost at a comfortable distance. As a result, progressive change does not even appear as an option. Any nuances to the quota discussion seem, for the same reasons, to be discarded and hence not explored. Noon (2010: 730-32), for instance, presents a ‘tie-break’ and a ‘threshold’ system as more moderate forms of positive discrimination than the current understanding of quotas. In the tie-break system, it would be permissible to base selection on gender if there were two or more equally qualified candidates. Taking into account group characteristics such as gender would mean that a female candidate, given that she belongs to the disadvantaged social group, has already proved herself more able by getting into a tie-break situation with a male candidate. The threshold system, on the other hand,

requires the candidates to pass a certain minimum qualification standard, after which hiring managers may consider gender and make choices favouring candidates from disadvantaged groups. Both systems allow organisations to redress their shortfall of women managers. However, the problem is that the interviewed Danish managers never get to engage themselves with these options due to their unsubstantiated fear of how quotas obstruct an assumed (but only illusory) meritocratic functioning of organisations.

The fear of quotas as it is expressed in the interviews is therefore not rational, which is the second point that we would like to discuss further. The fear seems to be based on a form of pluralistic ignorance (Halbesleben et al., 2005, 2007; Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004). This insight struck us in our intra-active reading of the transcribed interviews, which were conducted separately for each participating organisation, albeit with the charter as a common denominator. The organisations were as such already connected or entangled across the interviews in their perceptions of and reactions to the quota ghost. One of the reasons why the respondents in this paper accepted to be interviewed in the first place was to have a conversation with a researcher (the interviewer) in order to obtain the information thought necessary to analyse the identified problem: the low number of women in management. The danger of pluralistic ignorance kicks in when these interviewees – as a response to their inadequate knowledge in the area – begin to observe one another, hoping to find the answer. In that respect, they all seem to be doing the same; they are observing the lack of action. Nobody seems to know why quotas are bad, but everyone just assumes they are (no matter whether they believe in them or not), because the interviewees presume that everybody else is (also) of that opinion. So even when some of the respondents are of the opinion that quotas can indeed be integrated into the way we do business, they still express reluctance to bring the ghost to the table, so to speak, because they seem to believe that their peers are not in favour of quotas (either).

Now, if everybody thinks that and acts accordingly, being opposed to quotas will naturally be the norm. This probably comes out the strongest when one interviewee, Barbara, states that she is not afraid of quotas, and even personally is *for* them, but still conforms to the view that quotas are bad. Across all the organisations in the analysis – which must be assumed to be among the most progressive when it comes to gender diversity initiatives, as they voluntarily signed the charter for more women in management – we detect a fundamental fear of quotas. A fear so strong that it seems to be the reason why they never get to scrutinise why exactly they are so opposed to quotas – they just are.

The reason why gender quotas can become scary in the first place seems to be – following our analysis – that gender quotas are repressed to the shadows and thus

may reappear as something uncanny, which is probably why the interviewees and we as researchers become unsettled. Our analysis shows that a particular fear of quotas is formed around the fact that quotas are constructed as instruments of creating more ‘women-friendly’ conditions (Meier, 2012). Interpreted this way, quotas are written into a discourse where men and women are fundamentally different and that women might not be better leaders, but different ones (e.g. Eagly, 2005). This reinforces the hierarchy between the genders in relation to leadership (e.g. Muhr and Sullivan, 2013). Introducing gender quotas would, in that regard, be to perform what Beyes and Steyaert (2013: 1450) called an ‘unsiting’ in that quotas would unlock an affective reaction by reorganising a site’s constellations of, in this case, immaterial forces. The unsiting act of the absent-present ghost can be seen as a process by which the familiar, although abstract, conception of merit is destabilised and made strange. Put differently, the momentary unsiting unsettles the interviewees and defamiliarises organisational structures that, as a result, become only vaguely familiar, or strangely familiar – uncanny. It is almost a Derridian ‘hauntology’ (Derrida, 1994) in the sense that the ghostly matter of gender quotas has been suspended and repressed for so long that it now returns to haunt us to let us know that gender equality is not something of the present; its time is still to come.

The question that remains is: if it is not possible to bring legitimacy to quotas in business as has happened in politics in other countries, can we at least bring legitimacy to the discussion? Do we dare to mention this ghost? We will never be receptive to its message if we live in denial of its existence due to us fending it off with seemingly rational and logical arguments such as having a meritocratic system for hiring and promotion. That approach only blinds us to the illogical dimensions as well as the irrationality of those arguments. If we listened to the ghost’s whispers, we would realise that the ghost is an effect of an invisible *de facto* quota system that privileges men due to assessment processes that are falsely believed to be based on universal, objective and neutral measures for ‘best fit’ candidates (meritocracy). Ultimately, hiring managers are making comparative, and hence normative, judgements about what ‘objective’ criteria are legitimate as measures, and selection choices may be affected by implicit biases (e.g. Reuben et al., 2014). One interviewee actually makes such a realisation when addressing the ghostly absence-presence of quotas during the interview:

Everybody knows who you are when you’re the only woman among all the managers. So to that end quotas might be beneficial. Perhaps you are also, as a woman, evaluated along a different scale because you are different. I would prefer to live in a world where you are evaluated on an equal footing regardless of whether you’re a man or a woman. And we also claim that that is what we do. But we just have to remember that all of us – depending on what generation we come from – are raised with different expectations of what a typical man and a typical woman is.

And we can never be sure that those expectations don't influence the way we are evaluated. I don't think that the scale of measure is completely identical for men and women. We might say it is, yes, and we will probably continue to assert that. But I just don't buy it. (Beth)

This realisation, however, does not make her an advocate of quotas, so there is still a task in turning anxiety into excitement if gender quotas are to have a fighting chance. At first, to believe in the ghost of gender quotas may seem somewhat superstitious; it requires us to unlearn everything that we have been schooled into believing about our current system – that it is meritocratic, and somehow more rational. In our case, the ghostly allowed us to be startled and unsettled, to dwell on aspects that at first we did not intend, and could not have expected, to stumble upon. The ghost only seems frightening because it exposes opponents of gender quotas – who argue in favour of merit – as defenders of the status quo. It is scary because the positive effects of equality are repressed, and thus become uncanny – not because the ghost is new or unfamiliar, but because part of the argument has been suppressed and is now returning to haunt us. As Rainbow Murray (2015) recently wrote on her blog:

It is rather insulting actually to suggest that the reason why elite, wealthy, middle-aged white men dominate politics and other echelons of power is because they deserve to – because of their greater merit. This suggests, by inference, that under-represented groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and people from less privileged backgrounds, are relatively absent from politics because they don't deserve to be there. If we are basing this assessment on inherent talent, then we are saying that rich white men are naturally superior to everybody else.

The gender quota ghost materialises and manifests itself in the conversation and refuses to be put to rest, as it points to systemic organisational inequalities that prevent the hiring and especially advancement of women to top management positions. The ghost can, in other words, be seen as a benign spirit telling stories of historical and social disadvantages of women as a group. We suggest that by listening to the whispers of the ghost, and by letting it guide us in addressing underlying norms and structures of privilege that hold back women (while adding a layer of Teflon to men) and hinder the realisation of sustained gender equality, we may not only help the haunting quotas find peace, but also help ourselves create new organisational spaces for employees to draw on their full spectra of gendered competences, regardless of sex. So let us stop hunting down the ghost of gender quotas and let it, by all means, haunt us instead.

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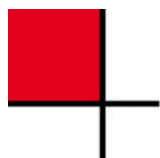
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But it does not take death to make ghosts of some



The Danish school as a haunted house: Reforming time, work life and fantasies of teaching in Denmark

Nana Vaaben and Helle Bjerg

abstract

The article explores the affective effects of school policy on Danish teachers, by using a ghostly perspective supplemented with Lacanian psychoanalysis as described by Žižek. The empirical case concerns how Danish teachers experienced a series of political events, including a lockout, a school reform, and a new law regulating their working hours. Our ghostly reading draws attention to the ways in which linear time collapses as past events continue to have an influence on the present. What becomes clear is that what bothers the teachers is not a matter of having to work more or less. Nor is it exclusively a question of settling accounts and rewriting history. It is also a matter of teachers having become seriously bewildered about what others require of them. The key claim is that 'the spirit of teaching' is rooted in a fantasy of what the Other wants, and creates a desire to provide exactly that. However, this 'spirit of teaching' has been killed, and teachers are now 'working dead' (teaching machines), driven without desire. But they are also haunted by the absent presence of 'the spirit of teaching' calling to them: 'Remember me! Remember me!'

'I get really mad, when people tell me that now we have to put things behind us and move on...I can't!'. With this remark, Line, a Danish teacher, expresses her experience of a major labour market conflict and its immediate aftermath. Shortly afterwards, in the spring of 2014, Line decided to quit her job in a municipal school¹, just before a major school reform was to be implemented. In this article,

¹ 'Municipal school' is our not quite satisfactory attempt to translate the Danish 'folkeskole'. The majority of Danish children between the age of 6 and 16 attend a

we explore the experiences and the reactions of a number of teachers to this industrial conflict about teachers' working hours and the subsequent school reform.

Throughout the article, our main focus is on the case of Line. However, we recognise her reaction and sentiments throughout the wide range of empirical data material that makes up the contextual basis for the analysis of her case. Line's experience of not being able to 'put things behind her', and her later decision to quit her job as a teacher, has been our cue to dive into the growing body of literature that suggests we turn our analytical interest to the question of the performativity of policy. Several researchers have suggested the need to study policy through multi-sited policy ethnographies sensitive to the performativity of policy across different spaces and levels (Brøgger, 2014; Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Others work with policy translation, showing how policies are borrowed, but also changed and reinterpreted across local contexts (Steiner Khamsi 2014). In this article, however, we primarily relate to studies of the performativity of policy through the entanglement of temporality and affectivity (e.g. Brøgger, 2016). We are interested in finding out how policy actually does something to people. In some sense, one could actually with reference to Dorthe Staunæs (Staunæs, 2018), argue that policies in line with motivational technologies become performative exactly by affecting people's feelings and emotions – and, we would add, desires and fantasies about 'the Other'. In this paper we shall dive into the affective or phantasmatic space created by recent educational policy reforms, inhabited and embodied by Line and her fellow teachers in Danish municipal schools. We adopt a 'ghostly' perspective on organisational matters supplementing it with Lacanian psychoanalysis. Through this analytical lens we will explore how Line's remark resonates with a widespread sense of wrongdoing and loss that refuses to go away, even if the events causing it are long gone. We shall use the story of Line as an entry point for exploring an 'absent presence', which not only makes itself felt, but also seems to carry a particular urge to act (Gordon, 2011).

We will be using the case of Line and the Danish teachers to argue that political and organisational life is not fully grasped without some understanding of the spirits, passions, desires, and fantasies that animate people to do (or in this case quit) their jobs, or without some understanding of the ways in which the past (or

'folkeskole'. These are – in contrast to private schools – free of charge, exclusively financed through taxes, and part of the public sector. However, they are not actually managed by the state government, but by the local governments in the municipalities. This becomes important later in the article, when the state government interferes in a labor market conflict.

the future) can haunt the present and call for action. This makes it possible to question the often naturalised understandings of policy implementation in organisations as unfolding linearly from top to bottom, or from past to future – just as when Line was asked to ‘put things behind her and move on’. Further, we will question the ways in which agency is often ascribed exclusively to the living in the here and now, and argue that the past and what is suppressed can take on agency in the present in the form of absent presences.

Background

In the beginning of 2013, Local Government Denmark (KL) and the Danish Union of Teachers (DLF) initiated negotiations about teachers’ working conditions in the municipal schools. By then, the minister of Finance had already declared publicly, that teachers’ working hours needed to be ‘normalised’ in order to establish a closer link between wage and productivity, and that teachers of all kinds had for years received raises without giving anything in return (Finansministeriet, 2012). The aim of Local Government Denmark in the negotiations were much in line with the aim of the Minister of Finance. They wanted to be able to increase the amount of teaching per teacher per week, and to give school principals the managerial right to decide how teachers’ time was spent. In order to do so, it was necessary to abandon the previous system where teachers had a fixed amount of tasks and responsibilities ‘counting for’ a certain number of hours. Instead, Local Government Denmark wanted to introduce a new system with fixed working hours, where teachers had to be physically present in the schools, so that school principals could prioritise their time more productively (KL, 2013; Vaaben, 2018). The Danish Union of Teachers were against both. They wanted to continue with the previous system, where there was a top limit to the amount of tasks for each teacher, and where teachers themselves prioritized their time. After a couple of months of negotiations and fierce discussions, not least in the media, negotiations broke down. The employers – Local Government Denmark – decided to declare a lockout. In consequence, not only most teachers, but also their students were sent home, and the teachers did not receive any pay. Instead, teachers could be found outside the schools and along main roads, demonstrating with banners expressing how much they wanted to teach and how they loved and missed their students. Because the media was busy reporting on the conflict and the debate it generated, and because most families were forced to keep some of their children at home, people all over the country were affected by, and involved in, the debate about teachers and their working conditions. After a month with closed schools, the state government decided to interfere and end the conflict. Instead of leaving the two parties to negotiate with each other teachers’ working hours were laid down by law – Act 409. This legislation sent the teachers back to work, and set a fixed limit to

teachers' working hours, requiring them to be present at school during all working hours, and many teachers felt that the state government had sided with Local Government Denmark as employers. This law meant that teachers and students could return to school, but many teachers felt, like Line, deeply wronged and humiliated, and had difficulties putting these events behind them. Moreover, in the minds of many teachers, the conflict itself and teachers' reactions to it became closely connected to the school reform that was also presented in the spring of 2013 to come into effect in August 2014.

Method and empirical data

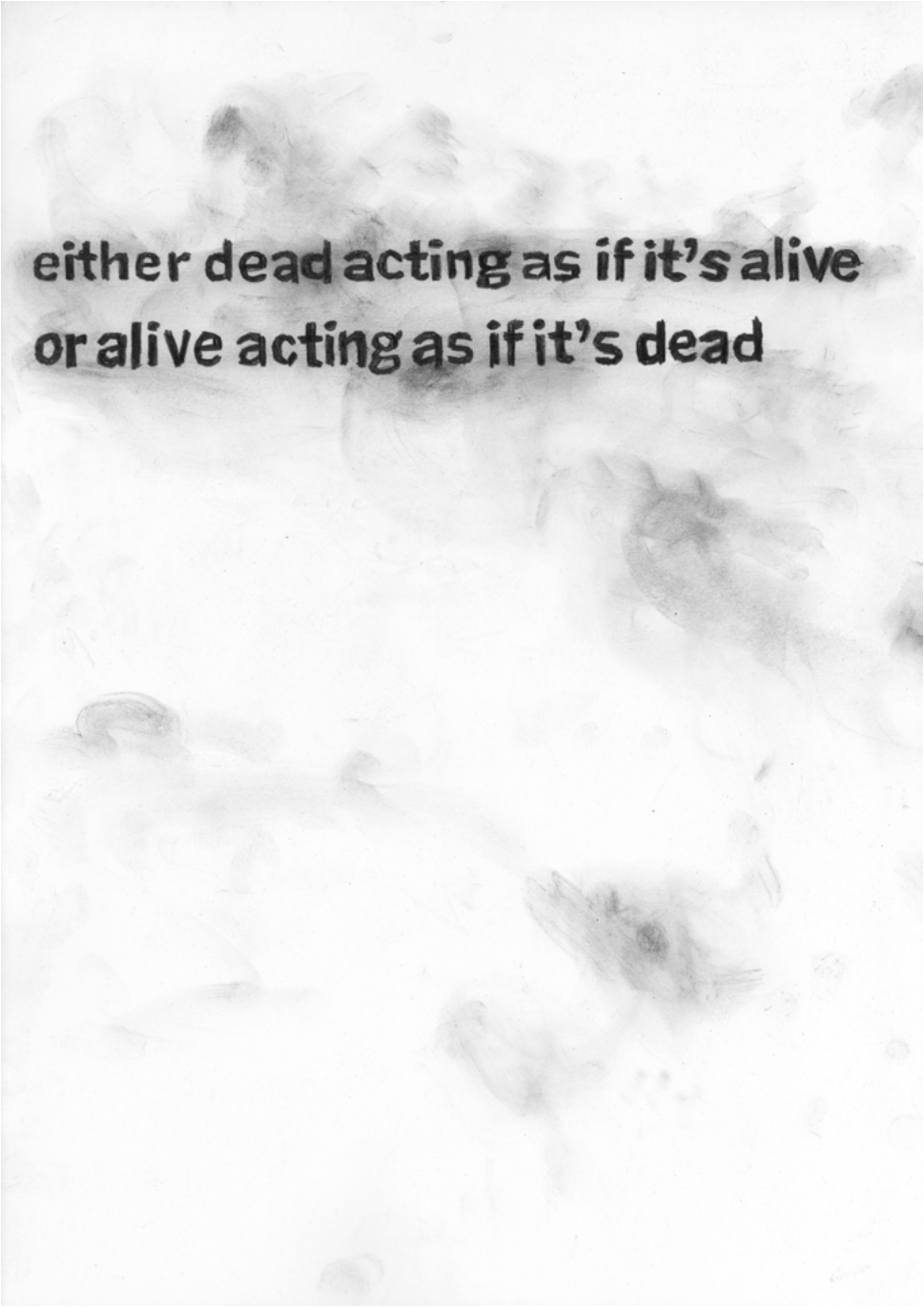
The case of one teacher, Line, introduced above, stands out against the backdrop of a larger set of data material. Since the lockout in April 2013, we have been following the situation and the reactions of teachers in the Danish municipal schools through various projects. In spring 2014, we conducted observations and carried out 18 qualitative interviews with teachers concerning what they felt about the working hours and the school reform, and what outcomes they anticipated. The participating teachers were identified through a snowball method, in which informants were asked to point out the next informant as someone who might present a different perspective on the subject matter. The interviews were semi-structured and partially open, enabling teachers to point out the matters of greatest concern to them. However, all the interviews turned into somewhat emotional accounts of how the experience of criticism and lack of trust from politicians and 'the public' had forced teachers to reconsider their jobs, their professional identity and the ways in which they felt perceived by society in general. Within this project, we have also analysed a range of policy documents relating to the reform of teachers' working hours (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2015). In 2016, another study was conducted focusing on teachers who had quit their job in Danish municipal schools between 2013 and 2016. The method used was an open survey, asking teachers to explain in their own words what had motivated them to leave. 405 respondents replied, and from their accounts it is apparent that the events of 2013 had not vanished, but still played a part in their experiences and actions in the present (Pedersen et al., 2016). In addition to these two research projects, we have continuously followed reactions and statements from teachers in the printed media as well as the social media, for instance within a particular Facebook group called 'look into my eyes'. Here teachers exchange experiences and opinions about the school system and particularly the current reforms. In 2018 teachers' working hours was once again up for labour market negotiations. This time The Danish Unions of Teachers found alliances within other Unions representing employees in the public sector – still, the parties did still not manage to reach an agreement to replace Act 409.

Across these diverse sources of data, a picture emerges of how the events of 2013 have not yet become past, since they are still manifest in the minds and bodies of teachers. This appears, for instance, as a preoccupation with the question of how they as teachers may regain an honourable place in public discourse about teachers and the Danish municipal schools. The data has made us look for the ways in which teachers search for meaning through shaping and reshaping the narratives about themselves and their profession by linking to other narratives (Boje, 2006, 2008; Humle, 2014). What we are specifically interested in is how the teachers seem to narrate their own stories by linking in to some sort of master narrative, in which they want to occupy a proper place. As indicated above, this continuous reference to past events which cannot be left behind has led us to go hunting for ghostly matters in teachers' narratives about the lockout, the school reform and their working hours. First, however, we shall root our analytical strategies within the ghostly framework.

Animating spirits and ghostly matters

The theme of ghosts and ghostly matters in organisational life is not new. Social scientists have been chasing spirits and trying to understand their roles in human organisation ever since Weber introduced the spirit of capitalism and linked it to the Protestant ethic back in 1905 (Weber, 1992). Since this seminal work, a number of scholars have been looking for similar spirits and their roles in various aspects of modern capitalism (Appadurai, 2011; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2010). By describing how people are moved and urged on by callings or compulsive desires, these authors have addressed spirits as animating forces urging on people to act (Appadurai, 2011). We draw on such an animistic approach in our reference to 'the spirit of teaching', in order to explore what animates teachers to do what they do. It is important to emphasise, however, that this urge does not necessarily take the form of explicit doctrines or clearly articulated ideological worldviews. Following Appadurai, it makes itself felt rather as embodied moral sensibilities and collective psycho-moral dispositions (Appadurai, 2011: 519). For a closer analysis of such animating spirits, we draw on Slavoj Žižek's use of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory. We do so in order to explore how such embodied moral sensibilities and urges might take the shape of an animating spirit of teaching, produced through subjectification, fantasy and desire. In relation to the ghostly we also draw on Žižek's idea about how the dead may be haunting the living because of unsettled symbolic debts. We will expand this perspective shortly.

Another and more direct link to the study of ghostly matters in organisation is the hauntological approach, which draws on Derrida's influential 'Specters of Marx'



**either dead acting as if it's alive
or alive acting as if it's dead**



(Derrida, 1994). Derrida draws attention to the ways in which Marx describes how things and people become animated and gain autonomised or mechanical agency (*ibid.*: 170-174, 188-205). Contrary to Marx, Derrida's project is not to exorcise ghosts in order to regain a 'pure' or 'rational' understanding of things and people from before the arrival of capitalist ideas (*ibid.*: 209). Instead Derrida tries to understand the ghostly workings of *something* (rather than *someone*). A 'something' which is there, yet not really there; absent, yet somehow present; dead yet somehow alive. Analytically it is a matter of evoking rather than exorcising the ghost or the ghostly. The analytical take from Derrida suggests a spectral reading of meaning through which we can obtain a sensitivity to the 'something' on the edges and slips of discourse. This allows us to shed light on the forces that may only make themselves felt as absent presences. A crucial implication of studying ghostly matters and how they affect organisational life is to understand how linear time seems to collapse, because absent presences may take the form of simultaneous existences in various temporalities or spaces (Brøgger, 2014). Pasts and possible futures may haunt the present and make themselves felt by capturing the bodies and minds of people, reminding them of traumatic pasts or offering glimpses into possible gloomy or uncanny futures (Pors, 2016a).

As for the relationship between ghosts and the ghostly, most approaches to the ghostly in organisations seem to abandon the idea of personalised or 'generic' ghosts as particular figures returning from the past to redeem past wrongdoing in the present (Pors, 2016a: 1642; Raahauge, 2015: 322-323). But even if there is not an interest in ghosts per se, the 'affective turn' within organisational studies certainly presents an interest in the animating forces or 'hauntings', the absent presences, which may be related to the study of the agency of affect and atmosphere within organisational life (Pors, 2016a, 2016b; Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Brøgger and Staunæs, 2016). We share this interest in ghostly matters in organisation, analysing *and* believing in the agency or performativity of 'the ghostly', and we will unfold our analysis of animating spirits and organisational hauntings by drawing on Žižek's use of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Here we focus on how "the spirit of teaching" may be conceptualised through the concepts of fantasy and desire, and how we may search for the haunting of the ghostly in the interplay between the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary or Phantasmatic order (Žižek, 2008, 1992)

A phantasmatic perspective on the ghostly in organisations

Accordingly, our analytical contribution to the present interest in ghostly matters in organisations is to suggest conceptualising the ghostly through the Lacanian concepts of fantasy and desire, as these concepts are framed by Žižek. The use of

Lacanian psychoanalysis in organisational studies is widespread. Within Critical Management Studies, Lacanian psychoanalysis has been used to study the performativity of particular forms of governance through processes of identification and subjectification (Bojesen, 2008; Contu and Willmott, 2006; Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010), and in the interplay between different logics (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). Other studies focus on the production of subjectivity in the interplay between fantasy/ideology and desire (Ekman, 2013; Glynos, 2010; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2012), or on political struggles and forms of resistance which may or may not challenge or support the hegemonic order of a particular organisation (Contu, 2008; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Stavrakakis, 1999, 2010). Our ambition is to borrow insights from the way in which Critical Management Studies has used Lacan and Žizek, in order to contribute to the study of the ghostly in organisational life.

Fantasy and desire

In a Lacanian understanding, the subject comes into existence through the interplay between three orders: The Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary (also sometimes called the order of Fantasy) (Žizek, 2008). The symbolic order is the order of the social and can be expressed in language or discourse. This is the order where the subject achieves a positive existence through identifying with particular subject positions or social identities. But in a Lacanian perspective, identification is not as simple as someone identifying with a particular identity or subject position. Two forms of identification are at play:

Imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing ‘what we would like to be’, and symbolic identification is identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves, so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love. (Žizek, 2008: 116; emphasis in original)

The first point here is how positive or social identity rests upon the *imaginary* identification with a subject position within a social or symbolic framework: ‘You are a teacher because you identify with a particular image, a subject position, within a (larger) social order’. This is further explained by the idea of identification with a ‘gaze’ through which we are identified with a particular subject position. This is the *symbolic* identification with the social order understood as ‘the gaze of the Other’. This raises the questions: ‘[...] for whom is the subject enacting this role? Which gaze is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image?’ (Žizek, 2008: 117–118).

The second point is that the subject is always and already constituted around a lack of something. In spite of the identification with a position within a symbolic order, there is always a 'something', a surplus, which escapes positive symbolisation. This means that the subject is never fully grasped by, or identical with, its social identity within the Symbolic order. This 'lack' that constitutes the subject resides in the order of the Real. There is, however, no positive sign of the Real, as it only appears through lack, and through its effects on the interplay between the symbolic order and fantasy:

Fantasy appears then, as an answer to '*Che vuoi?*', to the unbearable enigma of the desire of the Other, of the lack in the Other, but it is at the same time fantasy itself which, so to speak, provides the co-ordinates of our desire – which constructs the frame enabling us to desire something [...] *through fantasy, we learn 'how to desire'*. (Žižek, 2008: 132; emphasis in original)

According to Žižek, it is the fantasy of the desire of the Other which again produces the desire of the subject: the subject does not only identify with the gaze of the Other; it is also animated by the fantasy of what it is the Other (really) wants, which in turn produces the subject's desire. In this way the fantasy about 'what the Other wants', and about what it is the Other sees in me, turns into the animating spirit, calling us to love, to buy, to work, or – as in this case – to teach. In this way desire is not to be understood as attempting to further the subject's own needs or wants. The point is that such desires are inseparable from the fantasy of what the *Other* wants. Accordingly, 'the spirit', and in this case particularly the spirit of teaching, resides in the order of fantasy. With this understanding in place, we will return to Line and her decision to quit her job.

A proper goodbye

All the 5th graders and their families are gathered in the staffroom of a municipal school in the middle of Copenhagen in an area with a mixed social and ethnic population. They are gathered to say a proper goodbye to their teacher, Line, who has decided to quit her job. After a communal meal, Line has prepared an hour-long slideshow presenting pictures from the five years she and the children have spent together. The pictures display visits to forests and farms, museums and theatres, campfire cook-outs, a raft-building project, art projects, theatre performances, street art, playing in bands, etc. Halfway through the show Line presses the stop button: 'And they're asking for "open schools"! I mean, what is this then?', she asks rhetorically, before switching the slideshow and the music back on. The comment about 'open schools' is a direct reference to one of the core elements in the school reform of 2014. 'Open school' refers to the requirement for schools to increase cooperation with the surrounding society and institutions in

order to open up alternative spaces of learning within and particularly outside the schools. In practice, 'open schools' means that the pupils should leave the school, and visit places, experience nature and collaborate with institutions and companies in the neighbourhood (Bjerg and Staunæs, 2017; Pors, 2014). By putting on her show, Line points out how this is exactly what she has been doing with and for her students for years. Long before it became a policy matter. After the show, Line explains to a group of parents why she felt she had to quit her job: 'This is my little protest. I know the Minister won't hear it. But anyway'.

Line's comments show how her slideshow was not an isolated event, nor was it meant for the parents' eyes only. The slideshow, and especially the comments that Line makes about it, indicate how the narrative of the years she has spent with the children is closely interrelated with other narratives. Line very explicitly refers to some of the elements in the reform, and links her personal narrative to some of the storylines found in the political discourse about schools and teachers. Drawing more closely on the Lacanian understanding of identification, we suggest reading the slideshow as a repetitive preoccupation with the question 'Che Vuoi?' (Žižek, 2008: 123 ff). She seems to be asking: 'What is it that the Other wants from me – if it is, indeed, not exactly this... and this... and this?!!!' The slideshow becomes a statement, intended to (dis)honour the gaze of the Other, represented as 'they' or 'the Minister' (referring to the Minister of Education who initiated the school reform). But why is it that Line's rich account of her long list of trips and projects with the class is not presented with pride and joy, but rather with anger and resentment? And why is that Line, who apparently has been doing a good, enjoyable job, and many other teachers in a similar situation, have found it impossible to keep up their good work after the lockout, Act 409 and the reform? Why is it that they choose to resign and turn their backs on the schools, the kids and the profession that they used to enjoy and take pride in?

Killing the spirit of teaching

Our first reading tries to detect the roots and content of the hegemonic master narrative that Line aims to counter with her 'little protest' directed at 'them' or 'the Minister'. In their ghostly readings of policy documents, Pors and Brøgger both draw on Derridean hauntology. They conduct spectral readings attentive to the absent-presences that seem incessantly excluded. Importantly, they are sensitive to the affective traces of such voids in master narratives about how to realise desirable potentials in and of the future (Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Pors, 2016a, 2016b). Inspired by these spectral readings, we will trace the master narrative within a symbolic logic, supplementing this with a reading within a phantasmatic logic (Žižek, 2008).

The policy behind the negotiations, and the conflict about teachers' working conditions in 2013 can be read as a master narrative centred on the idea that teachers had accumulated privileges that they did not deserve, and that they worked less than 'normal' people. This narrative had been emerging over some years, and can for example be seen in ministerial reports as early as 2006 and 2007. These reports on the management of teacher's working hours were produced by the Ministries of Finance and Education in collaboration with Local Government Denmark. The reports presented existing regulations of teacher's working hours as, for example, 'a barrier to management and prioritisation', or as standing in the way of the 'flexible use of resources' (Finansministeriet, Undervisningsministeriet, and KL, 2006, 2007). In 2012, the Ministry of Finance and Local Government Denmark, representing the employer's side in high schools and state primary and secondary schools respectively, were preparing for the upcoming labour market negotiations. In some of the policy documents published in 2012 and 2013 prior to the negotiations, the Ministry of Finance wrote that the problems connected with teachers' working hours were basically the same for all sorts of teachers in all sorts of schools (Finansministeriet, 2012). The problem, according to the Ministry of Finance, resided in the fact that teachers' working hours regulations were extraordinary, inflexible and out-dated, which was why they needed to be 'normalised'. The Minister wrote:

Today a high degree of automatisisation in the way salaries in the state are regulated minimises the link between wages and productivity. This arrangement, having secured employees of the state a salary which, automatically and without giving anything in return, follows the wage levels in the private sector, and is decoupled from the tasks at hand in the state sector, is outdated. (Ministry of Finance, 2012; our translation)

In this way, teachers and their abnormal working hour regulations were presented as factors that had unfairly secured for teachers wage rises and privileges that they did not really deserve, as they had not provided any increase in productivity in return. Teachers and their working hours were presented as an obstacle, rather than an asset, in terms of realising a potentially well-functioning and efficient municipal school system (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2015). For this reason, the employers demanded the abolition of special arrangements and privileges for senior teachers and 'outer limits' to the working hours. They also wanted to give local leaders the managerial right to lead and prioritise teachers' time – 'just like in any other workplace' (KL, 2013). When Act 409 was introduced to put an end to the lockout in April 2013, it also put an end to the freedom teachers had to organise their working hours and tasks in ways which they themselves found possible and convenient. Instead, all teachers were not only supposed to teach more, they were also supposed to be physically present at their schools throughout a full 40-hour working week. The reasoning behind this was to allow the school principals to

prioritise and organise the time and working tasks of the teachers as productively as possible.

The debate about teachers' working hours not only framed the future working life of teachers, it also seemed to reframe or recalculate their past. The reasoning behind the Act suggested that up till now teachers had worked less than normal people, so in fact they actually *owed* something, which could now rightfully be claimed by insisting that they be available for managerial instructions at the school during their total working time (Vaaben, 2018).

This narrative about teachers previously not having contributed as much as 'normal people' seemed to be omnipresent in the public debate and affected the way teachers were talked about in public discourse. For many teachers, this inflicted a deep wound that did not seem to heal:

What Local Government Denmark did was to show the population that [the teachers] are a bunch of whiners, and now we have to put them in place once and for all, and at any time you may call them whatever you think they are. They helped the population to do that, and they held us for as long as they could, and then sent us back to arrange exams. And working double we fought to make that happen [...] lots of people are not over it yet. The degradation that was in it, made us feel like second class people. [...] The teachers fought for public recognition. They fought for other things as well. But I think this turned out to be the issue of greatest importance. (interview with teacher, 2014)

This teacher, like many others, was not primarily preoccupied with the actual workloads resulting from the new law. Rather, she stressed that she and her colleagues still felt the 'othering' and degradation that had seeped out of political documents about teachers and their working hours to become a public opinion. It was the fantasy of being viewed in such a degrading light that made it impossible for many teachers to let bygones be bygones. Many teachers felt that 'something' had been destroyed or killed. This happened even in cases where, for instance, local municipal authorities had introduced local working hour regulations that softened the effects of the new working hours legislation, so that they did not actually have to work or teach more than before. The wound had little to do with having to work more or not. This was not about quantity of work. It was more a matter of a symbolic account that needed to be settled.

This is where the accounts of the conflict compel us look beyond or beneath the binaries and exclusions of the discourse. We will now analyse it through a phantasmatic lens, using what Žižek calls a 'logic of enjoyment'. Our claim is that the othering of the teachers did not only take place in the symbolic realm, but also in the realm of fantasy and desire. Here, what was targeted in the undercurrent of political and public discourses and eventually in the Act itself, was not the actual

number of working hours, but the imagined ‘jouissance’, or enjoyment of the teachers: did teachers not have a much easier and more pleasurable life than ‘normal people’? Žižek has a description of a similar fantasy:

In short, what really gets on our nerves, what really bothers us about the ‘other’, is the peculiar way he organises his enjoyment (the smell of his food, his noisy songs and dances, his strange manners, his attitude to work) – in the racist perspective, the ‘other’ is either a workaholic stealing our jobs or an idler living on our labour. (Žižek, 1992: 165)

Žižek points out how the fantasy of the enjoyment of the other not only raises irritation, but also constitutes the other and his illicit enjoyment as the very obstacle that stands in the way of the full or harmonious realisation of the social order. Bringing this point to bear on the actual case forces us to attend to what seems to be an incessant underlying questioning of the legitimacy of the professional desire and enjoyment of teachers. So many teachers were deeply shaken by the course of events, and we suggest that this was a central contributory factor. What seems to have disappeared is confidence in teachers’ understanding of what it means to be a good teacher; an alteration in the alignment between the ways in which teachers have pursued their professional desire, and whether or not they appear likeable and desirable in the eyes of the Other. The lockout and the Act left teachers feeling accused of being lazy, and illegitimately living on the resources of normal hard-working people. Line explained:

I’m always working, because there are some poor cases in these classes. For some of them we are the primary adult, and I take on over-responsibility in wanting to save those children – I know that. It is such a challenge to sleep at night as a teacher. But I want it! I want to be their primary adult, if they don’t have one. But if someone bangs me on the head and calls me a lazy pig, then I won’t! (interview with teacher, Line 2013)

For Line, teaching simply is ‘it’ (Žižek, 2008: 106). She wants to take on responsibility – but only if her desire is somehow in alignment with the desire of the Other. Here we need to stress that in a Lacanian understanding, enjoyment (‘jouissance’) is not the same as pleasure (‘plaisir’). Enjoyment is closely linked to the imagined desire of the Other, and it is exactly the sacrifice or suffering of doing what others are imagined to desire, that produces enjoyment (Žižek, 1992). It is, however in this relation that the lockout has introduced long-lasting insecurity or instability. Suddenly, this correlation between the desire of self and Other is no longer trustworthy. Previously teachers had felt relatively sure that there was an alignment between what they enjoyed doing and what others wanted from them. But now they are no longer sure what the Other wants – and therefore find no enjoyment in doing what they previously found enjoyable. In the situation with the slideshow at the farewell party, we see how such instability or insecurity produces

a repetitive preoccupation with the question of ‘what it is the Other wants?’ The lockout and its aftermath did not only shake the symbolic position and identity of being a teacher; hand in hand with the factual changes in teachers’ working loads, the shockwave of this insecurity about what the Other wanted seems to have killed the spirit of teaching as such. If Line’s desire to teach does not match what the Other desires, there is no enjoyment in teaching, and she does not want to teach.

Haunted by the spirit of teaching

We now jump from the immediate reactions to the lockout and the new working hours Act to some of the first experiences of actually working under the new conditions. Our main character, Line, decided to quit before the reform and the Act where put into effect. However, a Facebook-group called ‘Look into my eyes’ gives us a glimpse of those first experiences of working under the new conditions. The group was established during the lockout, but is still (in 2018) used by teachers to exchange experiences, interpretations and critical comments on their working lives. Shortly after the reform and the new working hours Act was implemented in August 2014, the following exchange was to be found in this Facebook-group:

Initial Comment: I just caught myself forgetting about Act 409 letting myself be immersed in the preparation of a theme-week...that old great feeling of doing something extra to give the kids an experience they will remember...so I caught myself preparing outside my working hours (like I used to), and in doing some shopping to do that little extra bit (like I used to). So now I’m disloyal...but for the first time this year I have a great gut-feeling.

Commentator 1: Was in the same situation: Project week starts today, sick last week, when to prepare?

Commentator 2: That doesn’t exist.

Commentator 3: Sorry to say this, but I don’t think you’re doing anyone a favour here... not that I don’t understand you, but do you want to continue working for free in your spare time after the treatment the teachers have just been given? Are we just going to turn the other cheek, so they can hit us again?

Commentator 4: Ooh, I do hope my colleges don’t fall for that temptation.

This exchange draws a clear distinction between before and after the Act 409. Not only do teachers discuss how their working hours and tasks are to be structured and organised, they also discuss the ways in which they manage their professional desire and enjoyment. The exchange starts with a teacher proclaiming how for a moment she ‘forgot’ the new working hours legislation, and how this forgetfulness allowed her both to remember and relive the spirit of teaching. She did so by allowing herself to continue her preparation at home in order to add ‘that little

extra', even if it was outside the officially designated working hours. What she did was actually nothing new, she claimed. Rather, she did exactly what she used to do before the introduction of the new law. What has changed is how reliving the spirit of teaching has to be done in secrecy, as it is now to be considered a transgression of the law (Žizek, 1992). As Line put it: 'What should I do if I'm not done with my work at four? Continue working at home in secrecy with my curtains drawn?'. To many teachers the dramatic change does not lie in whether they work more or less than before. The dramatic difference is that they no longer recognise themselves in the fantasy of the gaze of the Other. What they see when looking at themselves through an imagined perspective of the other is no longer a teacher working proudly to fulfil her professional duty. Rather, what they see is someone snatching illegitimate enjoyment out of transgressing the law. And this greatly affects their professional desire. What used to be both legal and loyal, not only to the letter of the law, but to the imagined desire of the Other, is now a violation of both. So even if the teacher is just doing what she always did, and thereby summoning the spirit of teaching, it no longer makes her appear as a virtuous and conscientious professional in (the fantasy of) the gaze of the Other. Moreover, as her fellow teachers point out, transgressing the law is neither to be considered an opposition to it nor a threat to its existence. Rather, the secret enjoyment of teaching represents what Alicia Contu would label 'decaffeinated resistance'. Even if the teacher here refuses to follow the law, the enjoyment of transgression is actually what supports its existence (Contu, 2008). This is what her peers are getting at when they worry that if she and other teachers keep doing the little extra things, even though they are neither paid nor recognised for it, they actually contribute to upholding an otherwise impossible system (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2014, 2015; Contu, 2008; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Žizek, 1997).

'You only die twice'

In order to grasp this, we will return to Žizek. In his writings, he draws extensively on the story of Hamlet. He describes how the ghost of Hamlet's father returns from the dead to haunt the present: 'The return of the dead is a sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite or the process of symbolisation, as the dead return to collect unpaid symbolic debt' (Žizek, 1992: 23). Žizek points out how this disturbance in the rite of symbolisation opens up a time-space between 'the two deaths'. According to Žizek, you actually die twice: symbolically and actually. One death can precede the other, and vice versa. (Žizek, 2008: 145-151). Within this time-space between the two deaths is a space where linear time collapses. As in the case of Hamlet's father, an on-going present can refuse to become past before accounts are settled, and those who have been excluded or repressed in the past have been given their proper place in the master narrative. Or as in the case of

Napoleon, who had lost and was sent away to Elba, but who kept on living and fighting because he didn't realise that he was already symbolically dead (*ibid.*). Such a time-space between the two deaths is marked by the disappearance of desire; the desire produced by fantasy is transformed into pure 'drive' or demand: 'A drive is precisely a demand that is not caught up in the dialectic of desire, that resists dialectisation' (Žižek, 1992: 21). Being driven by pure demand is being driven without the fantasy that produces the desire. As such, the time-space between the two deaths is not only a space filled with unsettled symbolic accounts. It is also a time-space in which fantasy and desire or, as we shall put it here, *the animating spirit* has disappeared and has been replaced with 'pure drive without desire'. Within this time-space, the living dead will persist, not until but beyond their death. They may only be put to rest when the injustices of the past have been redeemed by being integrated into the official and collective historical memory (Žižek, 2008). The actions completed in this period of perseverance may, Žižek adds, not necessarily be evil, they may just as equally be marked by suffering and 'infinite sadness' (Žižek, 1992: 23).

We have already pointed out how the spirit of teaching had been killed. Now we add that this spirit has returned in the form of a ghost, or just an absent presence haunting the schools. What keeps teachers going, then, is neither their identification with their position as teachers nor the fantasy and desire related to teaching. Rather, an imagery of teachers as 'working dead' is evoked as they still inhabit the school, but in a state marked by pure drive but without desire. Or as teachers formulate it themselves as 'teaching machines'.

The school haunted by teachers as 'working dead'

In this perspective, it is not only teachers, but the school as such that is haunted. It is haunted by the absent-presence of the spirit of teaching. Furthermore, it is inhabited by teachers who may appear to be 'working dead', and who demand the settling of symbolic accounts in order to restore the imaginary of teachers in their own eyes and those of the Other(s). So the past conflict refuses to go away and keeps haunting the present. Of course, this image does not apply to each and every teacher or school in Denmark. However, it does seem to possess explanatory power in terms of understanding the large number of teachers who claim that they *had to* quit their jobs. They did not leave because they disliked being teachers; what they did was an act of despair, but also of love – for their pupils as well as their profession. Based on a survey from 2016, we have analysed responses from 405 teachers who quit their jobs in municipal schools between 2013 and 2016. In contrast to Line, many of these teachers had actually tried to stay in their jobs and to make things work after the events of 2013 and 2014. However, many of them

describe how the situation in the schools had become more and more unbearable, why the decision to quit had not felt like a choice, but rather a necessity. In Lacanian terminology, their exit from the municipal school system can be articulated as an act of will, but not of desire:

I could not look pupils and parents in the eye, and finally not myself either. My teaching was poorly prepared, if prepared at all, and I was at everyone's beck and call². What made me take the decision to quit (without having another job) was a situation where I turned away two girls who were having a conflict, because at that point I only had 30 minutes to do some preparation that I really needed. I left the girls, but then turned around and went back to help them solve the conflict, after which I went up and wrote my resignation. (Reply in questionnaire 2016, Pedersen et al., 2016: 35)

Like many other teachers in our material, this teacher talks about not being able to 'look oneself and others in the eye'. It seems that the image of teachers reflected in the eyes of the imagined Other is no longer an image in which they appear 'likeable to themselves'. But – as it is the case for ghosts – they cannot recognise their own image in the mirror (Derrida, 1994: 195). And, as we noticed above, in several of the answers to the survey, teachers describe how they feel reduced to mere 'teaching robots', 'industrial workers' or 'machines'. They describe how the municipal schools have lost their humanity and decency. And they explain how they have been plagued with constant feelings of guilt, as they have not been able to attend to their pupils in the ways they know and feel are necessary, desirable and admirable (Pedersen et al., 2016). As we see in the quotation above, the teacher's feeling that she was doing a poor job is closely related to the fact that much more 'productive work' (teaching) is squeezed into an increasingly dense and stressful working day. This leaves her with the constant sensation of having to choose, not *whether* to let pupils down, but *which ones* to select: the girls who demanded her immediate attention due to a conflict, or the pupils who would be subjected to her unprepared and possibly poor teaching half an hour later? What finally settles the matter is a situation in which she finds herself acting in a way that a 'real teacher' would never do. To her a 'real teacher' does not turn down distressed students with immediate problems. Period. When she finds herself doing exactly that, this becomes the moment when she realises that she is already dead, so she might as well die for good, and quit. In this space between the two deaths, she has turned into a 'working dead', a mechanical teacher-robot, a dehumanised 'teaching machine', driven by the raw requirement to teach and

² The informant actually uses the Danish expression 'hænge i en klokkestreng', which literally means 'hanging on a bell pull.' 'Bell pulls' were originally mechanical installations of bells and ropes in houses, so that servants could be called from other rooms in the house. 'Hanging on a bell pull' is an expression for a certain way of working where you are always at the disposal of orders given by someone else.

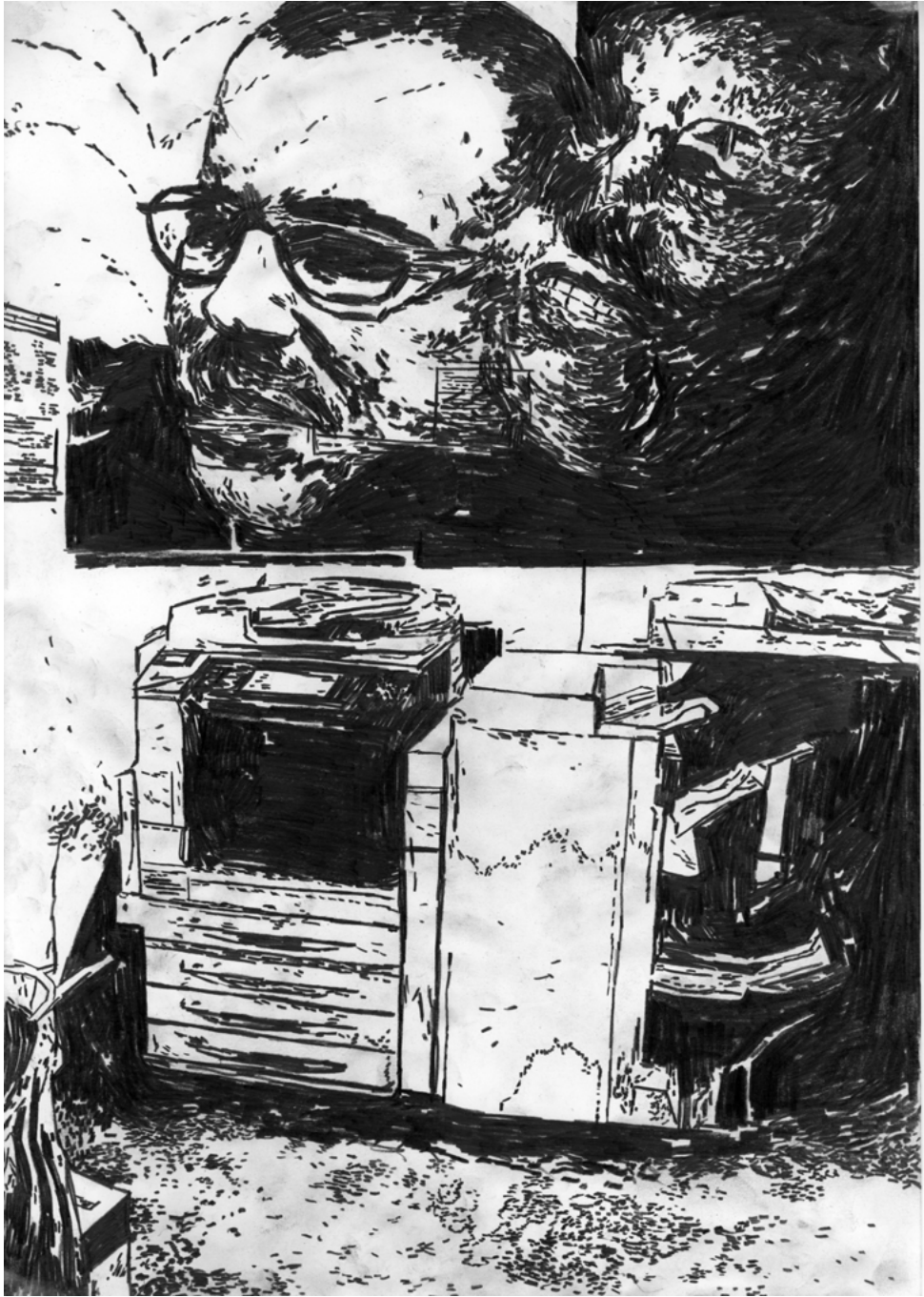
nothing else. When she realises that she can no longer identify with that image, she sees no other option than to put an end to it. In that sense, her resignation not only resonates with that of many others in the questionnaire (Pedersen et al., 2016), it also reflects the statements of other teachers explaining how they used to *be* teachers, but now just *working as* teachers. In the case of the teacher quoted above, as well as the teacher who confessed her transgressions of the law on Facebook, the ‘spirit of teaching’ is however still lurking in the shadows, as an absent–presence calling from the past: ‘Remember me, remember me!’.

Conclusion: When the spirit has left the building

So what can be learned from such a ghastly ghost story? Through the analysis, it has become clear that (school) policy works on a symbolical as well as a phantasmatic level. Obviously, the official (symbolic) rationality of the introduced reforms was centred on increasing *amounts* of work and more specifically amounts of *lessons* per teacher per day or week. However, the teachers’ reactions were not primarily about amounts of work. What concerned the teachers, was how the value of their work in the past was unfairly questioned. It was the sense of having been wronged, which refused to go away. It kept haunting them and called them to make sure history was rewritten. In a temporal perspective this analysis is fully in line with how other researchers have suggested that past traumas or glimpses into possible futures can be meaningfully understood, by taking a ghostly perspective on organisational life (Brøgger, 2014, 2015, 2016; Pors, 2016a, 2016b). Such hauntological perspectives question the linear progression of time in organizational life and draw attention to ways in which linear time collapses and past or future can become absently present in the here and now, and cause bodily sensations such as nausea (Brøgger, 2016) or shivers down the spine (Pors, 2016b). Fully in line with this, the teachers in our study seemed to be haunted by the past, making it impossible for the teachers to ‘move on’ in a temporal progression towards the future. Our analysis also falls in line with other studies preoccupied with the analysis of affective implications of policy and organization (see e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Gordon, 2011; Juelskjær and Staunæs, 2016; Orr, 2014; Pors, 2016a, 2016b).

What the psychoanalytical approach adds to the understanding of ghostly matters is an idea of how the social order of organisational life is not only brought to life through discourse, but how the discourse of organisations can become a matter of life or in this case death. Several teachers – including Line – spoke about having lost their joy in teaching. We suggest that the experience of the teachers was the death of the fantasy or rather the ‘spirit of teaching’ as such. With the idea of the interplay between the Real, the Symbolic and Fantasy, the ghostly is summoned





through the experience of a loss not only marked by disappearance. Rather the loss comes with a frustrating preoccupation with the lack of social identity and desire subsumed in the repetitive question: 'What is it the Other wants from me? How am I seen, and why am I not a likeable person when I look at myself through the eyes of the Other?' As such, the spirit of teaching has turned from a source of professional joy, desire and pride to a repetitive but persisting call from the shadow: 'Remember me, remember me!' This is what has turned the teachers into working dead, poor souls who have lost desire, but are still caught up in the drive to 'teach, teach, teach.' And this is why we summon the imaginary of the Danish school as a haunted house. We find that our analysis is supported by the fact that many of the teachers who chose to leave the Danish school, did not turn away from teaching all together. Instead they went to revive the spirit of teaching elsewhere. In the case of Line, she found a new job as a teacher in a school outside the municipal school system. In the questionnaire from 2016, we can also see that many of the teachers, did not quit teaching (Pedersen et al., 2016). Instead, they are now found in private schools or elsewhere in the educational system. And they describe how wonderful it is 'to become a teacher again', and how their joy in working has returned. In our reading we see them as being re-animated by the spirit of teaching, rather than by a joyless drive. They seem to be animated by the spirit of teaching, rather than pushed on by a joyless drive.

Here we find that the psychoanalytical approach offers an understanding of the ghostly aspects of organisational life, which also show the possible deadly effects herein. We have shown how the ghostly is not just a matter of imagination or speculation, but rather a matter of life and death with very real consequences. This does not only count for the teachers, but just as much for the school as a significant welfare institution. Our reason for being interested in ghostly matters in organisation is therefore not exclusively a wish to make a theoretical or analytical contribution to this particular field of study. It is also an attempt and an invitation to keep count of the casualties of policy making.

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Finance, possessed: Sighting supernatural figurations in critical accounts of the financial crisis

Sine Nørholm Just

abstract

In critical accounts of the global financial crisis, public commentators and academic investigators alike have sought to capture the causes and consequences of these disturbing events through figures of the supernatural. This paper sights three such supernatural figures: Vampires, zombies, and ghosts. Whereas the paper explores the figurative qualities and functions of each, the ghost is given special attention for two reasons: First, finance itself may be conceptualized as a fictitious form with no substance, a spirit with no body – a ghost. Second, the ghost is not only a conceptual figure of finance, but also holds a special place in the conceptualization of the figurative on which the paper relies. Thus, the paper is not only concerned with analysing figurative uses of ghosts in accounts of finance, but also with conceptualizing finance and figures as ghostly. As such, the main contribution is conceptual rather than empirical: The paper offers a grid that combines various functions of metaphor – stylistic, transactional, and constitutive – with their appearance in the guises of vampires, zombies, and ghosts, respectively, in the particular context of finance.

Introduction

A time of change and upheaval, Gramsci as popularized by Žižek (2010: 95) asserts, is a time of monsters. This certainly seems to be true of the years following the global financial crisis. Not only have monsters proliferated in popular culture (Newitz, 2006), public commentators and academic investigators alike have seized upon images of the monstrous as a means of grasping what, to return to the Gramscian paraphrase, was dying and what struggled to be born in those troubled

Financial Crisis





and troubling times. Most notably, vampires and zombies feature prominently in critical accounts of the financial crisis, indicating the causal greed as well as the consequential grief of what went on (McNally, 2012). While unpacking these two figments of our social imagination will be one central concern of the present paper, emphasis will be placed on a third figure: That of the ghost. Ghosts appear to be, well, more ethereal than the vampires and zombies who more readily embody finance and its discontents. However, I will argue that it is particularly important to attend to ghostly matters in accounts of finance and financial crises. Turning to ghosts, I claim, does not only provide us with a fuller understanding of the use of a particular set of literary figures to explain recent events in finance, but points to the figuration of finance itself.

Beginning with Marx, the increasingly fictitious or speculative character of finance has been conceptualized as a ghostly matter (Knight, 2013: 5). To say that finance is spectral, then, is no mere figure of speech, but a conceptualization of finance as such; when finance is defined as detachment from material value it haunts the 'real' economy. However, this does not make accounts of finance in the ghostly vein any less figurative than those invoking zombies or vampires. Rather, it means that the figural element is more ingrained in the matter at hand and, hence, harder to detect; finance as such is possessed and possessive – its metaphors may be 'dead', but their spirits linger. Thus, the present paper goes in search for that by which finance is possessed – and that which finance possesses. Aiming, more particularly, to explore the critical potential of different supernatural metaphors for engagement with financial speculation, the search will take us from unashamedly embellished expressions through subtler conceptualizations to the vanishing point of the figurative. The endpoint may be to discover 'the ghost in the financial machine' (Appadurai, 2011), but exploring the figurative use of vampires and zombies offers independent insights just as it helps establish the contours of the financial ghost. Thus, all three analyses operate at the same level of explaining how finance is figured and neither claims privileged knowledge of the nature of finance – beyond the common claim that finance is, by its nature, figurative. Still, ghostly figurations of and in the studied accounts do stand out in so far as they relate to the systemic level of finance. Whereas vampires and zombies figure particular actors, institutions, and/or theories, the ghost is figurative of finance as a whole.

In the following, I will first consider the nexus between finance and literary studies at which the present study is specifically situated. Next, I will introduce the papers' mode of ghost-hunting; establishing the method of sighting metaphors that guides the search for supernatural figurations of and in critical accounts of finance – and explicating its connection to 'ghostly matters'. The analytical encounters with these figurations will constitute the bulk of the paper, and only in their wake will I

position the findings in relation to the broader field to which this study arguably belongs; namely, critical finance studies. By way of conclusion, then, I will consider what the supernatural figurations of finance may teach us about issues of agency and responsibility in finance.

Fictions of finance

The relations of fiction and finance are manifold: First, fiction has been used as a means of coming to terms with financial events and developments. Studies of this relationship delve into the ways in which finance figures in fiction; how finance is explained in fictional terms (see inter alia Goggin, 2015; Marsh, 2007; Zimmerman, 2006). Ghosts sometimes figure prominently in such literary works (think of the ghost of Christmases past, present and yet to come in Dickens' *Christmas Carol*). Here, they function – and are studied – on a par with other monstrous figures that serve as pedagogical devices of explanation and admonition; teaching its audiences of the mechanisms and malaises of capitalism (for an exemplary collection of such studies, see Scott, 2007).

Second, and perhaps more radically, a growing body of scholarly work looks into the ways in which finance is itself fictitious. Quoting Taylor (2004: 163), Knight (2013: 4) asks:

...whether finance has broken loose from its moorings in the so-called real economy of manufacturing and, like modernist art, become entirely self-referential, a fiction of value creation that attempts to hoist itself up by its own bootstraps, the creation of value out of 'mere ideas, concepts, fictions, and consensual hallucinations'.

Studies in this vein conceptualize the fiction of finance as its ability to be performative of its own ideational value *and* to produce economic surplus value from it (Karl, 2013; King, 2016) – 'money for nothing', as Dire Straits had it.

Unpacking finance's fictitious operations means focusing on the literary figures of finance as such. Here, the ghost emerges as *the* central figuration; finance itself is a 'ghostly matter' – not because the workings of finance may be likened to or figure in ghost stories and other literary accounts of the uncanny, but because finance is best understood as a spirited figure without any material point of reference; spectral in the Marxist sense where '...value emerges from the void as a "spectre" that *haunts* the "real world" of capitalist commodity production' (Arthur, 2002: 215; emphasis in original). The ghost, here, is applied not as a 'mere' figure of speech indicating what finance is *like*, but as an intellectual concept explaining what finance *is*.

Finally, we may consider the relationship between fictions of finance and financial fictions; asking how popular and academic accounts intermesh in the creation and explanation of finance (McClanahan, 2013). It is to this latter branch of research that I will seek to contribute by tracing the ways in which figures of the supernatural are not only used to explain and criticize the doings of finance, but are also produced by and productive of finance itself. As I will argue, and as indicated above, accounts of how finance's ability to create 'fictitious capital' renders it 'ghostly' position the metaphor of the ghost as being both figural and figuring, able to impose a figural order on the field of finance from without *and* to shape the field from within. This does not mean other figures of the supernatural are irrelevant, it just means that they figure differently in the accounts – and function differently in relation to finance. Attending to such differences constitutes a main point of the analysis; in fact, one might argue that it is the main contribution of the paper as such: providing a grid that combines various figurative functions of metaphor with their appearance in the particular context of finance. The methodological establishment of this grid is the concern of the next section.

'Taking the side of the figural'

The different ways in which fiction may be related to finance correspond loosely to different views of the role of the figural in language: From a representationalist view in which figures are seen as amusing and, perhaps, pedagogical embellishments, means of making an idea easier to grasp, through an action-oriented perspective on the various ways in which figures may do things in and through language to a purely figurative approach in which the figure of speech is all there is, with no literal meaning hidden behind it. As these are main stops on the common route of accounts of the role of language in the history of ideas (see *inter alia* Formigari, 2004; Berlin, 2013; Benson, 2014), I will not consider their intellectual heritage further, but go directly to the issue of how to operationalize the three perspectives for the study at hand. First, I will provide a working definition of metaphor and introduce the various takes on it that will be applied in what follows. Second, I will consider the special link between metaphor, meaning, and ghosts that is implicit in the third and final conceptualization of figurative language. This will, thirdly, lead me to propose a strategy for seeing metaphors as ghostly truths that privileges figural corporeality over discursive signification. On this conceptual basis, I will, in a final preparatory move, turn to the more specific question of what material will be analysed how.

Figuring metaphor

Obviously, metaphors are not the only figures of speech, but they do enjoy a special status and have often served as proxies for considering the figurative character of language as such (Glucksberg, 2001) – as indeed they will in the present context as well. Today, it may seem unnecessary to reiterate that ‘you can do things with words’ (Austin, 1962) or to invoke, yet again, the ‘metaphors we live by’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Yet it is worth noting the wider implications of these stock phrases of the academic household: Any useful definition of metaphor must consider the function as well as the form of the figurative expression; what it does as well as what it is. As ‘the application of a strange term’ (Aristotle, 2001: 1457b), metaphors may be pretty to behold, but that is not all there is to them. Aristotle provides a first indication of their peculiar power: ‘It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars’ (Aristotle, 2001: 1459a). Metaphors, then, may be used to signal the communicator’s genius, but beyond that they are not just a ‘happy extra trick with words’ (Richards, 1936: 90). Rather, they are also transactional, and the meeting between what I. A. Richards terms the vehicle (that which carries meaning with it) and the tenor (the recipient of meaning) ‘...results in a meaning (to be clearly distinguished from the tenor) which is not attainable without their interaction’ (*ibid.*).

The function of metaphor, then, is not merely to substitute a literal expression for a more artful one, it is also to create new meaning – and we may go even further to say that metaphors constitute meaning in the first place. Or, invoking Nietzsche (1989a: 23), ‘what is usually called language is actually nothing but figuration’. Whereas metaphors have been scorned for being figurative rather than literal expressions of meaning (Forrester, 2010), we may also hail them on this very ground; metaphors as indicative of a basic condition of not only language, but human cognition: There is no literal meaning, no pure expression of an idea. This stance currently seems to be replacing representationalist takes on language, not only in the scholarly arena, but also in the public sphere as, for instance, witnessed by *The Economist’s* (2013a) audacious assertion that ‘it is literally impossible to be literal’.

Even if sketchy, this initial definition and overview has established three different views on the basic metaphorical operation of applying one word to the domain of another: This may be done for stylistic, transactional and/or constitutive purposes. A main point of the analysis is to determine how each of the metaphors of the supernatural figure in accounts of the financial crisis. A further point, however, is to explore the special role of metaphors of ghosts. In order to prepare the ground for this analytical move, let us look closer at the constitutive view in which the

metaphor of ghosts is extended to include metaphorical operations as such. The argument here is that the ghost is not only a conceptual figure of finance, but that the ghostly also holds a special place in the conceptualization of metaphors. I am not only studying the figure of ghosts, but figures as ghostly.

Ghostly figurations

When one adopts the constitutive perspective, it becomes evident that and how meaning is always already suspended – established in relations of difference and similarity, processes of circulations and exchange, rather than by reference to some ultimate point of origin, some sort of pure or unmediated idea. This does not mean all metaphors will always succeed in creating that of which they speak; they may still have embellishing and transactional as well as constitutive functions and, importantly, they may fail in either of these respects. But it does mean there is no meaning, no truth, besides Nietzsche's (1989b: 250) famous 'mobile army of metaphors':

Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they *are* illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins which have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins.

Truths, we might say, are the ghosts with which we, the living, co-habit. Or, perhaps more precisely, truths are the ghosts that inhabit us; spirits so familiar so as to be mistaken for the bodies in which they have taken up their abode (Burke, 1966: 6). Put differently, the human understanding of the world, as communicated in language, is always both elusive and evident. Or, as Derrida says of writing: 'A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game' (1981: 63). An illusion that poses as real – a ghost.

Derrida pursues the idea of the ghostly character of truth as/in language as a means of coming to terms with non-essentialist existence, with being that has no certain point of reference, but is inevitably and necessarily different from that to which it refers. Haunting, we might say, '...is the state proper to being as such' (Fisher, 2013: 44); figuratively constituted meanings are ghostly truths, never fully present, nor completely absent, hiding on the surface, as it were; they never materialize, yet are the only matter at hand. If we are to understand these ghostly truths, we must give up the ambition of looking beyond them and turn to the figure itself – not as a stand-in for something else, a code to be deciphered, but as the only meaning available to us.

Ghostly matters

Figurative language may hide its workings, but there is nowhere else to go than to the very surface of the words to find out how they work. This is why Lyotard (2011: 3) admonishes us to ‘take the side of the figural’:

The given is not a text, it possesses an inherent thickness, or rather a difference, which is not to be read, but rather seen; and this difference, and the immobile mobility that reveals it, are what continually fall into oblivion in the process of signification.

A ghostly matter, to be sighted and figured.

We might, even if it seems like a contradiction in terms, speak of a materialist hauntology. A hunt for figurative ghosts that takes the full consequence of privileging the figural; seeing it not (only) as the only clue we have to go on, but the only matter, however ghostly, with which we can work – the textual figure as a plastic material rather than a graphic one. Malabou (2007; 2010: 45) proposes that this ‘essentially materialist plasticity’ might replace notions of writing as a code as the hermeneutic motor scheme of our time; moving from Derridean grammatology to studies of being as and in processes of giving, taking, and exploding form. This notion of plasticity, I believe, may indeed provide deeper insights into the relationship between metaphor and meaning, which, as we have seen, is not one of replacing literal content with figurative form, but of shaping – that is, creating – the matter at hand in the first place. The figural, we might say, is a plastic material, a mobile immobility; ephemeral rather than essential. Meaning without essence, ghostly matter; this is what we might find when we go in search for supernatural figures in critical accounts of the financial crisis (or any other figure in any other context, for that matter).

The practicalities of ghost-hunting

The ghost may be a figure, but it is to be taken quite literally; I am, in fact, hunting for ghosts and other supernatural creatures in accounts of the financial crisis. Thus, the problem I face is that of anyone looking for paranormal activity: Where to spot it, how to explain it (see Holloway and Kneale, 2008)? The search at hand is further complicated by the fact that ghostly metaphors walk among us, sometimes passing as plain facts. As Nietzsche had it, a metaphor becomes true when we have forgotten that it is a metaphor; when the ghost is mistaken for the possessed body. Therefore, the search does not lead to dark shadows, but to smooth surfaces, the figurality of which must be recovered. I am looking for aesthetic affect, not discursive effect (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013).

For this task, the three functions of metaphor combined with the three forms of plasticity, as introduced above, may provide useful guidelines: That is, stylistic metaphors are usually easy to spot, like poltergeists they tend to make a lot of noise and draw attention to themselves. They clearly present themselves as form; as attempts to shape ideas. Transactional metaphors are sneakier creatures, but they nevertheless tend to leave a trace of ectoplasm; they both take and give form, and energy is released in the process. Constitutive metaphors, finally, are figures that have become facts – ghosts that pass as bodies. Such spirits must be exorcised before they can be explained and, like any séance, this may cause convulsions and explosions as the illusion struggles to uphold itself.

In the following, I will seek to perform sightings in each of these three ways. In the first two instances, the figural is directly visible; inserted into accounts of the financial crisis as means of drawing critical attention to an otherwise undiagnosed problem. The figures of the vampire and the zombie are directly visible: The financial system as a whole is not a vampire, nor is it a zombie, but these two figures draw attention to some of its more sinister traits; they aim directly to expose – and offer alternatives to – what is currently taken for granted. In the encounter of the third kind, form and content (ghost and matter) merge: Finance is spectral. This is not a figure that is brought to bear on finance from without; rather, it figures finance from within. Therefore, this figuration is the hardest to see, but bringing it about may provide the most explosive revelations. While this is never an easy task, I suggest that the comparison with stylistic and transactional figurations may help; that is, explaining how vampires and zombies work as embellishments and vehicles of accounts of the financial crisis is not only interesting in and of itself, but may also provide a more solid backdrop for the final task of explaining how ghosts figure finance – how finance is constituted as ghostly matter.

Finance, figured

Before turning to the sightings of paranormal activity in critical accounts of the financial crisis, let me provide a brief note on the sampling involved. I do not in any way claim, nor intend, it to be comprehensive or exhaustive – neither in terms of the spotted supernatural figures, nor the reported appearances. Rather, I turn to a particular site: That of accounts that aim to explain finance and the financial crisis ‘as it happened’. That is, the interest is the use of literary figures in non-fictional work, the ways in which supernatural figurations help lay persons and academics alike make sense of finance and its workings. The figurative focus is partially guided by others’ sightings of vampire and zombies in popular accounts (McNally, 2012), indicating that these creatures figure frequently in such accounts,

and partially informed by conceptual concern with the ghosts of finance (Knight, 2013), suggesting that capturing their elusive form may be particularly important.

As for the site I have roamed, even here the search has not been entirely systematic. 'Plasticity', Malabou (2010: 7; emphasis in original) highlights, 'refers to the *spontaneous organization of fragments*'. Thus, meaning arises suddenly and transiently and rather than attempting to comprehensibly map all sightings of supernatural figures in accounts of the financial crisis, I have sought to (re-)organize the many fragments that are left behind. The act of producing the material to be analysed, then, is as active as the analysis itself (McGee, 1990), and accounting for the sites of my sightings will form part of what follows.

Stylistic figures: The vampire squid

The world of vampires seems to map itself readily unto the realm of finance: Not only does the idea of bankers as bloodsuckers appear obvious (see below); other parallels, e.g. based on the inability to withstand sunlight (Krugman, 2011), may also be drawn. Indeed, the tragedy of finance could well be likened to that of the vampire: The tendency to kill its own source of livelihood. Accordingly, invocations of finance as parasitic recur in popular as well as academic literature on the financial crisis (Hudson, 2015), but the full potential of vampire lore does not appear to have been tapped. That is, the rich popular cultural accounts (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Twilight*, *True Blood*, etc.) of how vampires (attempt to) establish self-sustaining parallel societies and/or relate sustainably to the world of humans have not been sources of extended analogies for the relationship between the financial sector and the productive economy. Or at least such analogies have not significantly shaped accounts of the financial crisis.

One explanation of this lack of development of what might otherwise have been a rich analogy (say, in terms of the parallels between synthetic blood and synthetic financial products) may be that the metaphor of the vampire is, at least in the US, more often associated with the state than with private enterprises. Here, money is, indeed, seen as equivalent to blood, but it is the state that is ascribed the quality of sucking the life out of the economy (Block, 1996). Thus, re-applying the figure to the financial sector would involve hefty ideological repositioning – or run the risk of confusing (American) audiences as to which actors to associate with what characters of the classical vampire cast (that the productive economy, and by extension, all people are the victims of bloodsuckers seems clear enough, but who sucks the blood? And who might supply transfusions to drained victims, let alone slay the bloodthirsty menace? If the felon is not clearly identified, the means of its annihilation surely become even more elusive).

Another explanation is that bloodsucking, eerie as it may be, is by no means restricted to the realm of the supernatural. Instead, ‘actually existing’ sources of comparison are at hand, and one in particular, the vampire squid, has shaped accounts of the financial crisis decisively. This figure has a clear source of origin, Matt Taibbi’s (2010) *Rolling Stone* article ‘The great American bubble machine’, which opens as follows:

The first thing you need to know about Goldman Sachs is that it’s everywhere. The world’s most powerful investment bank is a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.¹

The figure of the vampire squid immediately caught the public imagination (Carney, 2009); inspiring pundits and protesters alike, instigating much debate, but also showing capable of resisting criticism (McCarthy, 2010; Roose, 2011). Despite his occasional quibbles with its ubiquity (Hayden, 2011), Taibbi (2014; 2016) continues to employ the metaphor, and it is taken up time and again by a host of other commentators (e.g. Zamansky, 2013; Brown, 2015; Fulton, 2016). Throughout its heavy circulation, the initial articulation of the figure remains conspicuously present – often quoted directly, usually credited or at least alluded to. All of which indicates the power of the first expression.

So, why is this expression so powerful? In answering this question, Silverstein (2014) points out its humour and vividness as well as its ability to summarize complex and dull facts in an easy-to-grasp manner that simultaneously shows the reader why he or she should be bothered about these facts in the first place. It poignantly presents a standpoint that sticks. To this I would add its self-conscious stylization; the almost palpable exaltation that makes it eminently quotable, but also makes it feel like a quote (even in the original). This is an expression that does not seek to hide its figurative character, does not ask the reader to see through it, but works by drawing attention to itself. Here, then, we see the figural at work as stylistic seduction; we are drawn to its very form. It is the figural in its ready recognisability as figure, as a felicitous stylistic choice, that provides the sentence with pervasiveness and power. It is an embellishment with a sentiment.

However strong its stylistic attraction, this is also what limits the figure of the vampire squid; it gives form to a particular view of Goldman Sachs (and investment banks, more broadly), but does not (significantly) alter that of which it speaks. Nor is the expression itself altered (much) in its circulation. In its specific and explicit figuration, the phrase lends itself to repetition, but not to transaction,

¹ The piece was initially published in print in 2009, but I refer here to the full online version.

let alone constitution; it says something better, but does not say anything new. Thus, 'the vampire squid' becomes a stand-in for the ferocious and omnipresent greed of (some) banks, letting us see it more vividly, but posing no invitation to explore the possible implications of the metaphor further. Meaning potential is lost rather than built in the process of circulation; 'the vampire squid' increasingly becomes a stock phrase, a derogatory name for a particular (group of) actor(s), and decreasingly an inspiring provocation.

Finally, the expression points away from rather than towards the otherworldly character of finance. Creepy as they are, vampire squids live in the ocean, not in the human imagination. Thus, the phrase evokes the beastly ferociousness of financial actors, not the immortal soullessness of the financial system. In focusing on the literal act of bloodsucking rather than the allegorical universe of the vampire, then, other figurative im- and applications are (unwittingly) foreclosed. The imagery of banks as bodies with no soul is not absent from accounts of the financial crisis, but it is not explored with reference to vampires. Rather, a different otherworldly creature enters the scene: The zombie.

Transactional figuring: Zombie banks and zombie economics

There is a specific and a more general version of the zombie figure at play, both of which draw more fully on zombie lore than was the case for the more restricted, but also more vivid figure of the vampire squid. I have already indicated that vampires could potentially function as transactional metaphors and provided possible reasons as to why this has not happened. Thus, I do not think that zombies are inherently better figures of finance, but, instead, believe that the fuller release of their transactional potential has to do with a lack of contextual constraints on as well as a less obvious stylization of their expression. That is, the figure of the zombie was not already associated with other actors (e.g. the state) nor was its first articulation so eloquent as to become the point of reference for future use.

Let me briefly elaborate on the latter point: First introduced in a scholarly context (Kane, 1987), the zombie metaphor's route to and traversal of accounts of the financial crisis is harder to follow than that of the vampire squid (but see Nelms, 2012 for a meticulous effort at doing so). Although some references do not lack in theatrical gore, the zombie also pops up in more restrained accounts. It is less tied to a certain style and a particular phrasing and more open to creative development and circulation. Although just as readily recognizable a figure as the vampire squid, the zombie is not just vivid imagery, but also a matter of ideas. This metaphor, then, may be characterised as transactional; it brings together two fields, thereby creating meaning that is not otherwise available. As mentioned, this

may both be done specifically, influencing meaning formation about a certain type of banks, and more generally, engendering reinterpretations of a set of economic ideas.

In its more specific form, the notion of the reanimated corpse is transferred directly to one outcome of the crisis: Some banks ought to be dead, yet are not – they are zombie banks. This notion has become almost institutionalized; if not exactly included in economics textbooks, then at least defined in web encyclopaedias:

A bank or financial institution with negative net worth. Although zombie banks typically have a net worth below zero, they continue to operate as a result of government backings or bailouts that allow these banks to meet debt obligations and avoid bankruptcy. Zombie banks often have a large amount of nonperforming assets on their balance sheets, which make future earnings very unpredictable. (*Investopedia*, n.d.; see also *Financial Times*, n.d.)

Zombie banks, then, are, quite literally, undead financial actors

The introduction of the zombie metaphor, in its specific form, not only adds to the understanding of troubled banks, but also re-values the act of bailing such banks out. Whereas a bailout is based on the assessment that it is necessary for the survival of the bank, labelling the benefactor a zombie forms the basis of the claim that public subsidies will actually not benefit the bank – or, rather, will not bring it back to a state of healthy livelihood. Instead, such banks continue to walk the earth as mindlessly harmful corpses; slowly but surely, they feed on the warm bodies of the still-living parts of the economy that haplessly cross their path – contaminating these parts in the process (see Onaran, 2012 for one particularly well-developed version of this use of the metaphor).

The figurative assessment of zombie banks shifts the room for possible interpretations of such banks. Seeing them as victims is no longer an option; instead, they are posited as the unabated villains of the tale. Thereby, the metaphor lends itself to popular re-use, e.g. in the form of protests (see, for instance, *The Huffington Post*, 2011). However, applications of the zombie metaphor are not limited to activists marching as zombies in the same way they might parade papier mâché vampire squids; it also holds policy implications. First, one may use it to condemn current bailout schemes: ‘If there is one lesson that seems to leap out at us, it is that, however great the short-term costs, the costs of keeping zombies alive is much greater’ (Cooley, 2009). That is, bailouts are not a tenable solution; zombies should not be fed, but killed. Second, invoking the zombie may become the occasion to propose alternative policies. As *The Economist* (2013b) puts it, ‘waiting for zombies to come back to life is a fool’s game’. Here, the implication is that banks cannot resurrect themselves, let alone the economy as a whole, and that

bailouts and other existing policies are, at best, instances of symptom management, whereas stronger public policies are needed to rid the economy of the deadly contagion. In effect, the zombie, in its specific figuration, is not particularly geared towards explaining what caused the crisis, but provides a succinct exposé of its effects – just as the origin of actual zombies is usually hazy, so accounts of zombie banks focus less on how they became undead and more on how to deal with them once they have taken this atrocious form.

The more general figuration of the zombie is less faithful to the customary lack of an origin story – and, instead, posits the zombie as the pivot point of sweeping explanations of the causes as well as the consequences of the financial crisis. Here, we are not dealing with a certain financial character, but with a characteristic of the system – what John Quiggin (2010), crediting Paul Krugman, has termed zombie economics. The key question is, as the subtitle of Quiggin's book informs us, 'how dead ideas still walk among us'. Thus, the zombie metaphor undergoes a transition; from undead bodies to undead thoughts. It becomes the basis for an explanatory framework in which zombies connote a certain resistance to change even in the face of evident decay, a kind of rotten conservatism. As Quiggin (2010: 2) explains:

...habits of mind and thought are hard to change, especially when there is no ready-made alternative. The zombie ideas that brought the global financial system to the brink of meltdown, and have already caused thousands of firms to fail and cost millions of workers their jobs, still walk among us. They underlie the thinking of those who are responding to the crisis and, to a large extent, of the commentators and analysts who assess those responses.

The underlying premise (one that the book, it should be said, seeks to substantiate), then, is that current economic theories not only provide inadequate explanations of and solutions to the crisis, but are the root cause of current maladies. Such ideas should be dead, but are not; in fact, they continue to dominate not only academic discussions, but also policy decisions. The reason being that most economists stay so committed to these ideas so as to be unable to put them out of their misery – maybe they cannot even see their suffering. Thus, the figuration of zombie economics is an arch of rise and fall that does not, sadly, lead to replacement; a journey from wedlock to deadlock, we might say.

The transaction between zombies and economics posits one (theoretical or practical) idea or another as wrong and suggests that it must be replaced. Krugman (2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2015) has used this line of reasoning time and again, each time drawing the conclusion that 'the zombies have won'. Although both Quiggin and Krugman as well as other proponents of zombie economics in the public and academic domain (e.g. Bernstein, 2011) offer alternatives to the zombie ideas they

seek to call out, the use of the figure tends towards a certain pessimism. If we did not win the battle, the implicit argument goes, it was not because we were wrong, but because zombies are so hard to kill.

In the various figurative uses of the zombie, then, new meanings arise. The figure gives shape and it takes shape; it is itself altered in the process of its circulation, just as it re-figures accounts of the financial crisis. Yet there are limits to the malleability of the figurative meaning; zombies, even zombie ideas, have bodies. This is their fundamental feature; they are bodies without minds. When used in the general sense, the metaphor could be said to connote mindlessly stupid ideas, but the transaction still relies on select characteristics of zombies that are foregrounded at the expense of others so as to make the transaction work – thereby, rendering the figural element of the account fully visible at all times. The zombie, we may conclude, is somehow too palpable, too tied up to the specifics of its materiality, to be fully malleable to the idea of finance. The figure simplifies the problem of the perseverance of finance beyond what is warranted. Most pressingly, zombies may be hard to kill, but still this is not impossible. So, why are the zombies of finance still around? Because, I will now argue, they are not undead bodies, but un-bodied dead. They are ghostly matters.

Constitutive figuration: Ghostly finance

Whereas the differences in the figurative use of vampires and zombies have to do with their histories of circulation rather than with their relationship to finance, the third metaphor to be explored is of another kind. Ghosts are, as Joseph Vogl (2015) brilliantly demonstrates, inherent to finance; they are constitutive of its theory as well as its practice. Calling attention to the ghosts of finance does not introduce a new element into accounts of finance and its crises, but highlights what is already there – it exposes the fiction of financial facts.

The ghost, then, is not only introduced into critical accounts of the financial crisis as a means of displaying the miscreation of certain actors and/or ideas; rather, it haunts the financial system as such. The omnipresence of ghostly matters, however, also makes them more difficult to track down – they are everywhere and nowhere. Conceptual references to ‘invisible hands’, ‘animal spirits’, and ‘spirits of capitalism’ abound, just as financial products and practices are routinely labelled ‘derivative’, ‘synthetic’ and ‘speculative’. While these instances indicate as much, the system as a whole seeks to hide that the logic of exchange is, in fact, the logic of phantasm (Malabou, 2010: 92). Finance does not articulate its ghostly logic, but runs according to it; it is concerned with upholding the fiction rather than undoing it. Thus, explicit references to ‘financial phantasmagoria’ (De Cock et al., 2011), ‘the ghost in the financial machine’ (Appadurai, 2011) or ‘the specter

of capital' (Vogl, 2015) are mostly in circulation among critical scholars. In the spirit of keeping up appearances, it is understandable that ghostly figures are not used by financial actors, but we may wonder why they have not found their way into more broadly circulated critical accounts.

Well, it should be conceded that financial ghosts are not entirely absent from the public sphere. Vogl's account, in particular, has received broader attention. However, it is the explanation of ghostly finance, rather than the figure itself that tends to be noted and quoted. In *Spiegel* (2011) for instance, Vogl explains speculative transactions as follows: 'Someone who doesn't have a product, and neither expects to have it nor will have it, sells this product to someone who also neither expects nor wants to have it, and in reality does not receive it'. Speculators deal in ghostly matters, we might say, but such language does not seem to catch the public imagination as readily as the figures of vampire squids and zombie banks. The reason may be that figurative use of the ghostly is itself so elusive it escapes elaboration. A variety of terms are used (ghosts, spirits, phantoms, spectres, etc.), but their figural meaning is seldom explained. That is, ghosts neither feature in elaborate sentences that may vivify accounts nor in extended analogies to guide meaning formation. Capital simply is figured as spectral.

Ghostly figures constitute finance as fictional: A spirit without a body, always-already derivative, endlessly deferred. As such, ghosts both give shape to and take shape from finance, pointing to its 'absolute ontological mutability' (Malabou, 2010: 44); its lack of a point of reference beyond its own process of circulation, exchange, substitution. Attending to the figural matters of finance could potentially not only explain, but also explode the fiction that the very lack of attention currently sustains. However, the very ghostliness of ghostly finance also makes it difficult to explode; even as the figure materializes it eludes materialization and, hence, remains deceptive in its malleability. If finance is 'the other in the same', as Derrida defined ghosts (Appelbaum, 2009: 75), what are we to do about it? Vogl (in his academic version, rather than in public illuminations) explains the problem thus:

To the extent that financial markets operate as systems to cover financial costs, they may be understood as mechanisms for the autopoietic production of *doxa*, in which rational expectations and preferences are only truly rational if they directly coincide with common opinion and find consensus in normative ideas. Financial truths are built on conventions, conventionalism dictates the episteme of markets, and every theoretical justification only ratifies this doxological substrate. Precisely as the subject of all that can be known, the market renders the distinction between knowledge and opinion obsolete. From a governance point of view, those who call for a deregulation of financial markets are demanding nothing less than a symbiosis of economic and intellectual conformities, a machine to produce normalizing trends. (2015: 115)

In figuring finance as ghostly, we may be able to spot the ghost, but we are powerless to intervene upon its figuration.

Concluding discussion

This final analytical observation points to a serious ethical dilemma: What are we to do with situations that we may feel a responsibility to condemn, but seemingly have no power to change? Overcoming this dilemma is central to the CFS manifesto of not only critiquing mainstream finance, but also offering (scholarly and practical) alternatives to it (Forslund and Bay, 2009; Bay and Schinckus, 2012) – and discussing the possibility of not only seeing, but also altering the ghostly matter of finance will be the final task of this paper.

Mixed metaphors: In whose possession?

My account not only privileges the figural, but also the ghostly. Finance is figured by the spectral; this has been the claim from the outset. So, why look at vampires and zombies as well? Because they are there. Just as the appearance of the supernatural in popular culture should not only be seen as an entertaining collection of curios, the passage of such phenomena into critical accounts of the financial crisis is an expression of real and really pressing matters. Our monsters of choice indicate who we are and how we view the world. In popular culture, paranormal phenomena may be seen as allegories of our anxieties and fears (see inter alia Bishop, 2010, 2015; Murphy, 2010); in accounts of the financial crisis they figure powers beyond our understanding.

Just as popular accounts of supernatural creatures may provide explanations of the inexplicable, the financial crisis becomes easier to grasp when presented as the work of evil others. Here, the vampire squid and the zombie bank work in the same way, but with different emphases; the vampire squid, on the one hand, is a classical villain – it is the cause of the problem and should be treated accordingly. On the other hand, zombie banks might not be entirely blameable for their horrid state, but the cause of this state is not the focus of the account; rather, the point is that once a bank has become a zombie, it should be slayed rather than sustained. In each case, we might not understand exactly what ails finance, but we get a clear sense of what to do about it.

Not so with zombie economics and even less with spectral finance; in both these cases the eerie gets too close for comfort. Zombie economics figures certain rotten ideas that are integral to the current financial system; this makes them particularly difficult to locate and eradicate, but the mission of those who speak of finance in this way is to do just that – to expel putrefied ideas and resurrect the body of the

economy. This may seem a daunting task, but it is still more tangible than the one presented by spectral finance. Here finance may be seen as a body possessed, but the broader implication of the ghostly figuration is that finance as a whole is constituted as the spirit that has taken up its abode in the body of society. This is a very disconcerting figuration as it neither offers clear demarcations of the good or the bad nor specific directions for action. The uncanny destabilization of boundaries between ‘familiar and unfamiliar, homely and unhomely’ (Pors, 2016: 5) is the source of the figure’s constitutive power, but it is also what makes it so difficult to deal with.

Thus, figuring finance as ghostly matter provides a better explanation of the workings of finance than those offered by the figures of the vampire and the zombie. However, the summoning of financial spirits appears to be a case of failed exorcism; the ghost is brought to the fore, but not driven out. The fiction of finance may be exposed, but it does not explode. The seeming lack of alternatives to spectral finance may explain the use of more specifically villainous – and more explicitly figurative – figures; in times of crisis, a sense of who to blame and what to do is a necessary first step to recovery. Thus, the monsters appear. However, slaying the vampires and zombies of finance will not change the financial system; neither zombies nor vampires can be the bodies for ghosts (cf. Bellofiore, 2009; Malabou and Butler, 2011).

Being, in better spirits

Thus, accounts that rely on the figures of vampires and zombies may supplement those focusing on ghostly matters, but they have not substituted – and cannot substitute – the spectre of finance. Tackling these meatier bodies cannot save us the trouble of dealing with the ghost. The insight that we must engage with spectral finance from within rather than seek to other it and drive it out, takes us to the core of CFS. How are we to deal with the uncanny truth of finance that ‘lies not in the eyes but in the spectacles of the beholder’ (Forslund and Bay, 2009: 287)? In a sense, the entirety of this text has sought to answer this question; taking the side of the figural is all about seeing how we see finance rather than seeing through our figurations; it is about making visible once again the plastic malleability of seemingly solid matter. But it is also about recognizing the agency of the figure, realizing that matter cannot be detached from form, that no existing entity is ever separate from its processes and procedures of production (Vásquez, Schoeneborn and Sergi, 2016). This implies an enhanced hospitality towards the spirits that possess us (Lundberg and Gunn, 2005: 85), a dialogue with the spectres of finance, rather than a determined – and determinably futile – effort to drive it out.

Such a stance, however, begs the question of defeatism; now that we see the ghost of finance, are we to simply accept it as given? In what sense might such an account be critical? It is, I believe, critical in the only sense possible, ‘...at one and the same time a risky confrontation with external powers and an internal, ethical combat with one’s self’ (Forslund and Bay, 2009: 285). We cannot expect change to impose itself from without, placing our faith in the sudden appearance of better spirits, heralding the advent of a brighter future. Instead, change is only possible in and as an unending process of continued labor on and with the ghostly matters at hand; the promise of a better future ‘...is to be conceived of as involving both urgency and a waiting that has no determinate outcome’ (Banham, 2002: 123).

Such an eschatology without a final moment, with no hope of a future resurrection of the dead, but with a concern for the spirits that presently haunt us, may be what earned Derrida the derogatory label of ‘moderate’ (Zizek, 2000: 665), but it is also the only viable route to salvation. We cannot place our faith in a second coming, nor incur change at our own free will; we cannot wish the financial spirit away, but we can take it into our possession even as it continues to possess us. That is, we cannot simply claim the death of one financial figuration and the birth of another, but we can figure current matters differently – although this turns out to be no easy matter; indeed, no matter at all. And so, even when the monsters are slayed, the ghost remains.

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'The Ghosts Insurance': Participatory research in haunted schools by the Theatre of Research

Sibylle Peters

abstract

Since 2002 *Theatre of Research* brings kids, artists and researchers together in explorative projects based on performance art and wish production.¹ Most of our projects are initially based on wishes made by children like 'I want to be an astronaut!', 'I want to be rich!', 'I want to speak to a real pirate' or 'I want to meet a ghost!'. We then try to relate those wishes to current discourses and questions in cultural studies, as well as to live art practices which intervene into the everyday, to create experimental setups for collective transgenerational research. The wish 'I want to meet a ghost!' resonated with quite a few discourses and performance practices we were interested in and finally resulted in the founding of *The Ghosts Insurance*. Public schools were invited to sign up for a *Ghosts Insurance* to be on the safe side in case they did find themselves being haunted. At the time of writing, more than a dozen schools have taken part in the project which is still ongoing. In this essay I will describe the starting points, methodology and findings of the *Ghosts Insurance*.²

Introduction

One. When I visited Mexico a few years ago I heard the story of the 'virgen del metro'. This is how it goes: In Mexico City thousands of people live in the streets. One day one of them saw a piece of mould in the floor of the metro station of Hidalgo and watched it for a while. Suddenly, in the midst of the mould, the face

¹ <http://www.fundus-theater.de/forschungstheater/theatre-of-research/>

² The *Ghosts Insurance* has been developed and is performed by a team consisting of Christina Witz, Hanno Krieg, Gyde Borth, Monika Els, Dorothee de Place, Tobias Quack, Christopher Weymann, Tine Krieg, Sylvia Deinert, Tanja Gwiasda, Frank Helmrich and Sibylle Peters.

of Mother Mary appeared to him. The mould itself turned into her face. Others saw her, too, and they instantly agreed on a reading. A revelation: By appearing in the form of mould Mother Mary wanted to show her solidarity with the people living in the streets, in the mould. During the next few days thousands of the poorest people of Mexico City came to the metro station of Hidalgo to witness the revelation. The traffic system of the city broke down. The church made announcements and put up signs saying 'This is no miracle'. But people didn't care, they just wanted to see the holy mould, that made them feel meant by their very own miracle. More and more of them came - an estimated 70 000 in total. Finally, the city council had to send experts, who carefully excavated the holy mould out of the floor of the station and put it into a shrine next to a church at Hidalgo station. You can still see it there today: the trace of a miracle, that happened when one man one day looked at the mould in the floor from a slightly different angle.

Two. In the little town Hydesville in the State of New York nothing much ever happened. Until the first telegraphic line of the United States was installed there in 1843. Shortly after, a strange phenomenon was witnessed in the house of the Sisters Fox: knockings of an undetectable source. Soon, these knockings were discovered to be a telegraphic code from another world, the world of the dead. Many people came to witness this and after the house got too small for all of them, it turned out that the knockings followed the Sisters Fox wherever they went. They started to tour through the country to open that channel to bigger and bigger audiences. Only decades later, after one of the sisters had died, the other sister revealed how the knockings were produced by an invisible virtuosic tap dance which was disguised under the long skirts of the era.

While this famous initial of spiritualism may have been discussed at length, it is less common knowledge, that the Sisters Fox actually initiated a feminist movement: the movement of women towards the public lecterns (Braude, 1989). In the US of the 1840ies, like all over Europe and the Western world, women were still meant to keep quiet in public, and there were simply no occasions for women to address mixed audiences with their thoughts or opinions. The Sisters Fox changed this. Following their example, women all over the US started to claim publicly, that they spoke for the dead, they became so-called trance lecturers. Moving on from the somewhat complicated system of pseudo telegraphic tap dance, women first started to teach and preach about all kinds of philosophical and political topics by claiming to be in contact with spirits and lending their voices to them. One of them was Achsa White Sprague, a young woman, who ended a seven-year long sickness, that she had spent in bed reading, by becoming a trance lecturer. Apparently her charisma as a public speaker was so overwhelming, nobody ever doubted that she was actually possessed by spirits: How could this

young self-educated woman possibly talk about philosophy the way she did, without a dead man speaking through her?

Three. In his book *Haunted media* Jeffrey Sconce (2000) argues that throughout history ghostly matters frequently, if not always, occurred alongside the development of new media such as, for example, photography or radio. New media creates new relations between the present and the absent, and as this repositioning takes place at the level of technology and signification processes, it does also have an impact on collective consciousness in terms of questioning the boundaries between the normal and the paranormal. From this perspective phenomena like spirit photography or the practice of listening to otherworldly voices within the noise that occurs in random radio waves, can be read as instances of the cultural shift that occurs through every new entanglement between the present and the absent. An analysis, that while being phantasmatic, still points towards a cultural layer of technical development, that is often overlooked. It can be read as a practical investigation into how the matter of media is changing signification as such beyond the frame of what can be said within it.

Four. In her essay *Reclaiming animism*, Isabelle Stengers criticises the way western science and scholarship dealt with animistic beliefs and practices by way of first separating them from their original 'milieu' and then proving them wrong within the milieu of science. She argues:

A distinct operation was attempted by the surrealist poet André Breton, who claimed that the magnetism should be taken out of the hands of scientists and physicians, who mutilate them through polemical verifications dominated by the suspicion of quackery, self-delusion, or deliberate cheating. For Breton, the point was not to verify what magnetized clairvoyants see, or to understand enigmatic healings, but to cultivate lucid trances (automatism) in the milieu of art, with the ultimate aim of escaping the shackles of normal, representational perception. The milieu of art would explore the means to "recuperate our psychical force." Breton's proposition is interesting, as the milieu of art could indeed have supported and sustained the unsettling effects associated with magnetism. Such a milieu would perhaps have been able to produce its own practical knowledge of trances – a knowledge concerned only with effects of trances, indifferent to whether the causes were "natural" or "supernatural" (Stengers, 2002: n.p.).

To use the milieu of art for the creation of such kinds of knowledge, is what the *Ghosts Insurance* as a project of collective research is all about. In other words, this small collection of stories and theoretical references may roughly mark the 'milieu' of the *Ghosts Insurance* itself, as an experiment to reclaim ghostly matters in our everyday. The *Ghosts Insurance* tries to stay true to a tradition, in which spiritual contact is performed as an emancipatory practice. A practice, that is given to subject positions as the potential that comes with positioned at the margins of a predominant reality regime. The *Ghosts Insurance* tries to make this potential

available primarily to children, who are subjected to forces often fairly unspeakable for them in a school context. At the same time, the *Ghosts Insurance* clings to this tradition from a place outside of given practices, quoting them, re-enacting them, hybridising them. From a place of being spiritually challenged. And maybe it is only from these grounds that we can start again to use the milieu of art for something like a spiritually informed production of public discourse.

Methodologies and procedures

When it is announced to the children of a school, that their school has signed up for a *Ghosts Insurance*, it does not take long until suspicious activities are observed and reported. A written report submitted to the insurance triggers a procedure consisting of the following steps:

- a) search for spirits on school premises
- b) transport of the collected spirits to the *Theatre of Research* for performative analysis
- c) public séance at the *Theatre of Research* (including collective decision making regarding the future of the spirits)
- d) return of selected spirits to the school premises. Possibly including installations of places and invention of practices related to them

In the following I will describe these steps in practical terms. When we, as a team of the *Ghosts Insurance*, show up at a school,³ we introduce ourselves to the children and ask them about their general feelings towards their school and about their experiences and thoughts regarding ghosts and spirits, possibly related to cultural and religious backgrounds. During this conversation, we make the following essential points: As employees of the insurance, we know *how* to search for spirits and ghosts, but we can't actually do it ourselves. Only the children, the students of the school, will be able to find them. If we want to search for spirits and ghosts, they have to become our media. Whether ghosts and spirits really exist is a question that is raised again and again, because it cannot be answered one way or another, as, basically, ghosts and spirits are just that what we are not sure about. Therefore the *Ghosts Insurance* is based on the conviction, that this question cannot ever be answered. However, our search for spirits and ghosts is based on a very real concept of local spirits, the idea of the genius loci, which inhabit places

³ Often a meeting with teachers, headmasters or parents will have happened before in which we present the project in much the same way it is done in this essay.

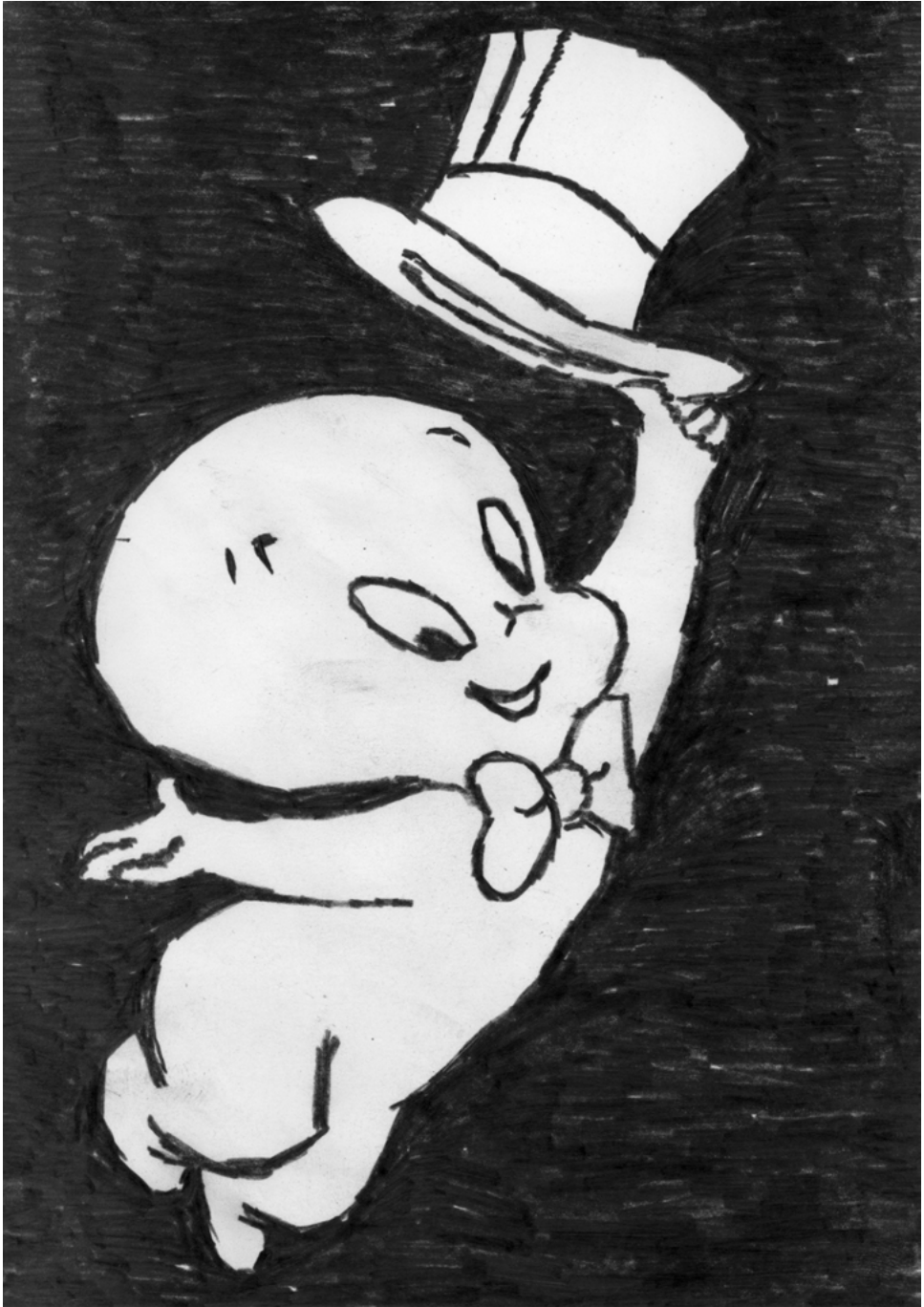
creating and embodying a certain atmosphere. The *Ghosts Insurance* argues, that if many people feel the same at a certain place, this can either create or be caused by a genius loci.

To start the search, we ask the children to draw a map of their school, including all the places which are important to them, and then to fill in the spaces with colours, indicating the atmosphere of the different places: feels good = green, feels indifferent = yellow, feels bad = red. By comparing the maps, we find special places in the school, for example, places that everyone feels bad or good about, though nobody really knows why, or places, which seem to have a very contradictory feeling to them. In the next step we visit these places in groups of up to eight children using our ghost machine. The ghost machine is a soundmachine that has eight headphones build into shower heads. Holding the shower heads to their ears, children hear a constant noise like from a radio in between stations. This noise never really changes. However, we let the children know, that the ghostmachine will keep moving until all the kids feel that the noise from the showerheads has changed in character. If that happens, the ghost machine stops and now has to be calibrated more precisely. Through a few simple exercises in perception, children are supported to describe the local atmosphere in more detail: What colour does it have, when you keep your eyes closed? Does it feel heavy or uplifting? Dense or loose? Is it dynamic or slow? When the kids finally agree on certain parameters the machine enters capture mode. The children take a polaroid of the place and are told that while ghosts and spirits usually are not depictable in photographs, they might leave a trace during the developmental process as such. After observing and interpreting the development process the kids point a stethoscope-like device that is attached to the machine towards the place in which they believe the spirit or ghost is hiding. If all goes well, the ghost is then sucked into the machine and finally filled into a glass that is closed immediately. Together with the information given by the maps and the qualities ascribed in the process of capture, the ghost is now materialised as the content of the glass, and thus becomes an object for further speculation: What's the name of the spirit? Why did it develop right in this place? What does he or she want? Of course, all the information and speculation given by the children is filed in the forms of the *Ghosts Insurance*. The team of the *Ghosts Insurance* says goodbye and takes all the glasses and documents to the *Theatre of Research* for further analysis. It usually takes at least two weeks until the children and teachers of the school, and occasionally parents, are invited to the *Theatre of Research* to take part in a public séance, in which they encounter their spirits and ghosts in a different context. To prepare for the séance, the team at the theatre closely examines all the given information. This is done from a range of different theatrical angles. To stay within the frame of our endeavour, these angles are addressed as 'theatrical spirits' inhabiting the theatre: the Animat, which is related to the intrinsic activity in all objects, matter and stuff, is mediated through



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a puppeteer animating objects. The angle of the Shifter or Twister, a spirit related to acting and being possessed, is represented by an actress. Furthermore, there is the Spark, a spirit related to inspiration, and the Small Mind, a ghost who is destructive towards imagination and entirely in disbelief regarding the existence of ghosts. In addition, a scholarly perspective is taken that reflects on historical parallels and resemblances and may give reference to related ghosts and spirits from cultural history. Next to the puppeteer, the actress and the scholar, who also functions as a receptionist to the insurance, handling the actual files and documents, the technician of the theatre, who runs the séance in terms of a theatre show including lights, sounds and special effects, takes part in the preparation. He finally is connected to spirits, which create potentially meaningful disturbances and errors by interfering with technical equipment. Together, this team prepares a performative setup for each of the captured ghosts and spirits by associating certain materials, actions, motives from cultural history, lights and sounds with them, without ever trying to fully embody them or identifying them with a fixed figuration. The setups are not completely elaborated and finished scenes ready to be repeated, but merely plans how to initiate activity, when a certain spirit is going to be summoned.

The glasses will not be opened, the spirits will not be released, before the children of the respective school have arrived at the theatre and sit on stage in a large circle. Nobody knows beforehand, what exactly is going to happen, when performers, theatrical spirits, children and ghosts will come together. The process aims to create an open-ended interaction between performers, children and spirits. The release of the spirits out of their glasses, one after the other, often ends with everybody actively participating: lying on the floor pressing ears to the ground, jumping up and down, laughing, hugging, telling stories or falling completely silent and sad.

Generally, the summoning aims towards learning more about the character, the wishes and wants of the spirits and ghosts, not least to provide insights for a final procedure of collective decision-making: When a ghost or spirit is finally sucked back into its glass, the school community which is present in the theatre has to decide whether to take the spirit back to school and acknowledge it as an official member of the community, or to leave it with the *Ghosts Insurance* to be kept in storage.

The theatre team prepares and supports this process of decision-making in several ways: The ghosts and spirits captured, named and described by the children differ widely in character. There are always those who are merely jokes, light echoes of pop cultural entertainment, or pranks, which use the concept of the spirit to make a bold or discriminating statement about something or someone at school. During

the séance these jokes and pranks are often dissolved by the Smallmind, who – much to the amusement of the children – literally eats them out of their glasses commenting on their ingredients. Other ghosts will be of an utterly positive nature, good local spirits standing in for support, community and pleasure. For this kind of ghosts, the insurance issues certificates, congratulates the children for having them and recommends to put them back to where they were found, possibly accompanied by a festive event in their name. In the spectrum between these two positions, there are many ambivalent and sometimes quite dark spirits, which point to feelings and conflicts, that should be addressed in some way. Regarding these ghosts and spirits, the team of the *Ghosts Insurance* generally argues for an inclusive approach - this time to the amusement of teachers and educators for whom 'inclusion' is a paradigmatic term central to recent school reforms. The team asks the school community to acknowledge the existence of these ghosts and spirits and to aim towards a peaceful coexistence, instead of leaving them behind in the insurance's storage. Not least because this comes with the risk of spirits growing back stronger than before. To point towards how to deal with them, the team provides precedence of similar cases and mentions procedures like, for example, relocation in a spirits' house next to the school building, sacrificial gifts, the instalment of a messaging system, like a mailbox, combined with the reading of anonymous messages in a ritualized setting. Generally, these procedures are open formats or protocols to acknowledge and address the situation related to the ghosts. Sometimes, when it becomes obvious, that a spirit actually symbolises the total neglect of an issue, suggestions might be more specific, going as far as demanding that measures will be taken to renovate children's sanitary facilities or something similar.

Finally, after the séance is finished, children, teachers and spirits in glasses return to their school. At this point the job of the insurance is done and the school community itself is in charge to follow up on the process in their own way. Sometimes this is initially done in the form of a procession of spirits relocating them in the school and putting up the certificates issued by the insurance on the walls.

Findings

Before I provide a brief overview of our findings, I would like to point out that, whereas the framework of the *Ghosts Insurance* as a piece of performance art and a detailed interactive protocol, is entirely on the account of the *Theatre of Research*, the ghosts and spirits found at the schools are not. On the contrary, the team of the *Ghosts Insurance* takes great precautions not to push children into any direction, when it comes to finding and describing their spirits and ghosts.

Therefore, the number of ghosts and spirits, more than 200 in total, which in the course of these last years have been found in more than a dozen schools can actually be interpreted as results of research in an ethnographical perspective.

Certain types of spirits and ghosts can be identified which have been found in many schools alike. One of the most surprising findings, in this sense, might be that in more than 60 percent of elementary schools, children found ghosts which are trapped in the toilets due to the fact that they cannot clearly identify their gender. Another common type is the ghost of conflict that often is found in overly attractive parts of playgrounds, in staircases, which tend to be overcrowded, or in areas of queuing for meals etc. A more complex form of ghosts often occurs in areas, which are related to conflicts between teachers and students. These ghosts are sometimes described as nurturing themselves from the 'acid' of those conflicts, creating self-escalating dynamics by becoming bigger and hungrier exponentially. Also, frequently there are ghosts related to the gaze, either connected to constantly being watched in a way, that makes one feel guilty or small or ignorant, or, to the feeling of being overlooked and invisible in some way. In many classrooms ghosts have been found, which interfere with concentration in some way, either supporting children to focus, or creating disturbance on the level, it appears, of the nervous system, for example by tickling or by some kind of frantic frequency that allegedly emanates from them.

Maybe more expectable are spirits related to nature, which, for example, live in trees or bushes and provide a hide away, a much desired chance to be alone or in private during breaks. Finally, spirits related to the known history of the school building are found, often in cellars or attics. It has to be noted, that the search for spirits, often, is the first time children were allowed to actually examine all the spaces of their school – including areas, which are usually out of bounce, like for example the teachers' room. Of course, ghosts are suspected frequently in these out-of-bounce-areas. One team once found a ghost called Moodshifter in the teachers' room. It was held responsible for a strange phenomenon: children had witnessed that teachers enter the teachers' room in a good and leave it in a bad mood. Interestingly, in many schools, children found spirits characterised as sad muses. They tend to live in places like assembly halls, that are seldom used, or unused closets next to the library. These spirits and ghosts like singing, spectacle or stories, but they suffer from loneliness. They point towards a forgotten potential of creation connected to these spaces.

Other findings of the project concern the question what might follow from reclaiming spirits within a school community. To review these, it should be kept in mind, that the *Ghosts Insurance*, being a theatre project, allows for a wide range of approaches, some serious, others playful or even nonsensical. In the milieu of

art, this is never is a dual opposition. However, along this spectrum a school community would find a few ghosts and spirits of minor importance, which soon were to be forgotten. Usually, only a small number of ghosts actually called for a sincerer treatment in the everyday. Regarding these more important ghosts and spirits, two highly positive outcomes of the project have repeatedly been reported to the *Theatre of Research* by teachers and parents: Undoubtedly, to manifest and reclaim local ghosts and spirits helped people to identify more with their school environment. Due to recent reforms, many of the schools explored by the *Ghosts Insurance* were in transition from part-time to full-time-schools. This implied the challenge of redefining school from a place of learning into a place of living, as children and teachers suddenly spend much more time at school than before. To enhance that process of transformation, schools need inspiration and a new perspective on their spaces and how they use them. The *Ghosts Insurance* draws attention to the way children experience atmospheres at school and helps to define, intensify or change them by associating them with a certain spirit.

Another important outcome of reclaiming spirits is a different option to deal with conflict. In any given conflict between children or between children and teachers, the ghost of that conflict now forms something like a third party. It suddenly seems evident to all participants that a conflict is not just between two people, but has an existence of its own. From this perspective, it becomes more obvious that to try and blame either side of a conflict is not a way to solve it. To describe the ghost of conflict in detail allows for a different approach.

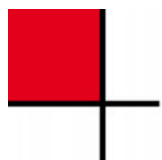
In a third dimension of findings, the methodological framework of the *Ghosts Insurance* has been found suitable to create a collective process of analyses, creation and communication, that generally proved joy- and helpful to school communities. Though the methodological setup was mostly used working with groups of children between eight to thirteen, it is not necessarily limited to this group. Eight year old children do not 'believe in ghosts' any more than most adults do. On the contrary, they often distance themselves more fiercely from any kind of 'childish' belief. On the other hand, they might be capable of a somewhat smoother transition from play to serious business and back. On a few occasions, we used the methodological framework of the insurance to work with adults groups like teachers, university students or the employees of our theatre. These trials indicate that the methodological toolbox of the *Ghosts Insurance* might be used in many different ways, also by other institutional bodies or collectives, like, for example, neighbourhood communities, who want to search for local spirits as a way to analyse and change settings and uses of public space.

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the author

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Textual *flânerie*: Writing management with Walter Benjamin

Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera

Flâneur

The world's an untranslatable language
without words or parts of speech.
It's a language of objects
Our tongues can't master,
but which we are the ardent subjects of.
If tree is tree in English,
and albero in Italian,
That's as close as we can come
To divinity, the language that circles the earth
and which we'll never speak. (Wright, 2010)

Textual *flânerie* and the Benjaminian *dérive*

To be a *flâneur* means following flows and unobvious pathways, finding doors where walkways close. Textual *flânerie*, for us, centres on following the poetic, dream thrust of historical texts, rather than focusing on the rational, argument-building level, while still embracing their literal, face value meaning. It is attentive yet freely wandering, as can happen in texts just as much as in physical space.

Walter Benjamin (1940/1969) picked up the idea of the *flâneur* from Charles Baudelaire, 'the *prince*, who is everywhere in possession of his incognito' (Baudelaire, n.d., as quoted in Benjamin, 1940/69: 40), depicting him as a passionate spectator, moving around amongst movement, setting up house midway, following the infinite flow of the city. The *flâneur* is strolling freely but attentively, he is the philosopher and the chronicler of the city:

The street becomes a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are as least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of the cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (Benjamin, 1940/1969: 37)

The *flâneur* is intoxicated by the crowd, and driven by (or perhaps to) all-encompassing empathy: with the crowd, for sure, but also with the city, the organic and inorganic surroundings. It is an empathy entailing adaptation and in that, she (see Wolff, 1985 and, to a lesser extent, Elkin, 2015, for a discussion of some possible implications of adopting a female-gendered *flâneuse* perspective) resembles commodity: she is possessed by everyone and everything she comes in contact with, and possession is a relation of commerce as much as of spirituality.

And yet the *flâneur* is not a passive stroller; rather, the experience heightens her consciousness: the intoxication of the crowd is as enlightening as it is disempowering: it makes her aware of the intricacies of the social reality. She is walking against commoditization:

The more conscious he becomes of his mode of existence, the more imposed upon him by the system of production, the more he proletarianizes himself, the more he will be gripped by the chill of the commodity economy and the less he will feel like empathizing with commodities. (Benjamin, 1940/1969: 58)

The *flâneur* relates to things and to experiences of city life, to the margins of modernity, and she becomes a bearer of resistance. However, she does not challenge or confront injustice. Instead, she walks towards awareness, an awakening: the moment when the past and the present connect. Wherever she walks, she keeps looking back, the past is present for her as she releases, by her movement, the city's memory, and provokes back to life what is seemingly lost (Benjamin, 1940/1999a).

In this text, we strive to become just such *flâneurs*, but instead of strolling around in the streets of a city, we embark on a journey through historical texts (Richter, 2002). Like Benjamin, we abandon ourselves in our wandering and we read what we encounter retrospectively, 'against the production process' (Benjamin, 1940/1999b: 472). Benjamin himself used the method of *flânerie* to read and interpret texts. Reading historical texts, he saw history as written by victors and yet full of false closures (Benjamin, 1940/2005). He retained the possibility of its redemptive re-reading and re-conceptualization by the reader, one intent on seeing and understanding it against the main currents.

Also in management the narrative of the victors is known as the foundational texts, built on the ideological foundations of managerialism, used to justify injustice, inequality and to legitimize cruelty (Parker, 2002). It is a linear text, and a lethal one, as *linearity kills* (Burrell, 1997). Winner's tale discourse purges management of such aspects of organizing as beauty and creation, replacing them with artificial and sterile notions such as 'value' and 'creative enterprise' (Kostera, 2014). But we believe, with Walter Benjamin (1940/2005), that ideas can be redeemed, that nothing is completely lost and that the past can still be set alive again, through the force of attentive redemption.

In cities, as in texts, time is central for narratives, and the choice of time to follow can lead a *flâneur* to the superficial or to the free, marginal stream. Walter Benjamin (1940/2005) reveals how dead, linear time, as measured by calendars and clocks, external to human experience, is produced by capitalism. Such time is the inheritance of Scientific Management and its obsession with time measurement and planning, its time and motion studies, its conveyor belt organization of work. It is empty time, a managed construct. As a contrast, Benjamin presents messianic time: filled, immediate, experienced. It is here that meaning left behind in history can be retrieved and redeemed. Messianic moments are hidden underneath linear time, a potential revolution waiting to be seen and regained: in and through them empty time can be transformed into the experienced, living time. This is a revolutionary moment present in history, in all things, awaiting redemption. The revolutionary reader of history is sensitive to those moments, always ready to pick them up and give them a voice, instead of focusing on retelling the linear story, as the foundational texts does. This is a radically different use of ideas, time, and space, distinct from what is taken for granted or fashionable, the conformist truth. Ideas can be redeemed by disconnecting them from what seems to be the right way of telling their story.

Following messianic moments in texts, reading them against the stream of the winner's tale, but without deconstructing them or reading them against the authors, is what we call textual *flânerie*. Instead of deconstruction, as method of focusing attention on the meanings in the text, we use the situationist approach to attentive walking. Situationist International used a special kind of *flânerie* as an artistic and political methodology. The *flâneur* is driven by desire to wander planlessly, which can have a decadent or a radical expression. Thinking how to capture the latter, Debord proposed the method of the *dérive*, a walk directed by architecture and geography, typically in the margins of a city, which is an active forming of a relationship between the walker and the terrain (Wark, 2015). The *dérive* is the radical proposition: it is propelled not just by imagination and curiosity of other meanings, but it is undertaken in order to resist the mainstream, and in particular – capitalism. We now embark upon a journey in some of the



Europa kann nicht von Dauer sein

A Light That Failed Completely



foundational texts of management, taking the *dérive* rather than the linear main drift that has been created by the forceful readings of the winning stream.

The *dérive*, or why walk against the winner's tale

Walking and reading against capitalism means, first of all, forceful re-appropriation of time. Guy Debord (1977: 143) warned that time has been appropriated by capital and separated from the collective organization of life and work:

the bourgeoisie unveiled irreversible historical time and imposed it on society only to deprive society of its use. Once there was history, but 'there is no longer any history' because the class of owners of the economy, who cannot break with economic history, must repress any other use of irreversible time as representing an immediate threat to itself.

It means resisting capitalism which to fill up the narrative. Capitalism ostentatiously fills up everything, it claims the material as well as the immaterial reality; it claims the spirit, the conscience as well as the status of hope available for humanity (Benjamin, 1921/1996). And yet, Benjamin (1940/2005) posits, there still exists messianic time that lies outside capitalism, in a space the latter had left empty (Benjamin, 1940/2005). It is neglected and invisible, but retains the active potential of ungluing the present from the 'inevitable' future. By reclaiming and redeeming the past, we are thus able to release a new future, though not the one currently inevitable, or extrapolated, or contained within the present. A future outside of certainty. Benjamin's messianic future, instead, connects with histories underneath the surface, the underground of time and experience. The messianic moment is a radical alternative to ordinary, conformist sensemaking; it works simultaneously across temporal boundaries, in the present, the future and the past, giving new meanings to history and offering new possibilities for times to come. If it is a kind of progress, then it is a subversive one, the domain of poetics and not rhetoric, as Heather Höpfl (1994) explained: an openness to the empty spaces, the unlocking of horizons, the smashing of categorizations, which helps one see the unrealized possibilities hidden by the obscuring walls of historical inevitability.

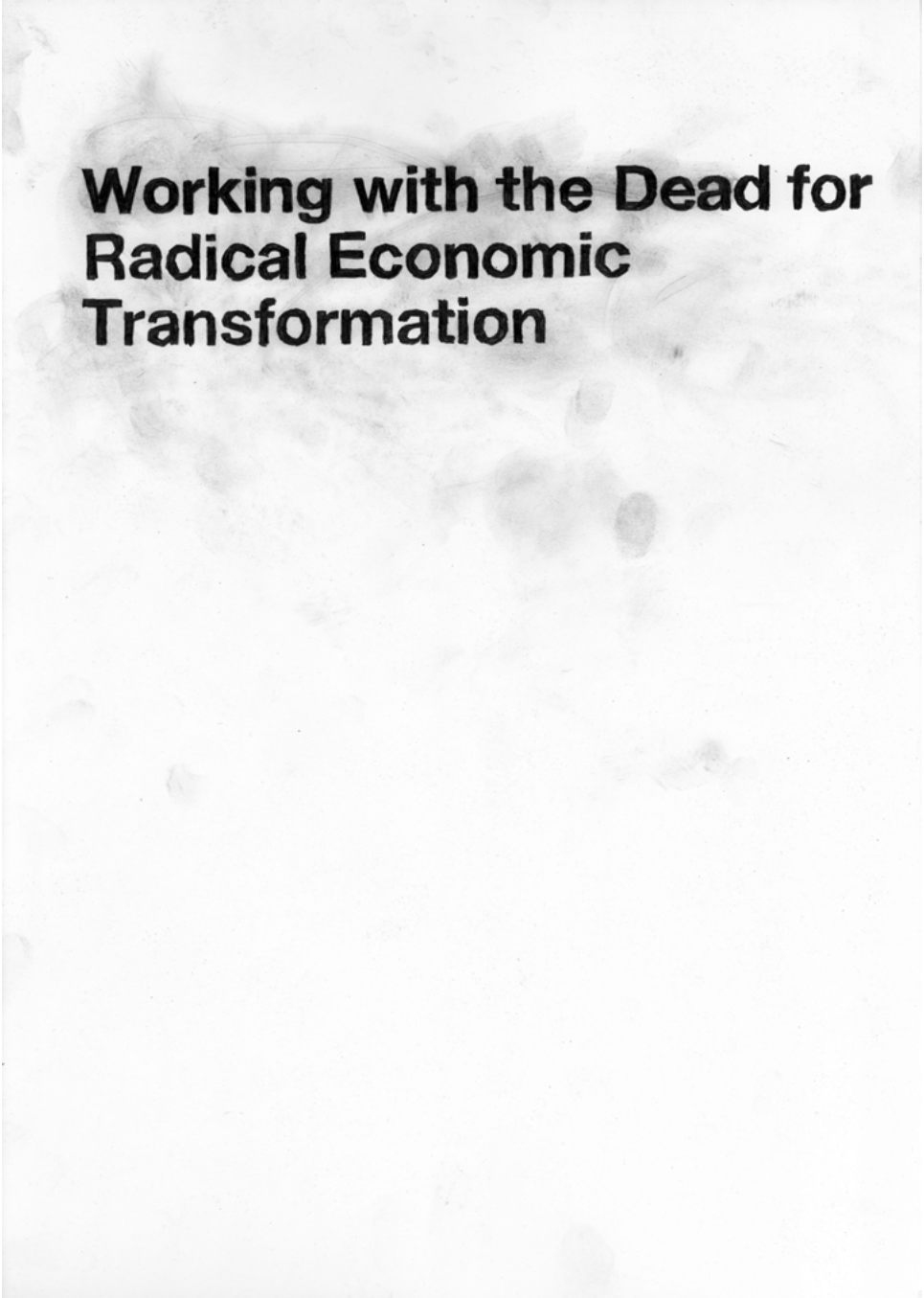
Walter Benjamin (1940/2005) believed that history has been rendered meaningless, but can be made comprehensible again from the point of view of redemption. Everything: the material, tradition, can be rescued by the radical historian. Disconnecting the story, so that what is regarded as obvious and taken for granted is pushed aside to liberate the messianic moment hidden underneath, makes it possible to reveal the sparks of hope concealed in history by an act of

retroactive realization of underground potentials. The revolution has already happened: it is hidden in the messianic moments of the past (Benjamin, 1940/2005), in the empty spaces of the poetic conventionally regarded as the background to black text of rhetoric (Höpfel, 1994). We should liberate tradition from the dead conformism of rightful memory, use it anew, in a distinctly new way, disconnecting it from the story that envelopes and controls time. Benjamin assures us that this can be done even in capitalist contexts. History can be read again, radically, bringing redemption through repetition or re-enactment of potentials betrayed by the narrative of the victors. We embark on this textual voyage to meet messianic moments of management and to release its ghosts.

This might require partaking in what Kevin Orr (2014) deems the morbid turn in organization studies: using the metaphor of death to shine light on organizational life. It is the point where Slavoj Žižek unleashes the undead, proposing that ‘primordial immortality is that of evil: evil is something which threatens to return forever, a spectral dimension which magically survives its physical annihilation and continues to haunt us’ (2008: 64). In Žižek’s reading, Benjamin attempts to ‘retroactively redeem the potentialities of past failed revolutions and to actualize the still insisting claims of the undead of history’ (Khatib, 2010: 15). We, however, choose to take a different path and instead look for ghosts, or ideas that still can speak for themselves, which possess an agency and a truth that can be redeemed in messianic time. We follow the path in Benjamin’s texts traced by Gerhard Richter (2002: 5) and take upon ourselves another task:

The task of the reader who takes this ghostliness seriously is not to undo or exorcise these ghosts – by explaining away difficult textual passages, seen as a provocation or an embarrassment to the hermeneuticist – but rather to learn to think through what they have given us to consider, even when this task cannot find universal ground or metaphysical foundations manifested in transparent language, stable political programs, and factual certainty.

In doing so, we read Benjamin’s texts themselves from the point of view of a textual *flâneur*, stepping out of readings subsequently construed as the main current, retaining our own radical perspective but without any deconstructive intent. Thus we encounter a ghostly dimension in Benjamin’s writings, one that allows us to bypass common sense in facing the social, yet which does not distance us from the empirical, the immediately experienced. We retain our love for the text and respect for its authors, even as ours is a subversive reading. Sometimes, therefore, in order to resume the responsibility of the real, we may have to read its demands against the grain. As Benjamin teaches us, ‘Only he who has made his dialectical peace with the world in the moment of deciding can comprehend what is concrete. But to him who wishes to make that decision “on the basis of the facts”, these facts will



Working with the Dead for Radical Economic Transformation



refuse to offer themselves' [*werden diese Fakten ihre Hand nicht bieten*] (Benjamin, n.d., as quoted in Richter, 2000: 70).

It takes imagination to read a text in this way. This is a radical proposition, as it coincides with a revolutionary trail. The path of liberation from late capitalism necessarily leads through the liberation of imagination, as has been pointed by our numerous authors (to list just a few: Bauman, 2011; Fleming, 2015; Graeber, 2015; Kostera, 2014; Shukaitis, 2009). We are ghost busters, but travelling companions of the ghosts in the texts, setting them free as we walk, opening up for different routes for them in the greater text of the management discourse.

Our main companion is the ghost of Walter Benjamin. Hand in hand with him we embark on a *dérive* in historical management texts, to give voice to the founding mothers and fathers of management, release their ghosts from the grip of the victors' history narration, set them free of the implications they are associated with in the plots dictated by the foundational texts. We wish to let them speak for themselves in the messianic time of an epoch that we now see dying or dead already, to seek redemption for their ideas, as well as, perhaps, point towards possible ways of learning management beyond capitalism. It is a side which may yet give us something we have long lost.

We choose to go back to the founders because we believe that they have something very valuable to give us in terms of learning, something that is as far away as possible from the main rational discourse: the dreams. As Walter Benjamin said, 'every epoch has such a side turned toward dreams, the child's side' (1940/1999b: 388). It is that side we now intend to visit, guided by the ghosts.

Meeting the ghosts

The *dérive* takes us back in time, as in Christina Vantzou's (2014) beautiful song, we are *going backwards to recover that which was left behind*. Here, management ceases to be something taken for granted. It is just about to become recognizable as a distinct profession as well as an academic discipline. This happens in the early years of the twentieth century (Jacques, 1996; Shenhav, 1999), with significant groundwork being laid already in the late nineteenth century. Consequently, both scholars and practitioners from that heroic era have been present in management textbooks and management imagination to the present day, imagined as the very giants on whose shoulders the present state of management scholarship rests (or, indeed, as the culprits responsible for the failures of managerial thought). It is not our aim to recount the platitudes of managerial fixity, available to the reader in any of the first five textbooks found upon entering an academic bookstore (a claim we

have empirically verified). But freed from the constraints of their historical role, the ghosts of the founding figures voice notions completely opposed to the idea of management as a dehumanizing system of rules designed solely for the maximization of shareholders' profit.

Frederick Taylor, originator of the notion of scientific management, emerges as a revolutionary advocate of cooperation between workers, managers, and enterprise owners:

Scientific management does not exist and cannot exist until there has been a complete mental revolution on the part of the workmen working under it, as to their duties toward themselves and toward their employees, and a complete mental revolution in the outlook for employers, toward their duties, toward themselves and toward their workmen [consisting of substituting] friendly cooperation and mutual helpfulness for antagonism and strife. (Taylor, 2002: n.p.)

Taylor traced origins of worker unrest to unacceptable working conditions, deficiencies of care on part of management, and lack of trust between the workers and the managers. Only through eradicating the above could an organization hope to create a productive work environment:

Each [employee] was made to feel that she was the object of especial care and interest on the part of the management, and that if anything went wrong with her she could always have a helper and teacher in the management to lean upon. [...] the most friendly relations existed between the management and the employees, which rendered labour troubles of any kind or a strike impossible. These good results were brought about by many changes which substituted favorable for unfavorable working conditions (*ibid.*).

The ghost of Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company and a pioneer in assembly line manufacturing, is particularly concerned with the value of human labour, proclaiming it the bedrock of not just the economic activity...

The economic fundamental is labour. Labour is the human element which makes the fruitful seasons of the earth useful to men. It is men's labour that makes the harvest what it is. That is the economic fundamental: every one of us is working with material which we did not and could not create, but which was presented to us by Nature. (Ford, 1922/2003: n.p.)

...but also of society and social relations

The moral fundamental is man's right in his labour. (*ibid.*)

It is the moral right to the fruit of one's labour that, for Ford, constitutes the basis of the right to property. Consequently, he is not particularly impressed by the notion of capital ownership divorced from actual labour, and sees capitalists as

valuable (or tolerable) only insofar as they can help others achieve better results from their labour:

Capitalists who become such because they provide better means of production are of the foundation of society. They have really nothing of their own. They merely manage property for the benefit of others. (*ibid.*)

What we see as significant in these quotes is not just how at odds they appear with the way Fordism/scientific management appears in contemporary management imagination (and teaching materials): after all, other actions and statements of both Ford and Taylor can be interpreted to point to different interpretations less friendly to employee welfare. But the regime of justification is important: for Ford and Taylor, business activities do not exist in a purely financial setting devoid of externalities; rather, they see the need to spell out both the social and the moral case for business: without such underpinnings, management can appear successful and yet lead to the very social and ecological problems that plague our society today (Bauman, 2013).

Mary Parker Follett was, famously, not just a precursor of management science, but one who was particularly far sighted, often beyond the limits of her own time. Her ghosts speak up with much more authority than she ever managed to project in the mainstream discourse, as in her time she was far too radical (besides being a woman) to be as much cherished as her ideas deserved. Her teachings on conflict resolution and importance of groups in organizations are well known today. Less well known are her clear preferences for shared management responsibilities:

The problem in business administration: how can a business be organized that the workers, managers, owners, feel a collective responsibility?. (Follett, 1940/2012: 7)

[...]

It would not be possible to carry on a business if the workers did not do some managing. (*ibid.*: 9)

She also did not believe in an alienating form of leadership, one that implies passive or restricted followership. Rather, she envisaged the leadership as a reciprocal relation, a partnership:

If leadership does not mean coercion in any form, if it does not mean controlling, protecting or exploiting, what does it mean? It means I (think) freeing. (Follett, 1928/1970: 137)

The engineer Karol Adamiecki was one forerunners of management science in Poland and his pleas for a systematic approach to matters of organization and production are well known today. However, which is much less known, he was

also a firm believer in intuition and feeling and his ghost would like to emphasize precisely that dimension of his thought:

The science of work organization should not only be understood but deeply felt, so it can be most constructively used in practice. (Adamiecki, 1924: 592; our own translation)

Its implementations are not always helpful, because management science is not a linear project: it contains dimensions which are not always appreciated by economics – harmony, an organic potential (*ibid.*). There is a special kind of harmony, spiritual harmony, which ‘cannot be reduced to mathematical functions’ (*ibid.*: 595), but which is governed by clear and compelling rules:

If the rules of spiritual harmony are respected during the organization of human work with the aims of the highest good of the working man and the whole of humanity, if we strive at the highest ideals, and keep a healthy judgement by the higher mental faculties, and introduce a discipline derived from higher moral concerns, in other words, if we employ a moral compass of justice and keep all the rules of spiritual harmony, [...] then organization science will, without doubt, become one of the leading factors of culture and will help man to derive from his work not just material wealth, but also moral. (*ibid.*: 595)

Another believer in society, common good and management as a service in the interests of the working people is the much more recent ghost of Peter Drucker, currently remembered as a management and productivity guru. His views were as far removed from an instrumental notion of human work or management as a purely economic function as can be conceived. Instead, he thought businesses were necessarily subordinated to higher goals:

Business enterprises – and public institutions as well – are organs of society. They do not exist for their own sake, but to fulfill a specific social purpose and to satisfy a specific need of a society, a community, or individuals. (Drucker, 1993: 39)

This role cannot and should not be confused with the achievement of profit, particularly in the short term.

A management problem is not solved if immediate profits are purchased by endangering the long-range health, perhaps even the survival, of the company. A management decision is irresponsible if it risks disaster this year for the sake of a grandiose future. (Drucker, 1993: 43)

Management practice and theory cannot, then, be reduced to purely economic thinking. It is much more than a technocratic concern.

[M]anagement [apart from, dealing with technology] also deals with people, their values, their growth and development – and this makes it a humanity. So does its concern with, and impact on, social structure and the community. [...]

[M]anagement is deeply involved in spiritual concerns – the nature of man, good and evil. (Drucker, 1994: 223)

There is one more ghost waiting for us. For that final encounter, let us step back even further in time and give voice to the ghost most commonly invoked by the foundational texts to encapsulate the world order at the heart of the managerialist project: Adam Smith himself. Commonly associated with not just the invisible hand metaphor (a minor aside in the original text), but also with the conceptualization of human beings as driven by purely egoistic and calculating motives and their behaviour that can be regarded in terms of economically rational choices. On encountering the spirit and his writings, however, it soon becomes clear that far from being an advocate of *Homo Oeconomicus*, this ghost has come, instead, to speak of altruism and empathy:

Sympathy, however, cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle. When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may be pretended, indeed, that my emotion is founded in self-love, because it arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances. But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize.

When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. (Smith, 2002: 374)

This chimes well with the growing body of research concluding, unsurprisingly, that far from being the engine of wellbeing, greed causes a wealth of organizational and societal problems (Wang and Murnighan, 2011; Haynes, Hitt, and Campbell, 2015). But the moral philosopher Adam Smith did not just abhor selfishness, he did not believe in the rationally self-interested *Homo Oeconomicus*, either; in fact, he was quite against the construct:

That whole account of human nature, however, which deduces all sentiments and affections from self-love, which has made so much noise in the world, but which, so far as I know, has never yet been fully and distinctly explained, seems to me to have arisen from some confused misapprehension of the system of sympathy. (Smith, 2002: 375)

Textual *flâneurie* for redemption from capitalism

We have met the ghosts of management and listened to them when they spoke, redeeming their altruistic and humane ideas of management theory and practice, the body of knowledge that they have assisted at its birth. But we think this encounter has a redeeming potential reaching beyond these particular times and authors. We are confident that by invoking these, and other ghosts, from the childhood of management, the textual *flâneur* is able to embark upon an endeavour of radical learning, to seek redemption from two victorious and overpowering ghosts: managerialism and capitalism. Finding messianic moments full of dreams and meaning and letting them out in the open, the *flâneur* becomes a revolutionary. This is where the *dérive* has taken us. Demanding to take back lived time, re-appropriating it, is a revolutionary endeavour and the radical *flâneur* does just that, in her marginal walking and by creating a *dérive*. It is, as Debord upholds, a fight against an ideology, one, which has colonized everything. Also management authors are well aware of this.

Capitalism has become so powerful that it has colonised our imagination, leading to a monoculture where capitalism appears as the only realistic option [...], as if there were no alternatives (Parker et al., 2014: 14)

This is a particularly dark case of colonization.

First, capitalism is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme there ever was. Within it everything only has immediately a meaning in direct relation to the cult: it knows no special dogma, no theology. From this standpoint, utilitarianism gains its religious coloring. The concretization of the cult connects with a second characteristic of capitalism: the permanent duration of the cult. Capitalism is the celebration of the cult *sans trêve et sans merci*. (Benjamin, 1921/1996: 259)

Walter Benjamin adds that the only spirit allowed by this religion to speak is the one on 'the ornamentation of banknotes' (*ibid.*: 260). It is not even an autonomous cult, it has:

developed parasitically by attaching itself to Christianity. Firstly, it reduces all of existence to its own standards of value.

Secondly, it colonises all of time with this regime of value, as if every day were a day of worship. Thirdly, it is a cult based on guilt and blame (not repentance). It declares everyone to be guilty. It is a 'cultic' religion, of ritual practices, without 'dogma' or religious doctrine. (Robinson, 2013: n.p.)

The lesson to be learned from the ghosts of management is, however, that textual *flâneurie* can take us into an entirely different moral space. Here ideas can be reclaimed, decolonized by a Benjaminian revolution which makes possible a kind of transubstantiation (Robinson, 2013). Messianic time lets us to go back in time

to rediscover the past in a way that alters it, and with it the future it is implying. The endeavour involves both imagination and rationality (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2012) and is a possibility to learn anew. Management as such is not necessarily a capitalist dominant tool for colonization of reality. It can be reclaimed, re-learned in other ways, redeemed. Invoking the moral rationale in concord with the ideas rediscovered in the ghosts' of management narratives, to new, non-capitalist organizational forms of a desired future, can help us to embark upon a journey to learn management anew. It is not about control – control of the future remains an illusion, albeit a cherished one in times of interregnum, and we believe it is more honest to abandon it and, instead, embrace something more vague, less certain: a promise, an utopia (Bauman et al., 2015).

We can ask Walter Benjamin to accompany us there, following flows, invoking them in a wave of a situationist *dérive*. We can walk right into them and embrace the ghosts who, in receiving back their voice, authorship of dreams in the childhood of the management, can be redeemed and bring redemption to management in a new utopian tale. It is within reach, as much in the future as in the past, because:

nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past – which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments. (Benjamin, 1940/1999a: 254)

The utopian management tale would begin with humanity and responsibility, which are a common theme in the ghostly readings of foundational texts. Management is, at its ghostly heart, about care, ordering and creating harmony for the common good. It makes space and conditions for collective action, in the most congruous way possible, work towards a common end, where each and everyone's contribution is orchestrated and valued. Management is about seeing the whole and caring for it, deeply, defending it against erosion, dissipation and fragmentation, if needed, against the individual vectors and desires of the participants. Management sees the beauty in obligation, the goodness in concern; in the words of Polish management scholar Krzysztof Oblój (2010), it is ultimately about passion and discipline intertwined, braided and merged. The manager is someone, or a group of people, who passionately protect and nurture the common good of organizing, who is able to see a ghost called 'the organization' in the myriad complex and diffuse emerging processes, and is ready if not die for it, then certainly live by it and believe in it. The manager knows how to dance to the spiritual harmony of the organization of human work and the highest common good, and insists on the importance of duties and right working conditions while safeguarding space for striving towards the highest ideals. The manager respects labour profoundly, believing in the harvest that comes as its result. And this is how

we come back to the ghosts of management, who insist that management brings freedom: this is the redemptive promise of the world after the interregnum, after capitalism, where we can all work to free the common good, unblock the passage for goodness in our organizing work and tales, knowing that ‘every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter’ (Benjamin 1940/1999a: 264).

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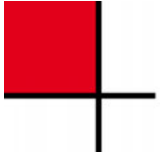
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Uncanny matters: Kafka's burrow, the unhomely and the study of organizational space

Timon Beyes

Introduction

In Franz Kafka's late and incomplete text *Der Bau* (translated as *The burrow*; Kafka, 1971), a mole-like creature is haunted by fears that its intricate, labyrinthine burrow is about to be – or indeed already has been – invaded by some dangerous other. The beastly protagonist and narrator has dedicated its working life to building and organizing a perfect shelter, an environment homely, quiet and secure. 'I have completed the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful', the story begins (Kafka, 1971: 325). That is, 'it seems': while proud of the burrow's ingenious architecture, the creature 'can scarcely pass an hour in complete tranquillity' (Kafka, 1971: 325). It is continuously constructing and reconstructing, mending and repairing, surveying and controlling, forever trapped in the labour of keeping the outside at bay. Yet unhomely forces are perpetually there. Worse, the more work is put into securing the burrow, the more it seems to be haunted by ghostly presences. They cannot be kept outside but emerge with the construction of the homely itself, like the whistling noise that comes to occupy the dweller: 'I must first feel quite at home before I could hear it; it is, so to speak, audible only to the ear of the householder' (Kafka, 1971: 343).

According to Walter Benjamin, Kafka's writings summon and reflect the 'question of how life and work are organized in human society' (Benjamin, 2007: 123). In this sense, *The burrow* raises the question of the unsettling affectivity and ghostliness of organizational space.¹ Yet this is a specifically unsettling affectivity,

¹ In Kafka's own words, his process of writing and revising was itself geared towards keeping or enlarging an aura of ineffable mystery by making everything sound *ein wenig unheimlich*, 'a little uncanny' (quoted after Harman, 2002: 325).

one that posits the ‘strange within the familiar, the strangely familiar, the familiar as strange’ (Fisher, 2016: 10). This is the realm of the uncanny (Freud, 1976). In tying the affect of uncanniness to the built spaces of the shelter, *The burrow* dwells on the spatial or ‘the architectural uncanny’ (Vidler 1992). In this note, I seek to reflect on these uncanny matters in relation to organizational space and the ‘spatial turn’ in organization studies.

Two specific interests inform this endeavour. First, the ‘unconcept’ of the uncanny (Masscheleinen, 2011) arguably lies at the core of the by-now broader engagement with the ghostly, with haunting and spectrality in social and cultural theory. The special issue’s aim to more fully open the organization-theoretical imagination towards ‘ghostly matters’ thus calls for an engagement with the uncanny. While a well-established, even fashionable term in the humanities and the humanities-inflected social sciences (hence its pivotal role in matters of the ghostly; ffytche, 2012), *das Unheimliche* is a little-known category in the study of organization (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013).

Second, the uncanny has been at work in the spatial and architectural imagination at least since the end of the 18th century (Vidler, 1992). Relating uncanniness to organizational space thus offers a distinct perspective on the physical spaces of organization. The notion of the uncanny emphasizes the affective, haunted and multiple constitution of space. It thus is a powerful reminder to not dissimulate spatial multiplicity into comforting narratives of spatial means and ends when studying and writing spaces of organization (Massey, 2005). And it points to a way of theorizing organizational spatialities that is open to the affective and atmospheric force of space and attuned to its unsettling and ghostly effects.

The burrow

Back to Kafka’s strange, nameless beast and how its story invites the reconsideration of organizational space; in the way that so many of the creatures that populate Kafka’s stories can compel us to rethink how organization takes place (Beyes and Holt, 2019). The affect of unhomeliness, or of the uncanny, to use the standard translation of *unheimlich*, is predicated on the burrow’s architecture, its spatial form and its organization of space. Already indicated by the story’s title, this ‘great vulnerable edifice’ can be read as the very material protagonist of the narrative: ‘the vulnerability of the burrow has made me vulnerable; any wound to it hurts me as if I myself were hit’ (Kafka, 1971: 355). In German, moreover, *Der Bau* alludes to a range of meanings which ‘the burrow’ does not capture. A *Bau* is, first of all, a building, an edifice, an architectural structure. Moreover, in colloquial usage it denotes a prison. The term is often used in the processual sense of *im*

Bau, of a building under construction and a construction in process (a *Baustelle* is a construction site). The verb *bauen* or *aufbauen* means to construct and to build, and in a metaphorical sense, to develop (a text, a self, a company). Only in the context of animal habitats the term refers to a den, a lair, or indeed a burrow. Arguably, then, the title emphasizes the physical building, its architecture, its entrances and exits, walls, passageways, rooms, cells and voids, as well as the interminable labour of construction and repair. The story's *Bau* is made of passageways, in the intersections of which there are spatial voids or cells. These cells afford the creature's feelings of homeliness, and moments of rest and sleep. The main cell and ultimate shelter is the 'Castle keep': a larger, womb-like space that the empty passages seem to lead to and depart from (Touloumi, 2005). It is here, where homeliness can be enjoyed the most and interruptions are least expected, that the whistling noise sets in (or returns):

This had to happen just in my favorite room, I think to myself, and I walk a fair distance away from it, almost halfway along the passage leading to the next room; I do this more as a joke, pretending to myself that my favorite room is not alone to blame, but that there are disturbances elsewhere as well, and with a smile on my face I begin to listen: but soon I stop smiling, for, right enough, the same whistling meets me here too. (Kafka, 1971: 344-345)

The homely encompasses, and is destabilized through, the unhomely; the household and its management – literally, *oikonomia* (Dotan, 2016) – by that which is unmanageable. The building and its ghosts turn against its dweller: 'I go once more the long road to the Castle Keep, all my surroundings seem filled with agitation, seem to be looking at me, and then look away again so as not to disturb me, yet cannot refrain the very next moment from trying to read the saving solution from my expression. I shake my head, I have not yet found any solution.' (Kafka, 1971: 357) The familiar becomes strange, and the strange familiar; the architecture of surveillance and control to defend against intruders becomes a trap for its builder. The burrow's exit, beyond the security labyrinth, appears to be safer than the inside: 'A complete reversal of things in the burrow; what was once the place of danger has become a place of tranquillity, while the Castle Keep has been plunged into the melee of the world and its perils' (*ibid.*: 352).

Yet this is not a complete reversal. After all, 'even here [at the exit] there is no peace in reality' (*ibid.*: 352); and the noise was there before, the creature remembers, 'when the burrow was only beginning' (*ibid.*: 355). Whatever it is that haunts the building – 'some animal unknown to me'; 'a huge swarm of little creatures'; a single 'big beast'; 'strangers'² – it is co-present with and tied to its cells, vaults,

² It is beyond the scope of this note to discuss how *The burrow's* uncanniness figures the very timely issue of 'strangers at our doors' (Bauman, 2016) and concerns of security, paranoia and affective politics. Uncannily, 'the foreigner lives within us: he is the

labyrinth and passageways. No homeliness without uncanny sensations, a reader might think; no organizational space without cracks, leaks and hauntings. 'All remained unchanged' (*ibid.*: 359), thus ends the story.

The Freudian uncanny and the ghostly

The notion of the uncanny has a rich and heterogeneous genealogy (Masschelein, 2011). In 20th century thought, it was developed and mobilized to think specifically modern anxieties and to ponder questions of estrangement, alienation, exile and (literal and metaphorical) homelessness (Vidler, 1992; Jay, 1998). A 'crossover' concept par excellence, it is now referenced and employed across many fields, including cultural studies, sociology, aesthetic and architectural theory as well as literary, feminist and postcolonial studies. According to ffytche's critique of the 'apotheosis' of the uncanny in cultural and social theory (2012) – and of the uncanny as a kind of meta-theory of cultural thought – Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* constitutes the perhaps most influential text for the proliferation of this kind of scholarly work. This influence is predicated on relating the notion of the uncanny to the language of the phantom, the spectral, the ghostly and haunting or 'hauntology'. Indeed, Derrida (1994: 174) claimed that *Spectres of Marx* could have been subtitled 'Marx – *Das unheimliche*'.³ The uncanny is a peculiar concept in at least three ways: as 'unconcept', to use Masschelein's term, it is situated 'on the verge between concept and affect', between thought and sensation (Masschelein, 2011: 11). As such, it is a particularly performative and slippery notion, 'never fixed, but constantly altering' (Royle, 2003: 5). It thus appears to be an all-purpose nostrum – a meta-theory – that can be brought to bear on all kinds of phenomena.

The 'apotheosis' of uncanny thought is usually based on readings and re-readings of Freud's *Das unheimliche*.⁴ As 'founder of the discourse' (Masschelein, 2011: 4), Freud (1976) perceived the uncanny and its unsettling feelings of unpleasantness

hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder' (Kristeva, quoted after Sandercock, 2005: 222). The stranger is strangely familiar, indeed. As Simmel (1992: 764 et seqq.) has famously argued, the stranger combines wandering and fixation, nearness and farness, not belonging and somehow belonging, being-inside and being-outside.

³ 'Is this not our own great problematic constellation of haunting? It has no certain boundaries, but it blinks and sparkles behind the proper names of Marx, Freud, and Heidegger: Heidegger who misjudged Freud who misjudged Marx. (...) The subtitle of this address should have been: "Marx – *Das unheimliche*"' (Derrida, 1994: 174).

⁴ In Freud's oeuvre, *The Uncanny* is regarded as a so-called 'bridge text' leading from the earlier writings and their psychoanalytical conceptualizations to a more advanced social thinking to be witnessed in later works such as *Beyond the pleasure principle* and *Civilization and its discontents*.

and unease to be a neglected part of the aesthetic sublime. The destabilizing force of the uncanny is echoed in its etymology. There are doubles and reversals: Freud noted how the meaning of *heimlich* first became ambivalent and then fell together with its opposite *unheimlich*. *Heimlich* (literally: homely) stems from *heimelig* (cosy, intimate, familiar, trusting) – from feelings of domesticity, of being at home – yet came to signify things that are concealed, kept hidden, done in secrecy. *Unheimlich* is then the un- or not-homely that is however there, tied to the home and its secrets, emerging with and beneath the *heimlich*, and thus a ghostly presence. This amounts to an etymological manifestation of how ‘that which supposedly lies outside the familiar comfort of the home turns out to be inhabiting it all along’ (Wigley, 1995: 108). The uncanny thus denotes a peculiar knot of the familiar and the unfamiliar. It designates the strangely familiar, the familiar becoming defamiliarized, in its two senses: something familiar emerges in an unfamiliar context, and something unfamiliar emerges in a familiar context. The uncanny thus involves feelings of uncertainty and apprehension and a crisis or critical disturbance of the proper, of the boundaries of inside and outside.

Collecting and discussing examples of uncanny experiences, Freud (1976) mainly drew upon literary works,⁵ such as E.T.A. Hoffmann’s novel *The sandman*, and upon personal anecdotes and psychoanalytical cases. The uncanny appears in various disguises: as more gruesome or terrible defamiliarizations linked to death and corpses (e.g. the fear of being buried alive, being haunted by the dead as well as by the spirits and ghosts of dead bodies); as doubts whether an apparently living being is in fact alive, or, conversely, whether an inanimate object might not be alive; as a belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and spirits as well as corresponding practices of magic; as phantom doubles in all its forms and expressions (persons who appear to be identical, telepathy, identification with an other and subsequent ‘loss’ of one’s own self); as visions of supplementary of phantom limbs; as a response to lifelike objects or apparatuses; more generally, as the effacement of the distinction between image and reality (something becomes real that hitherto appeared fantastic); as involuntary, unsettling repetitions, for instance when losing one’s way in a city and returning to the same place time and again; as the feeling of *déjà vu*.

As the range of phenomena indicates, Freud struggled to contain the notion of the uncanny. His introduction of a distinction between reality and fiction seems odd,

⁵ Also with regard to uses of Kafka in organization theory, it is of interest that e.g. Ranci re (2010) argues that a psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious could be formulated *because* there already existed, beyond the proper realm of the ‘clinical’, a notion of the unconscious’ sphere of influence invented by works of sculptural and literary art. In this sense, Freudian theory sought anchorage in this aesthetic configuration of both ‘uncanny thought’ and ‘unconscious thought’.

strangely disavowing literary examples after having made good use of them. After all, the point of departure of Freud's 'theoretical fiction' (Masschelein, 2011: 56) is the becoming-real of something hidden, something hitherto not real. '[A]s if', Royle comments (2003: 133), 'psychoanalysis were ever concerned with anything but displacements, disturbances and refigurations of "the distinction between imagination and reality"!'. Also, basing 'real' (presumably non-fictional) individual causes of the uncanny on the link between prior repression and unexpected return (e.g., of infantile complexes such as castration anxiety and womb fantasies) ties the notion to the troubled individual psyche, foreclosing the social complexity of haunting. As Gordon (1997: 57) put it in her study on *Haunting and the sociological imagination*, '[a]fter having dragged the human sciences into all these ghostly affairs, Freud's science arrives to explain away everything that is important and to leave us with adults who never surmount their individual childhoods or adults whose haunting experiences reflect their incorrect and childish belief in the modes of thought of their "primitive" ancestors'.

Yet before moving on to the architectural uncanny and thus one way of dealing with socio-organizational realities of haunting, it should be noted that bemoaning Freud's struggles to comprehensively discuss or specifically pin down the uncanny is a nostalgic move: the 'unconcept' haunted by the ghosts of conceptual clarity, docility and applicability. Having demonstrated its slipperiness might just be a lesson of Freud's text.⁶ The unsettling quality of the uncanny extends to the conceptual level itself. Especially in so-called poststructuralist readings, Freud's text has been discussed as exemplary for the fundamental difficulty or perhaps the impossibility of defining and 'fixing' concepts as such (Cixous, 1976; Derrida, 1994; Royle, 2003).

An uncomfortable sense of haunting: *The architectural uncanny*

The uncanny may thus be an individually felt emotion, 'but it is never one's 'own': its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world "itself" ' (Royle, 2003: 2). Its significance, that is, also pertains to the world of organization. At the very least, Freud's seminal essay invites the study of organization to turn towards the ghostly and haunted,

6 As Weber (2000) speculates, the indeterminacy and instability inherent in the Freudian uncanny might go some way to explain its importance. After all, there are different notions of the uncanny that have remained comparably marginal, for example Heidegger's usage of this term. In her reading of *Das Unheimliche*, this 'act of theoretical boldness' (527), Hélène Cixous (1976) marvels at how 'what is brought together here is quickly undone', how 'what asserts itself becomes suspect'; how 'each thread leads to its net or to some kind of disentanglement' (525).

disturbing and unsettling character of everyday organized life. Following Kafka's creature in *The burrow*, I suggest turning to the spatial environments of organized life. In architectural theory, mainly the work of Anthony Vidler (1992, 2001), physical spaces as well as spatial thought are shown to be invested with the unhomely. Recall Kafka's burrow: the crisis of the proper and of the boundaries of inside and outside is tied to the very building, its architecture, entrances and exits, rooms and passageways. The mole-subject not only builds its *Bau*; it 'lives the material world; it is of that world and produced by it' (Pile and Thrift, 1995: 19). In this reading, space is not treated as a 'container' in which the creature is placed, as if its burrow would be a 'given, knowable and universally same condition' (Vidler, 2003: 33); neither is the built environment a material disguise for deeper-rooted individual maladies. According to Vidler, space rather becomes 'suddenly charged with all the dimensions of a relative, moving, dynamic entity' (2001: 3). To put it differently, the interest lies in space as it affects embodied experience, as it is atmospherically 'lived'.

That uncanny sensations are perhaps invariably and irreducibly spatial is not only indicated by the etymology of the unhomely but also by its genealogy. In fact, the uncanny has been related to the spatial imagination at least since the end of the 18th century (Vidler, 1992: ix). It is part of a bigger history of seeing 'space as threat, as harbinger of the unseen [that] operates as medical and psychical metaphor for all the possible erosions of bourgeois bodily and social well being' (*ibid.*: 167). In this sense a 'spatial turn' *avant la lettre*, connections of uncanniness and physical space had been at work in the aesthetic of the sublime, the numerous 'haunted houses' in romantic literature, avant-garde architecture as well as the 'posturbanist sensibility' (*ibid.*: xii) from surrealism to situationism.

According to Vidler, two trajectories are particularly pertinent here. For one, in romantic thought and the aesthetic of the sublime – and as re-enacted in Kafka's *The burrow* – the house has been treated as a place for countless representations of haunting, doubling, dismembering and other gruelling imaginations. The juxtaposition between a safe home and the fear-inducing invasion of strange presences turns the uncanny into 'the quintessential bourgeois kind of fear' (Vidler, 1992: 4) – a materially (more or less) secure class that feels unhomely in its own home. Not surprisingly, also for Freud (1976) the haunted house is one of the most striking examples for the uncanny. Returning to Freud's etymological discussions, Vidler therefore suggests the term 'unhomely' as a (more literal, and better) translation for *unheimlich*: '(...) from the homely house to the haunted house there is a single passage, where what is contained and safe is therefore secret, obscure, and inaccessible, dangerous and full of terrors (...) ' (Vidler, 1992: 32). Second, the labyrinthine spaces of the modern city have been re-imagined as hotbeds of anxieties such as epidemics, revolutions, phobias and urban

estrangement. 'In many ways, the city provides an archetypal scene for uncanny experiences' (Pile, 2005: 40). The uncanny 'went public' in the modern metropolis, with its potentially disturbing characteristics of heterogeneity, instability and estrangement as described by Benjamin, Kracauer, Simmel and many others.⁷

It follows that 'in each moment of the history of the representation of the uncanny (...) the buildings and spaces that have acted as the sites for uncanny experiences have been invested with recognizable characteristics' (Vidler, 1992: 11). Feelings of the uncanny are closely related to the organization of physical space: to the house (or the burrow) that does and does not afford security, to the city once intimated and walled, then a breeding place for unsettling encounters. Therefore, Vidler conceptualizes the 'spatial uncanny' as 'sinister, disturbing, suspect, strange; it would be characterized better as "dread" than terror, deriving its force from its very inexplicability, its sense of lurking unease, rather than from any clearly defined source of fear – an uncomfortable sense of haunting rather than a present apparition' (*ibid.*: 23). In *The burrow*, it never becomes clear from where the whistling originates; it seems there are no specific actors or objects that could be pinpointed as the source of what haunts the creature. Yet, what is clear is that the haunting and the dread co-originate with the building and its architecture of control and security. Significantly, Vidler argues that these feelings of dread arose

⁷ Around the end of the 19th century, individual psychological disorders were extended to the social conditions of the industrial metropolis – 'the discovery of these new phobias seems to have been part of a wider process of remapping the space of the city according to its changing social and political characteristics' (Vidler, 2001: 26). Especially the bourgeois 'illness' of 'agoraphobia' (*Platzscheu*) embarked on a remarkable career, up to the point where it was popularly used to denote all kinds of urban fears somehow related to spatial conditions – it became the quintessentially urban anxiety next to claustrophobia (denoting the fear of crowded/populated places). Vidler (2001: 35) assembles an impressive list of what can be called 'metropolitan pathologies' of these nervous times: 'Agoraphobia (the fear of places) was supplemented by atremia or stasophobia (fear of elevated or vertical stations), amaxophobia (exaggerated fear of carriages), cremnophobia (the fear of precipices), acrophobia or hypsophobia (fear of elevated places), oicophobia (aversion to returning home), lyssophobia (fear of liquids), hydrophobia (fear of water – also connected to agoraphobia by the fear of the sea as expanse, and of crossing a bridge), pyrophobia (fear of fire, which was often linked to claustrophobia), monophobia (fear of solitude), anthropophobia (fear of social contact), and a multitude of others, culminating in photophobia (the fear of fear itself), an illness generally subsumed under neurasthenia.' Perhaps grappling with a list of more individualized psychological illnesses, the contemporary post-industrial city, too, is shaped by similar anxieties (Pile, 2005). For instance, '[d]iscourses of fear pervade contemporary discussions of the city. (...) Planning and urban management discourses are, and always have been, saturated with fear. The history of planning could be rewritten as the attempt to manage fear in the city (...)' (Sandercock, 2005: 219).

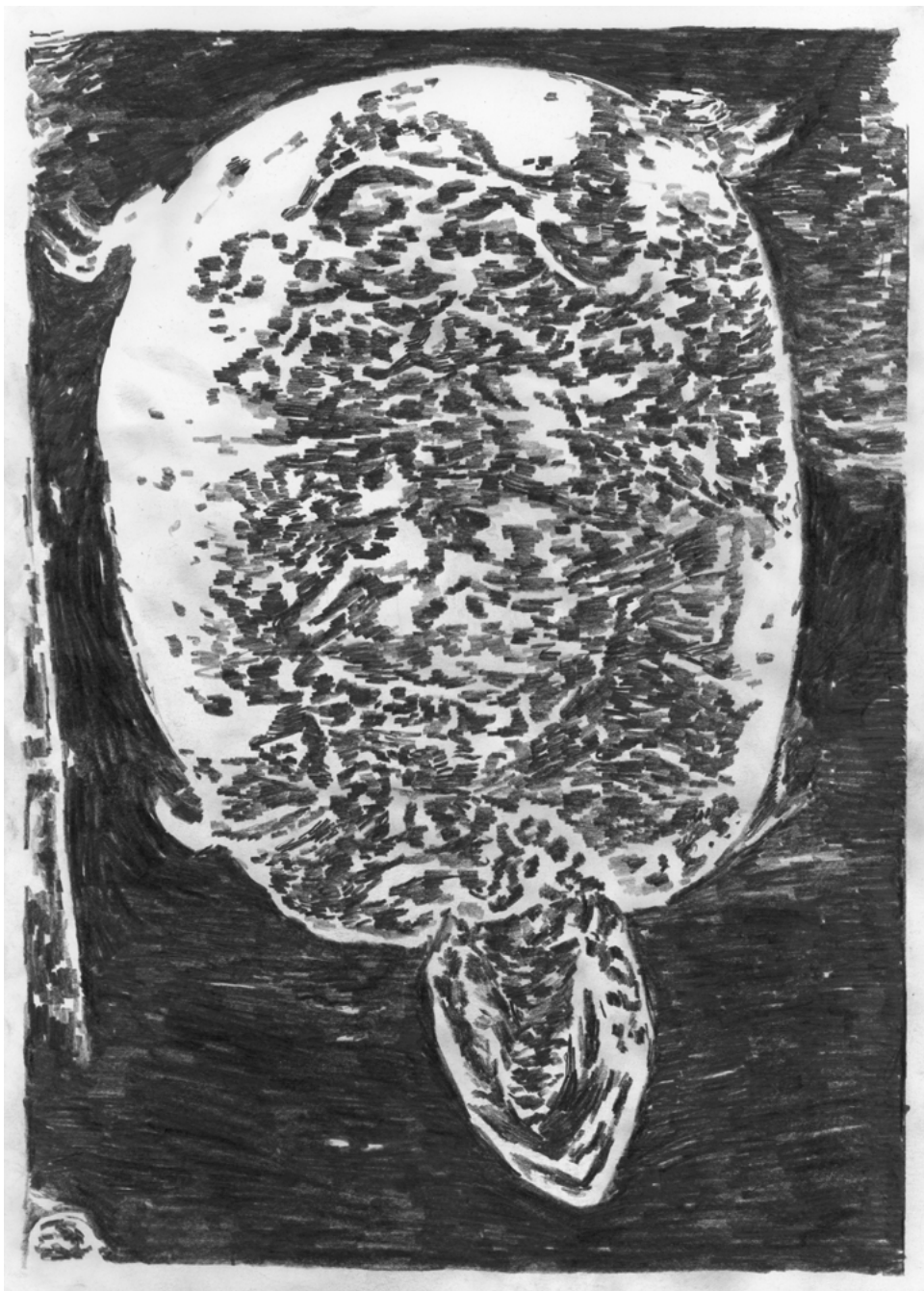
together with the enlightenment project of transparent and hygienic spaces of social progress. Modernism is said to have been infatuated with transparency and lightness – both in its technologically instrumentalist, optimistic visions and in its critical unmasking of structures of domination in order to enable progress and emancipation. What can be called the modernist paradigm of lightness is thus related to modernism's 'fear of the dark' and darkened spaces (Foucault, 1980); the infatuation with light, security and transparency goes hand-in-hand with its uncanny double, the 'invention of a spatial phenomenology of darkness' (Vidler, 1992: 169).

The uncanny therefore refers not so much to darkness itself (if there is such a thing) but to the interplay between darkness and lightness, to the process of bringing to light (that which was hidden). As has been noted by commentators of Freud's essay, 'the uncanny seems (at least for Freud) to involve a special emphasis on the visual, on what comes to light, on what is revealed to the eye. The uncanny is what comes out of the darkness' (Royle, 2003: 108). Importantly, then, both 'movements' – lightness, darkness – are intertwined: something familiar emerges in an unfamiliar context, and something unfamiliar emerges in a familiar context. The invention of the uncanny interferes with any clear-cut dualism in stressing the 'knot' of transparency and obscurity and the originary entanglement of dark space and bright space. It confronts the longing for a home and the desire for domestic security with its apparent counterpart, namely intellectual and literal homelessness, while simultaneously foregrounding the complicity between both (Vidler, 1992: 12).

Defamiliarizing organizational space

The notion of the architectural uncanny opens up a more complex frame of reference for the study of organizational space. It presents the physical spaces (of organization) as affectively and atmospherically charged forces or media of organizing (Martin, 2003). Organization theory's spatial imagination is stretched towards the potentially unsettling and disturbing psycho-spatial dimensions of built materialities. It also follows that exploring the ghostliness of organization has to reckon with the 'uncanny overflow' (Royle, 2003: 24) of spatial settings. The uncanny's capacity to unsettle is closely related to the irreducible unstableness and the excessive movements of space (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). The turn towards the ghostly in the form of the spatial uncanny therefore has quite radical implications for thinking and researching organizational spatialities. In the past 10-15 years, a substantial body of work on organizational space has appeared (Weinfurtner and Seidl, 2018). Heeding Lefebvre's (2009: 186) claim that 'we have passed from the production of things in space to the production of space itself',





these studies have firmly established a focus on the making of organizational spaces themselves and how they shape organizational life. Perhaps most notably, this approach enables studying the spatial materializations of power relations in organizations and their consequences (e.g. Dale and Burrell, 2008; Tyler and Cohen, 2010; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2015; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). Yet this spatial awareness is usually clad in the modernist dualism of (spatial) structures of domination, which bear down on organizational members, and a counterforce of what one could call spatial emancipation. Organizational sites are then presented as either 'dark' spaces of control or 'light' spaces of creativity and resistance (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004) – a seductive temptation when dealing with the brute materiality of architecture.

What resurfaces in such analyses is perhaps a sense of nostalgia that pervades the renaissance of space as analytical category. The 'nature' of this nostalgia is a modernist one, expressing a longing 'for politics, for the subject, for identity, for gender' (Vidler, 2001: 235). Under the guise of spatial thinking, there is a 'return to the comforting terms of a temporal discourse, the authorities of narrative, of beginnings, middles, and ends, of pasts, presents, and futures, that so controlled our thinking in the nineteenth century and that have reappeared consistently in the nostalgic counterspatial moves of the twentieth' (*ibid.*: 236). Here, a comforting narrative of spatial means and ends emerges. Yet this narrative and its assumptions are haunted in a double sense: haunted by homely distinctions such as positive and negative power and clear-cut spatial categories; and haunted by the uncanniness of space, which unsettles these distinctions and categories (Wigley, 1995).

That *unheimlich* somehow belongs to *heimlich*, that the homely cannot be separated from the unhomely and the comforting harbours discomfort and anxiety – these phenomena fuelled Freud's interest in unfolding and systematizing the uncanny. Moreover, they turned this notion into an important category of interpreting modern anxiety, of reflecting upon questions of estrangement, alienation, exile, homelessness and haunting. The uncanny therefore involves feelings of uncertainty and apprehension and a crisis of the boundaries of inside and outside – an unsettling of time and space. In this sense, the uncanny becomes more than a species of anxiety and discomfort; it becomes a 'bulwark against the dangerous temptations of conjuring away plural spectres in the name of a redeemed whole, a realization of narcissistic fantasies, a restoration of a true Heimat' (Jay, 1998: 161).

As for Kafka's creature in *The burrow*, the unhomely is co-present with and tied to organizational spaces. Through the notion of the architectural uncanny, the 'unconcept' of the uncanny therefore opens up the study of the built environments of organization to their ambiguity and their affectively unsettling charge (Beyes

and Steyaert, 2013; De Cock and O'Doherty, 2017). It emphasizes the haunted and multiple constitution of space, and of spatial thinking's potential to embrace this 'spatial swirl of affects' (Thrift, 2006). The architectural imagination of organization theory is thus expanded towards a more complex spatial agency. This entails problematizing the comforting pre-assumption of thinking the agency of built space either with regard to the 'dark' spaces of organizational control and surveillance, or its 'light' counterpart of organized spaces of creativity and innovation. Exploring organizational spatialities therefore calls for less certainty and more openness towards invisibilities and spectres, towards the familiar made strange and the strange made familiar. It 'requires attention to what is not seen' but there, 'to what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive', 'to what appears in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present' (Gordon, 1997: 42). It calls for a scholarly attunement to unsettling and disturbing effects and affects of built materialities. One expects organizational spatialities to be twisted and haunted, unsettled and contested, already defamiliarized or on the verge of defamiliarization, invested with 'invasive and boundary-breaking properties' (Vidler, 2003: 41). In this sense, the study of organizational space needs to embark on voyages into the ghostly and haunted character of organized life.

Empirically, a world of potential research sites presents itself to the organizational scholar. He/she might encounter staircases, corridors, toilets, voids and empty spaces (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1999). An uncanny organizational analysis would need to defamiliarize the exchangeability of a corporate architecture often colloquially deemed soulless, of corporate lobbies and open space offices. It would venture the hypothesis that the colourful and playful 'creative spaces' of today's experience economy harbour their own ambiguity and dread. It would explore new sites of organizing as they emerge through networked technologies and their uncanny doublings of time and space. It would inquire into the return of camp-like enclosures and their cracks and fissures as well as other monstrous sites that constitute the 'capitalist uncanny' (Clarke, 2011). Through addressing and conceptualizing the uncanny overflow of such and other sites, it would bring space back in, again.

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Weird science and datafication

Kristian Bondo Hansen

review of

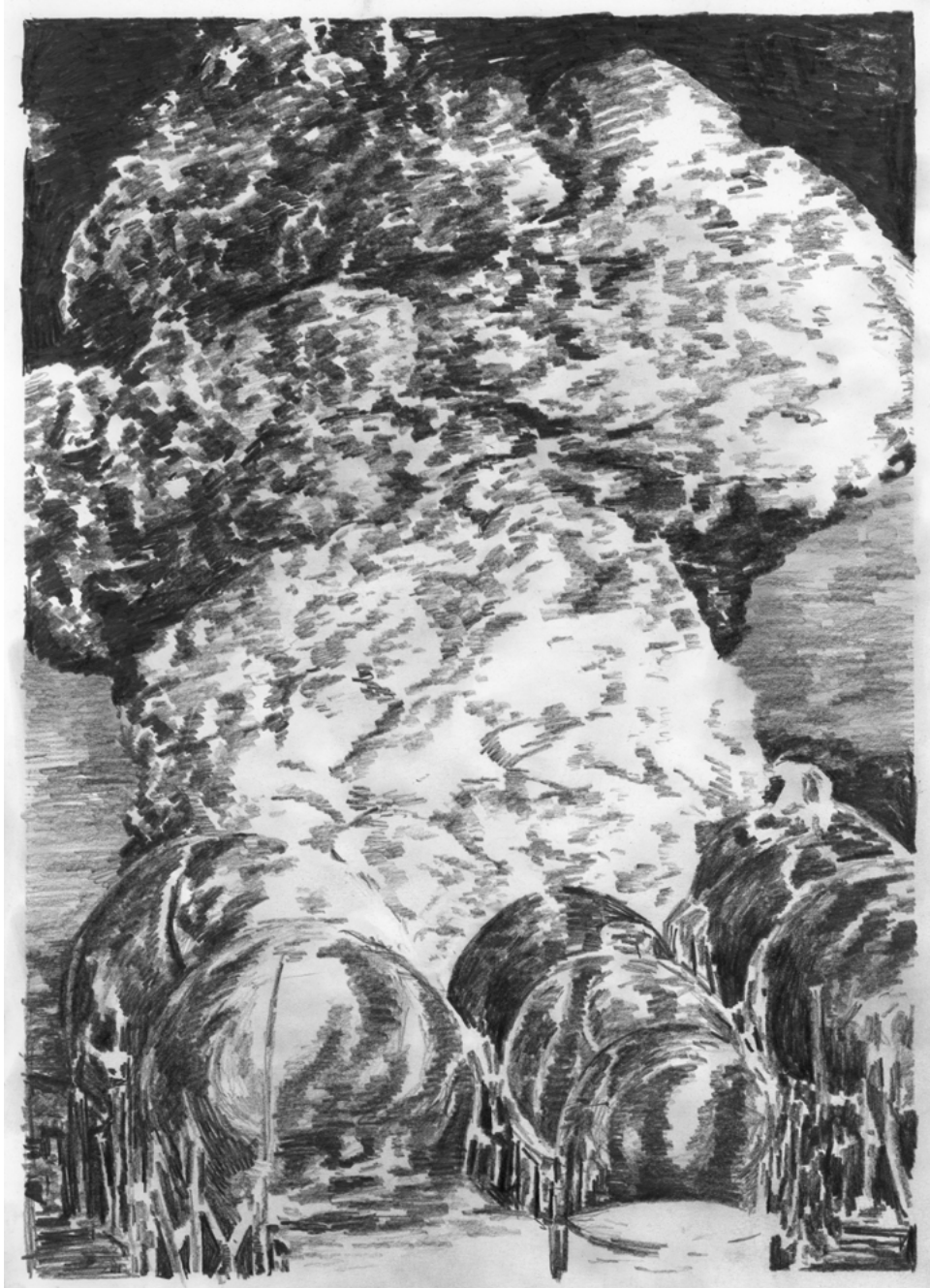
Blackman, L. (2019) *Haunted data: Affect, transmedia, weird science*, London: Bloomsbury Academic. (HB, pp. 256, £65, ISBN 9781350047044).

In August 1910, the American philosopher and psychologist William James was lying on his deathbed in Chocorua, New Hampshire. Just before he died, he told his brother, the great novelist Henry James, to stay near his burial site in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for six weeks after his passing. William wanted his brother to stay close to his resting ground and not travel back to England immediately after the funeral because he wanted to initiate contact with him from beyond the grave (Menand, 2001: 435). It would have been remarkable had Henry received messages from his dead brother, but he did not. What is fascinating about this story is that William James, one of the brightest and most respected men of science of his day, so staunchly believed in mediumship that he wanted to make this parapsychological experiment his rite of passage into the afterlife.

I came to think of William James' last request to his brother when reading Lisa Blackman's *Haunted data: Affect, transmedia, weird science*. The anecdote somehow captures the essence of the book, for it playfully yet seriously engages with the not-always-so-impenetrable boundaries between science and the kinds of inquiries and theories that belong to what Blackman dubs 'weird science'. Like William James, who considered himself as much a psychic researcher as a psychologist and



the Past, Catches Up



pragmatist philosopher, Blackman embraces the weirdness in science without romanticising or ridiculing it, keeping an open mind to what it might tell us even from beyond the grave. Readers of Blackman's previous work will know that she has long had a profoundly personal research interest in the marginalised and suppressed voices in the history of psychological thought, and she wonders how these voices might challenge orthodox understandings of subjectivity, consciousness, personality, etc. (James belongs to this group of thinkers, all of whom were interested in 'the radical indeterminacy of the human' [15].)¹ In books such as *Mass hysteria: Critical psychology and media studies* (2001), written with Valerie Walkerdine, and *Immaterial bodies: Affect, embodiment, mediation* (2012) as well as in a string of academic articles, Blackman has been able to show that both psychological theories and ideas from psychic research – long disqualified or considered unscientific – can actually provide valuable insight into the experience and construction of subjectivity, corporality and sociality in modern mediatised and affective societies. She pushes this agenda in *Haunted data*, where it is the 'datafication' of society and culture and its implications for science that are put under scrutiny.

Haunted data contains many ideas, references, theoretical assertions and mind-boggling perspectives, yet the central argument is that:

the sciences need the arts, philosophy and the humanities in order to develop the possibility of more open, creative, adventurous and inventive science(s)... [and] that it is important for cultural theorists to invent new ways of engaging with science, in all its ambiguities, contradictions, uncertainties, fracture-lines, hesitations, erasures and displacements. [xxvi]

Blackman substantiates this argument by exploring and discussing a couple of relatively recent 'science controversies' that erupted in the aftermath of the publication of two scientific studies. Analysing and discussing the two science controversies, she raises four pertinent research questions: 1) How are science and governance changing in the context of digital media and digital forms of communication? 2) What are the consequences thereof and how might we understand and examine new technologies of power – specifically psychological and affective forms of governance as they extend and are extended within software and computational cultures? 3) What kinds of critical research can be done in the context of software and computational cultures? 4) What does following science

¹ As one of the founders of modern psychology, James is, of course, not a marginalised voice in the field. However, it is well-documented by Blackman, among others, that James' very active involvement with psychic research is seldom mentioned by James scholars or by scholars interested in the foundation of modern psychology.

controversies as they take form in digital communication add to contemporary calls for more rapprochement between the humanities and the sciences?

The first controversy concerns a study in which a Yale cognitive scientist, John Bargh, claims to have demonstrated that subjects walked more slowly to a lift after being shown ageing-related words in a scrambled sentence task [34]. Bargh's experiments suggest that people are susceptible to unconscious priming, and the study thus challenges the sanctity of the rational, autonomous human subject. In the second part of *Haunted data*, Blackman discusses a series of experiments conducted by Cornell psychologist and former stage magician Daryl Bem, who maintains that the future can retroactively reshape the past [88]. I will not go any further into Bem's and Bargh's studies but only reveal that they predictably sparked major controversy. Bargh and Bem were fiercely criticised by colleagues in the blogosphere, and repeated failures to replicate the studies only added fuel to the fire. Blackman makes these controversies more than fascinating stories about the furore that such threats to 'normal science' can ignite by elevating them to examples of how digital culture and digital forms of communication are reconfiguring the ways scientific work is perceived in the public and by peers. This is the real feat of *Haunted data*, and I would argue of much of Blackman's previous work, that it takes something many of us tend to dismiss as obscure and uses it to open up much broader discussions about science, society, subjectivity and power. The Foucauldian influence is unequivocal.

While Blackman is a brilliant writer who excels in loosening the stiffness of academic writing with drops of storytelling, word plays and mundane examples, the sheer number of ideas she is able to entertain in a relatively short book makes *Haunted data* a challenging read at times. That being said, Blackman's insistence on throwing herself into the rabbit hole whenever the digital archives provide a lead is admirable, and resonates nicely well with the more inventive and adventurous engagements with science she is advocating. Rather than endeavour to cover every topic explored in *Haunted data* in this review, I will instead be selective and focus my attention on a few of the many exciting and stimulating ideas she raises in the book. My focus is undoubtedly biased and even intentionally idiosyncratic, as I am taking the liberty to relate central themes in the book to some of my own research interests.

Post-publication peer review and the afterlives of data

One revelation from the analyses of the two science controversies is that digital media has altered and continues to alter the ways in which research output is evaluated, reviewed, commented on and discussed. Many academics tend to devote most of their attention to everything that happens up until a manuscript





is accepted for publication. After that, they usually breathe one long sigh of relief, or perhaps get a feeling of ‘on to the next one!’ In her exploration of the Bargh and Bem controversies, Blackman analyses the aftermaths, or rather the afterlives, of academic output, showcasing the myriad data-threads spun from commenting sections on blogs, posts on other social media and articles in the established media and propagated in cross-referrals to these stories through a ‘dizzying array of hyperlinks’ [19]. This purgatorial state of potentially infinite scrutiny of academic output constitutes what Blackman calls the ‘post-publication peer review’ (PPPR):

PPPR refers to a particular context of data production and circulation that has the potential to transform academic practices of writing, publishing, debate and impact. It focusses on the afterlives that academic articles and books might accrue after publication, and the ways in which PPPR found on blogs, internet forums, social networks and other social media might enter into, intervene within and change the settings and parameters of what counts as legitimate and illegitimate debate. [xiv]

Keeping track of debates that proliferate in digital space can be immensely difficult, and one can easily be led astray. However, Blackman does not shy from getting off the beaten track, as one can also see in her so-called hauntological method, which combines Foucauldian genealogy and a Derrida-Barad-Haraway-inspired *embodied hauntology*. The methodology is deliberately performative in that ‘data is shaped and reshaped’ by the decisions the inquirer makes and the actions she takes [19]. This means that by studying the afterlives of research output in the digital sphere, the researcher necessarily contributes to the PPPR process. Like an ethnographer, Blackman immerses herself in the unbounded field that stretches out from the respective academic studies she makes her points of departure. This allows her to pick up clues, to draw connections to the past or to possible futures and, ultimately, to engage with questions about what data are, how they come about and what they do. Indeed, Blackman notes that data can take many forms and do many things, but they are never completely static or neutral:

Data, as with statistical forms of analysis, never speak for themselves. Data assume rhetorical forms, functions and strategies. One dominant form is the speculative, anticipative relations shaped from the aggregation and enactment of data patterns, put to work in order to generate future value and capital. Data are assembled, reassembled and re-performed... [Data] within digital and software media environments accumulate, leave traces and also disappear. Despite the myth or fiction of the universal database, where it is assumed that every action and transaction leave a trace, this dystopian myth of complete dataveillance does not stack up. Data disappear, are removed, become submerged or displaced, are lost, overlooked, deemed irrelevant, make accidental connections (rather than aggregated patterns), can remain alert or lifeless. [56-57]

In examining the two science controversies, *Haunted data* challenges the ‘instrumentalist notions of data’ [180] that consciously but certainly also unconsciously structure and give direction to our lives in today’s datafied societies. This in and of itself is a tremendously important intervention in times where data – the bigger the better it seems – are often proposed to hold the solution to almost every conceivable problem of a social, economic, political or scientific nature. One can also appreciate being provided with methodological tools for examining how data are haunted and what haunts them, and such tools certainly afford possibilities for further critical engagement with data both within and outside of the confines of the academic world.

However, what remains to be seen is whether Blackman’s *hauntological* approach can bring to life some of the ghosts of what superficially appear to be less contestable or openly controversial data than those produced at the intersection of social psychology and psi phenomena, where Bargh’s and Bem’s studies are located. This is not a critique of *Haunted data* as much as an encouragement for testing the possibilities this critical research practice might offer in studies regarding what I, for lack of a better word, would call more ‘mainstream’ cases. One area that might be interesting to explore, it having become thoroughly datafied in the last couple of decades, is securities trading in financial markets.² As someone doing ethnographic research in the field of algorithmic or computational finance, where data scientists and software developers tirelessly write highly sophisticated algorithms able to place orders in the market far faster than a blink of an eye, adapt to the changed behaviour of competing algorithms and process unfathomable amounts of data, I have come across a lot of data-centric people. These days everyone in finance is talking about and working with data: market data, big data, alternative data, structured data, unstructured data, noisy data, tagged data, bugged data, anomalous data and so forth. Many market participants consider data and data analytics the key to gaining an edge in the market, which is why huge sums are invested in data, data-processing technology and experts capable of handling it.

People working in algorithmic finance are generally well-aware that data can be haunted, although they would not use that particular word. Rather, they would say that data has bugs or anomalies, and many are also conscious about the lurking dangers of being seduced and possibly misguided by data. While haunted data pose a risk to the performance of trading strategies, financiers are also aware of the possibility of taking advantage of the anomalous and apparently

² Blackman briefly touches upon the topic of trading in a discussion of Karin Knorr Cetina’s and Urs Bruegger’s (2002) study of post-social relations between foreign-exchange traders and their computer screens [114-117].

counterintuitive. For example, programming algorithms to identify anomalies or anomalous patterns in data is one way for trading firms not only to backtrack potentially erroneous strategies or external events negatively impacting a trading algorithm's performance but also to anticipate future scenarios. Accuracy in anticipation, projecting and forecasting is essential for the profit-making and risk-reduction of many trading firms, and data constitutes the grounds on which the probabilistic estimates about the future are made. However, financiers know that the future is, at least to some extent, incomputable, yet they must be as informed as possible about likelihoods and probabilities in order to predict that if x happens, then y will probably be the result and so forth.

Blackman argues that the 'anticipatory techniques' and 'probabilistic statistics' used in, for example, the world of finance are limited in that these techniques are incapable of imagining possible futures. Imagining possible scenarios for the future instead of calculating probable outcomes is an area where Blackman believes that the arts and humanities have a lead they should use to their advantage [85]. Blackman's critique that probabilistic thinking has proliferated in economy as well as in society echoes that of other scholars who have proposed alternatives to the probabilistic anticipation of the future. Accounting scholar Michael Power has, for instance, argued for a 'new politics of uncertainty' in which 'the myth of perfect manageability is laid to rest' (2004: 58). More recently, sociologist Jens Beckert has done work on how actors in the capitalist system often underestimate the unknowability and incalculability of the future, and on how fictional expectations often drive economic action (Beckert, 2016; Beckert and Bronk, 2018). While the argument that not everything can or presumably ought to be quantified, computed and subjected to probability analysis is surely compelling, it would be fascinating to see the alternatives to probabilistic reasoning pushed further and thus do more than point out the limitations of these forms of reasoning. Although Blackman's analyses deliver on the promise of engaging with the quirkiness and weirdness of science and data, the main contribution of her analyses, as I see it, is that they uncover a more sharply winding path to inquiries into our thoroughly mediated and datafied societies. Power and Beckert propose alternative ways of anticipating the future by imagining futures in the areas of risk management and finance, and it would likewise have been interesting to see Blackman's alternative, enticing and somewhat curious methodology being put to the test in areas other than the two science controversies discussed. Such an expansion of the project might materialise in a possible future.

Resurrecting forgotten theorists and a clever horse named Hans

A major strength of *Haunted data* is the way Blackman, through her playful genealogical approach, manages to trace forgotten psychological ideas that

suddenly surface in a contemporary science controversy. Similarly, Blackman elegantly takes a science journalist's comparison between John Bargh and Wilhelm von Osten (the owner of a horse named Hans that became quite the attraction in Germany in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries because of its alleged ability to solve mathematical problems) and seriously engages with the story of Mr. von Osten and his horse, explaining why there is more to this 'Hans the Horse charge' than a thinly veiled attempt to ridicule Bargh's research. Inspired by science studies philosopher Isabelle Stengers' call for resurrections of seemingly forgotten figures [16], Blackman brings ghosts from the silenced history of psychology and from stories like the one about Hans back to life as she critically examines the current state of science.

Reading about the John Bargh priming controversy, including the 'Hans the horse charge', reminded me of another controversy within the scientific realm that took place at about the same time as Clever Hans was tapping his hoofs to solve math problems. In the late-nineteenth and very early-twentieth centuries, Eusapia Palladino, a medium from Naples, succeeded in shaking the belief system of some of Europe's and the United States' most prominent men and women of science. During her Naples séances, Palladino suspended tables in the air without any visible support and made curtains blow wildly in a room with all its windows and doors closed. These magnificent occurrences of mediated psychic phenomena were reported by, among others, the psychic researcher and scientific journalist Hereward Carrington in a *McClure's Magazine* article from 1909 titled 'Eusapia Palladino: The despair of science' (Carrington, 1909). Carrington further claimed to have witnessed Palladino making the renowned Italian neurologist Enrico Morselli left-handed, even though he was normally right-handed, and to have felt a cold breeze coming from a scar on Palladino's forehead. It is no wonder that a psychic researcher like Carrington was taken by Palladino's séances and convinced about the reality of psychic phenomena, but it seems quite astounding that a medium from Naples was able to draw the interest of and ultimately win over some of the foremost scientists of the day.

Besides Morelli, the academic notabilities who participated in séances with Palladino also included the physiologist Charles Richet, Pierre and Marie Curie, the (in)famous polymath Gustave Le Bon and, from across the Atlantic, none other than William James. Another prominent scientist visiting Palladino in Naples in the late-nineteenth century was the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, a fierce opponent of psychic research who had tried to eradicate it from the Italian academic milieu, but who after having participated in two séances with Palladino, became almost a convert. In a letter written in 1892 Lombroso admitted to his changed view of psychic mediation, while also implying that his faith in science was as unwavering as always:

I am filled with confusion and regret that I combated with so much persistence the possibility of the facts called spiritualistic. I say facts, because I am still opposed to the theory. (Carrington, 1909: 663-664)

As a criminal anthropologist and positivist, Lombroso could not deny the facts he observed with his own eyes, but he still found it hard to accept that any scientific theory could possibly explain such strange phenomena. In *Haunted data*, Blackman demonstrates how assertions about the reality of parapsychological phenomena have always provoked and continue to provoke strong reactions in the scientific community, and in instances where such assertions cannot swiftly be refuted, they tend to either create a creeping doubt or give rise to more polemical dismissals of anything that falls outside the bounds of the established sciences. As in the Bargh and Bem controversies, the controversy around Palladino also had its fair share of polemical outbursts.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Palladino's spiritualistic séances became the centre of heated exchanges between those in academic psychology who considered psychic research a legitimate scientific field and those who dismissed it as inherently unscientific. Among the critics of psychic research were one of the founders of modern psychology, Wilhelm Wundt, and his student, Hugo Münsterberg. As psychology historian Andreas Sommer (2012) has argued, the controversy around Palladino was not just a matter of believing or not believing in the existence of psychic phenomena – it was essentially a debate about how the boundaries of academic psychology should be drawn and thus how the scientific status of the nascent discipline of psychology could be bolstered. The controversy intensified when Hereward Carrington invited Palladino to the USA to be investigated by a committee of scientists. Although Carrington wanted to show the world the scientific legitimacy of psychic research, inviting Münsterberg and other known critics of psychic research to sit on the committee proved to be a disservice to his endeavour. James, who saw Münsterberg's position on psychic research as a bow to Scientism, warned Carrington against extending invitations to persons unyielding in their views on science (Sommer, 2012: 31). In keeping with his pragmatist stance, James accused Münsterberg of 'metaphysical dogmatism' because of his premature rejection of allegedly 'natural phenomena', while Münsterberg saw James' openness to the spiritualistic as a 'threat to rationality' and to science proper (Sommer, 2012: 24, 30). Münsterberg publicly exposed Palladino after having attended two sittings with the medium during her visit to the USA. However, Sommer has demonstrated that Münsterberg debunked the Neapolitan medium in a far from convincing manner. His whole approach to his investigation was dubious, his accusations of fraudulence were unsubstantiated and his account of what happened during the sittings was inconsistent with other attendees' observations (Sommer, 2012: 31-34). To Münsterberg, psychic research

needed to be dissociated from academic psychology, and pulling the rug from under Palladino allowed him to display once and for all that psychic phenomena were not real and that there were therefore no grounds for any research into such non-existing phenomena. Münsterberg's popularity and academic credentials strengthened his trustworthiness, which meant that the media uncritically accepted his barely substantiated debunking of Palladino's alleged humbug.

What the intellectual dispute over Palladino's psychic powers shows is exactly what Blackman demonstrates in her exploration of the PPPR's of Bargh's and Bem's studies, namely that science controversies are engulfed in power relations, with the preservation of boundaries between the scientific and the non-scientific being the battleground. Interestingly, these struggles are not purely intellectual, but whirled into a tangle of idiosyncratic views, disciplinary positioning, personal differences, etc. – all of which are only amplified and made more complex when they unfold in digital space. The victors of these struggles write a history of their discipline in which their rivals are marginalised and eventually forgotten. *Haunted data* is a reminder of the importance of being receptive to ideas that, although once silenced, occasionally come back to haunt us. Still, the invitation to be more receptive to those rugged ideas dismissed as too eerie and too far from the mainstream should not be mistaken for an encouragement to revive whatever dead philosopher, psychologist and sociologist fits the purpose of a given study, as sometimes occurs in organisational and in particular critical management studies. The invitation is instead a call for openness in science practice, which does not mean that we should relax our scientific standards, but rather be critically aware of their impact on our inquiries and the data we expose ourselves to as researchers.

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