The method of juxtaposition
Unfolding the visual turn in organization studies

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In the most sophisticated critical works, content and form are intimately linked
(Marcus and Fischer 1986: 137)

For now we see through a glass, darkly

To state that we live in an image-saturated world borders on the trivial, and is obvious. The word obvious is defined in Oxford English Dictionary as ‘clearly visible’, but also as ‘banal’ and ‘predictable’. So, we may ask, how can we pass the banal and the predictable, indeed the obvious, of the visual and render it intriguing again? A renewed engagement with the visual cannot, of course, take it at face value. What you see is very seldom what you get. However, this is not a function of late modernity being saturated, for some to the point of nausea, with images. In the first century AD, St Paul had already noted the visual’s non-trivial character: ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly’ (I Cor. 13:12). To Paul, the visual is puzzling, and not only because ancient glass was less clear than today’s transparent technology. In his warning, Paul uses a particular Greek word for ‘darkly’, namely ἀνιματικά, enigmatic: the visual is, in this perspective, at least as enigmatic as any other empirical matter or discourse, for all that the visual is connected to clarity and truth in what Jay (1986) calls modernity’s ‘empire of the gaze’.

It is a fact, whether one likes ‘the optics of it’ or not, that the visual reigns superior in contemporary life and in the life of organizations. Outside the field of organization studies, the visual has attained a dominant position as what expresses and, concomitantly, informs and controls our joint ‘social imaginaries’ (C. Taylor 2004). This may be conceived as the engine of Debord’s (1994) society of the spectacle or Baudrillard’s (1994) equally uncanny age of the simulacrum. It is, moreover, true to such a degree that one would assume a ‘visual turn’ in organization studies to have superseded the ‘linguistic turn’. Yet, while discourse analysis, which is focused on language and linguistic representation, had a deservedly easy entry into organization studies (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000), this has been the case only to a lesser extent for the analysis of the visual (Strangleman 2004). There are, however, reasons for optimism. The publication of this Companion testifies in any case to the fact that the visual in its own right is gaining ground within organization studies as a (set of) field(s) and method(s); visual analysis...
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is what may both complement and transgress discursive and more traditional, social scientific analysis (Fuery and Fuery 2003).

Whether one chooses to be optimistic or not in this regard, it is a curious fact that organization studies still remains about 20 years behind cultural studies scholarship, where the visual is a much more central category. Moreover, organization studies possibly still struggles with a Romantic yearning for depth and profundity as opposed to surface and superficiality. Organization scholars prefer to deal with the meaning of the words uttered over the executive desk, rather than with the designed visuality of the shiny desk itself and the room’s accompanying CEO portraits (for exceptions, see Betts 2006; Guthey and Jackson 2005). Organization studies remains more inclined to deal with the inside of the body from where thoughts and language on this account would ‘stem from’, rather than with the imagery through which, today, this body is expressed and disciplined, our time’s ‘social imageries’ (C. Taylor 2004). The inside and the depth are still considered the sites where truth ultimately is to be found (psychoanalysis is a qualified example of this, as expressed in Gabriel’s Organizations in Depth, 1999). Nietzsche, however, would have it differently, as expressed in his praise for ‘the Greeks’: ‘They knew how to live: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words – in the whole Olympus of appearance!’ (2001: 8).

The surface and the apparent – the visual – was Nietzsche’s way to profundity. As Deleuze says: ‘Nietzsche was able to discover depth only after conquering the surfaces’ (1990: 147). Visual analysis of organizations, in my view, is especially well suited to ‘stop bravely at the surface’ in order to ‘conquer’ it, to sense and unfold what goes on nearby and find its profundity in a meticulous superficiality.

This is in line with Paul’s insight that, while the visual is important, it is still an enigma through which one must travel to reach Deleuze’s profundity. Paul considers – much in line with Debord and Baudrillard – the enigmatic quality of our vision to be an ethical issue. The ‘now’ of the dark vision he speaks of is a time before the light of God, as it were, becomes ‘all in all’ (I Cor. 15:28). The now, then, is a time in which the visual is deceptive and seductive, doubled and barred. When Jesus was led astray by the devil, it happened in the desert, the place for hallucinations and fata morgana; eventually, Jesus was offered a total view from a mountain top of the world that could fall under his reign, if he would succumb to the seduction. However, and staying with this theological inroad to the visual, one observes that the true deity cannot be approached in full light, as spelled out in Matthew 6:6: ‘But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.’

The truth, as it turns out, is not necessarily directly approachable in the visual range. The visual is bent on pretending that what you see is what you get. But you see ‘through a glass, darkly’, and you are not going to get what you expect (from Latin expectare, to look out for). To Paul, who will be part of one of the ‘visual unfoldings’ in this chapter, this issue is ethical to the point of damnation and disgrace: only a conversion, as we will see in the analysis of Caravaggio’s Conversion of St Paul, can make one ‘see the light’ and receive Truth (or, in a perhaps more modest Companion-style, experience an interesting, organizational analysis). Light will, in any case, as Kavanagh (Chapter 4, this volume) argues, be connected to insight, while, still, the visual itself is unreliable and covered in (an ethical and spiritual) darkness. Descartes, Caravaggio’s contemporary, will come to share Plato’s, the Semites’ as well as Paul’s distrust of the visual, but the Cartesian alternative – the sovereign power of reason – was, ironically, in itself ‘a model based on the metaphors of vision (the mind’s eye) in which the properties of the visible were transferred into the mental domain’ (Kavanagh, Chapter 4, this volume).
Yet, Paul did not consider the ethical issue of visuality – that you don’t get what you see – solved by moving it into the domain of a superior reason: it remains enigmatic and, theologically and ethically, fallen. While perhaps not calling for a traditional conversion, this chapter presents a method of experimental juxtaposition, which intends to challenge the obviousness of the visual by rendering visible, ideally, forces that exist in secrecy, veiled in the all too obvious. This is, at any rate, how Deleuze and Guattari read Paul Klee’s idea of the role of art: ‘The visual material must capture nonvisible forces. Render visible, Klee said; not render or reproduce the visible’ (1987: 342).

This is very much in line with Berthoin Antal et al.’s observation regarding artistic interventions in organizations, which ‘work with the powerful intangible forces in people and organizations’ (Chapter 16, this volume). However, as such, organizational researchers are not artists; neither should we pretend to be: our ethical task is more closely connected to the political than to the artistic, yet may from time to time bridge the two. We may become craftsmen and deploy the force of art – its ability to render visible and its ability to create ‘new sensations’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Such effects stem from an engagement with ‘knowledge that is not entirely verbal, nor entirely sayable’ (Strati quoted in Warren 2008: 561). This enables us – and this is the idea with the method of juxtaposition – to invoke other ways to understand a given visual, organizational artefact and blow up its significance. Such visual or aesthetic method is a strategy that pertains directly to the ethical and hence political side of organizational analysis, directly intervening in the virtual and invisible, yet ‘powerful intangible forces’ of organizing.

In this chapter, I want to walk the reader through three juxtapositions, which intend to intervene in the configuration of these forces, each intervening, as it were, on various ‘levels’ of organization. The first pertains to the level of the organization itself, as it juxtaposes the famous Renaissance painting Conversion of St. Paul (1601) by Caravaggio with an also quite well-known organizational chart by Henry Mintzberg, namely his 1983 chart of ‘The Six Basic Parts of the Organization’. The second juxtaposition pertains to the level of ‘management’, as it juxtaposes an image of a naked CEO of Zentropia, Lars von Trier’s production company, with a photo of four Nigerians from a festival in 1944. The third juxtaposition, then, puts the iconic photo of a little Jewish boy coming out of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw with his hands in the air taken in 1943 side by side with Paul Klee’s painting Angelus Novus from 1920. In some respect, this juxtaposition pertains to the individual level (the boy), yet its ambition is to intervene in the ‘collective instruction’ of memory.

The following ambition counts for all the juxtapositions: while they may set off at a certain ‘level’, as normally understood in analyses of organizations (say, individual, group or organizational level), they illustrate how visual organizational analysis is able to move by simple (and, at times, by more complicated) means between different levels of analysis. Following this introduction, the method of juxtaposition is discussed methodologically, after which the three examples of juxtapositions are presented and discussed. A brief afterword closes the chapter.

**The method of juxtaposition**

The method of juxtaposition is quite simple, as it will place visual artefacts side by side. One may juxtapose any visual material and any organizational artefacts, a strategy that could involve photos, paintings, charts, material items, models, slogans, logos, architectural designs, the corporative rules and the company games, brands and commercials, etc. The point and aim is to let the collision of the two items make the reader/viewer stand back and think anew. The methodological challenge is to construct rich juxtapositions that produce new sensory
experiences in those that are subjected to them, freeing them from the way these subjects have been disciplined regarding how they may perceive and interpret the world (Warren 2008; Gagliardi 1996).

Juxtaposition analyses visual material in organization through the double lenses of aesthetics: two different experiences and two different habits of viewing collide and conjoin into a new experience. This new experience is a somewhat alienated one: the familiar becomes strange and, at times, uncanny, and breaks up the ways in which we, as Sontag (2003) sees it, have been ‘instructed’ to see and memorize what we see. The anthropologists Marcus and Fischer (1986) address such ‘instructional’ tendencies in Western culture through constructing a new type of enquiry, which works through ‘defamiliarization’. In their view, this can be accomplished in two ways: defamiliarization by ‘cross-cultural juxtaposition’ (technical and organizational) and defamiliarization by ‘epistemological critique’ (juxtaposing forms of knowledge formation) (for a discussion, see Banerjee and Linstead 2004).

For the purpose of this chapter, it is especially Marcus and Fischer’s method of ‘cross-cultural juxtaposition’ that is interesting; it forms the theoretical background for the method of juxtaposition here proposed. In order to illustrate their point, they discuss the well-known study by Margaret Mead (2001) of young people coming of age in Samoa, where she juxtaposes her study of Samoan youth with that of US youth. Yet as convincing as her study is – it practically came to define anthropology in the US – it is only a ‘weak’ variant of juxtaposition, since Mead only actually explored and researched the Samoan side of the juxtaposition, and relied on common knowledge when it came to US youth. In the ‘strong’ version of cross-cultural juxtaposition, which is the version I am championing here, both sides of the juxtaposition must be researched, analysed and explored in order to reap the full fruits of the exercise.

Marcus and Fischer’s cross-cultural juxtaposition aims to defamiliarize the familiar and habitual by a ‘disruption of common sense, doing the unexpected, placing familiar objects in unfamiliar, or even shocking, contexts’ in order ‘to make the reader conscious of difference’ (1986: 137). This procedure produces new differences and remains a ‘more explicit empirical’ and ‘more dramatic, upfront kind of cultural criticism’ (ibid.: 138). Within organization studies, Alvesson offers an astute reading of Marcus and Fischer’s method, explaining that ‘the trick … is to locate one’s framework (cultural understanding) away from the culture being studied, so that significant material to “resolve” emerges’ – and this is, Alvesson continues, ‘of course to a large extent a matter of creativity’ (1995: 53).

Such creation of new differences and consciousness, in my view, is exemplarily attained in Ian King’s (2003) juxtaposition of a painting by Mondrian with an organizational chart taken from Mary Jo Hatch. King says that ‘In placing these two figures together we should not be entirely surprised by their bond’ (2003: 197), which is an insight the carefully crafted juxtaposition always should aim at. In King’s case, the two images obviously belong to two different archives or imaginaries; they are both, each in their way, indebted to a view of science that is closely linked to Scientific Management and parallel, early modernist ways of thinking. Following what Marcus and Fischer refer to as the ‘strong’ version of their programme, in which both sides of the juxtaposition are explored equally, King establishes a set of genuine connections between what first appear disparate.

The suggestion that these two figures possess similar characteristics has become more understandable as our discussion has continued – both have emerged and have in their different ways responded to the writings of F.W. Taylor and others advocating a scientific approach to organization and management.

(King 2003: 203)
In the most productive juxtaposition, the ‘strong version’ as Marcus and Fischer call it, both sides of the juxtaposition are researched and explored. When the two parts or two sides of the fold are both unfolded (they may be inside/outside of the same fold, or the next fold in a manifold that would consist of more images from, possibly, the same archives), new similarities are seen and new differences are produced. It is in this positive sense that King ‘does not rely on mere defamiliarization for an effect, but rather tries to engage the reader in a prolonged, dialectic discourse about the open-ended nature of similarities and differences’ (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 161). This dialectical discourse must traverse both sides of the juxtaposition and create a third site where the ‘new sensations’ that Deleuze and Guattari (1994) talk about become possible.

In the juxtaposition between Caravaggio’s second version of The Conversion of Saint Paul (from 1601) and Mintzberg’s (1983) chart of ‘The Six Basic Parts of the Organization’, Sørensen (2010) points out how Mintzberg’s model and Caravaggio’s painting both partake in and depart from a long tradition of naturalizing contingent divisions between labour and management, expressed through darkness and light. Also a number of more or less explicit juxtapositions have emerged in organization studies. Departing from Kristeva’s discussion of the body and law, Matilal and Höpfl (2009) juxtapose images of the Bhopal disaster with the ‘dry’ accounts of the disaster. Perhaps being less programmed in the collision it engenders in the empirical material, it still strives to ‘find the relationship’ between the two expressions of disaster and ‘set [them] against each other’ (Matilal and Höpfl 2009: 953).

In a more radical vein, Burrell’s Pandemonium also deploys the form of juxtaposition in the book’s very layout, where the upper and lower part of the pages must be read in different directions, so that the book will become ‘a divided highway in which the meridian or central reservation separates reading which is moving in one direction from reading which is moving in the other’ (Burrell 1997: 30).

In addition, organization scholars may get inspiration from avant-garde artists, who, in the twentieth century, developed the ‘art of juxtaposition’, which has produced ‘disconcerting, fragmented works’ (Shattuck quoted in Broughton 1981: 48). But we are still faced with the pressing methodological question of what material to juxtapose. The first rule is that the image or artefact you want to change the perception of – be it a Renaissance masterpiece, an image of a CEO in the creative sector, or a victim of a crime against humanity – must be selected because of its quality of being remarkable, interesting, or even iconic.

The second rule is experimentation: find a counter-image or artefact and place it beside the first item. Now, the field of this experimentation is not just limitless. Great art is not chaotic or haphazard; neither is a strong and compelling, empirical analysis. On the contrary; the form and the content of an analysis are equally important as Marcus and Fischer observe: ‘In the most sophisticated critical works, content and form are intimately linked’ (1986: 137). One cannot, in other words, just juxtapose a chosen item with anything and assume this to be productive. Ultimately, of course, one only knows after the fact whether one’s juxtaposition is productive or not, but one necessary and, as it were, productive constraint is that both images (texts, symbols, artefacts, etc.) must belong to what Deleuze (1988) in his reading of Foucault refers to as the same ‘archive’: it must be feasible to construct an archive where both images/artefacts can be said to belong.

In the final case of this chapter, the juxtaposition between a photo of a genocide and a piece of art, both images may be said to stem from the archive termed ‘children close to death’, or ‘subjects faced with the horror of war’. Yet, while the images must belong to the same archive, and ‘repeat’ the basic figure comprising and traversing the archive, they must at the same
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time be ‘different’ in a significant way. The one must, as Marcus and Fischer argue, be able to defamiliarize the other in a reciprocal and ultimately circular process. This also counts for the first juxtaposition, where a painting by Caravaggio is juxtaposed with Mintzberg’s basic model of the organization (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). Such a juxtaposition opens up, in Roland Barthes’ (1977) words, a third space or an ‘obtuse meaning’, which, as he stresses, is ‘sensually produced’.

Another methodological or, perhaps, technical question is how one goes about analysing and developing a juxtaposition. Here the rule is: everything is already there, although it may be enigmatic, veiled, not yet unfolded. So work detail by detail: what is different between the two items, and what is repetitive. The written analysis may – as with the boy and the angel – consciously try to effect the production of a third space or figure ‘between’ the two images, which both unites them and makes them stand out on their own: both transforms them and anchors them in their original zone of solidarity.

Marcus and Fischer are quite explicitly aware of the dangers of the method and point out that it may produce ‘off-balance, even unwieldy texts, by conventional standards’ and they observe that the enterprise is often ‘received as merely fanciful, cute, or eccentric, rather than really consequential, persuasive, or biting’ (1986: 138). Yet, the productive and persuasive juxtaposition recreates the world as an open-ended event, and in some way remarkable or interesting becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Finally, one particular promising consequence within organization studies is, as I see it, the method’s ability to change the organization of memory, or, to be more specific, to change the organizational memory. Organizational Memory Studies (Rowlinson et al. 2010; Booth et al. 2007) identifies the role organizations and organizational artefacts play in subjecting memory and history to specific dominating systems of memory and in this way participates in its ongoing ‘instruction’ (Sontag 2003). This is especially critical when it comes to photos, which, as we once were told, convey reality. But photos do not convey reality, rather, they instruct our memory: ‘Photographs objectify: they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed. And photographs are a species of alchemy, for all they are prized as a transparent account of reality’ (Sontag 2003: 81).

It is this alchemical process that a productive juxtaposition should intercept. This way another space where another understanding of a photo and hence the entire organization of memory may open up. Sontag here wants to free the image, but not from Halbwachs’ (1992) ‘collective memory’, a concept which Sontag rejects. Rather, she wants to free the image from the ‘collective instruction’, which has tied down the possibility of memory to predisposed structures. Juxtaposition is a way of countering this collective instruction by intercepting the rational argument by aesthetic means, not least of our memories of guilt and horror-ridden atrocities.

Three juxtapositions

Caravaggio juxtaposed with Mintzberg: the Catholic Church creating the appropriate worker

This chapter’s first juxtaposition (Figures 3.1 and 3.2) aims at exposing the way an aesthetic artefact, a painting, participates in the organization and production of the ‘appropriate individual’ (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), here the appropriate ‘believer’ in the Catholic Church; the painting was created in 1601 and has since 1609 been exposed in the Church Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. Yet, the specific modern and exceptionally profound insights that Caravaggio...
is working with in this painting reach further than Church politics: the appropriate believer will transmute into the image of the appropriate modern worker, shaped in line with the composition of the art piece. The painting works directly on the sentiments of the church-goers, and this way naturalizes their idea of what a natural and necessary organization of the social fields looks like. These political issues may be less obvious when the painting is viewed in isolation, and it is the point of the juxtaposition to highlight such perspectives. Of course, this reading in no way precludes any other reading of Caravaggio’s masterpiece, and to seek in it a particular organization of labour does remain a rare reading of this iconic Renaissance masterpiece.

For the purpose of juxtaposing, I have turned St Paul’s Conversion upside down compared to the normal exposition of the painting. Caravaggio’s painting depicts Paul’s conversion as he had set off to Damascus but was thrown to the ground by Christ’s voice: ‘Why are you persecuting me?’ This version of the conversion is the painter’s second, as the first was rejected by the Catholic Church, which had commissioned it: this more realistic version, I think, was deemed more adequate in the ensuing Counter-Reformation. What the juxtaposition exposes is a strong isomorphism between the accepted version and the Church understood as a corporation in Mintzberg’s ‘basic model of the organization’ sense. The Strategic Apex is – and we are here helped by the mentioned ‘conversion’ of the canvas itself – the head of Paul; his arms as they ambiguously connect to the horse’s legs are the supporting Technostructure and Staff; and the enormous animal’s torso is the Operating Core. Despite the fact that a forceful hoof is threatening Paul’s genitals, he is not concerned: Paul stays calm in the belief that power in the modern world is not exercised primarily through brute force, but through knowledge and discipline (Foucault 1977). This light is represented by the bright areas of Paul’s head, arms and the one leg of the peasant and the front of the animal.

Figure 3.1 The Conversion of Saint Paul (inverted), Caravaggio
Source: Rome, Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. © 2013. Photo Scala, Florence/Fondo Edifici di Culto – Min. dell’Interno.
Paul, on his side, is not primarily engaged with the physical production, which is relegated to the horse and the peasant, i.e. the workers and the middle managers, who both are in severe need of management. To consider the Operating Core to be a monstrous crowd incapable of self-control is far from unknown in the history of ideas. Marx observed that the economic science ‘knows the worker only as a working animal — as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs’ (1972: VII). We also observe that Caravaggio had a more cynical but also more adequate view on (middle) management than Mintzberg. The manager who is visible in the painting is the groom. Whereas in the rejected version he was an active and centrally placed soldier, he is now a marginal part of the man–animal assemblage of the Operating Core, depicting how middle management is caught between an almighty board of directors and a crowd of workers/professionals, both groups having little regard for the middle manager who is neither a specialist nor a person with great influence and visibility in the organization, despite the grave responsibility. The groom’s hand leads the horse. The word manus, Latin for hand, is the well-known etymological root of manager, from the Italian maneggiare, a term directly connected to handling things, especially horses (Wensley 1996). But, while the groom’s hand may be said to ‘maneggiare’ the horse, it is constantly controlled and administered by Paul’s hand, and finds itself subjected to a Catholic knowledge economy where it is only a spare part in the overall division of labour. Paul’s authority becomes visible in the light surrounding him as a charisma, one of Weber’s (1947) three forms of authority, what strikingly reappears in Mintzberg’s drawing as the ‘Ideology’ glowing from the corporation. Naturally, today, Florida’s (2002) ‘creative class’ no longer handles horses; the creative class handles thoughts. This then happens, if we are to take Caravaggio’s analysis seriously, in splendid isolation: Paul’s conversion has become a primarily psychological and cognitive event that takes place within Paul’s head, behind his closed eyes. The overarching insight is modernity’s general displacement of the event (of conversion, of miracles, of meaning, of management, of thinking, etc.) from being an externality imposing itself on man to be what happens (only) inside man’s brain: ‘the site of control is … displaced to a significant extent from external to inner attributes of the subject who is urged to self-manage’ (Costea et al. 2008: 673).

This splendid isolation, however, alienates the middle manager, the Operating Core’s subjected workers as well as the Strategic Apex’s creative directors. The middle manager and the workers as they find themselves inside the actually rigid divisions of modern organizations as physical labour; the directors as they find themselves disconnected from affects and passions. The ‘passions’ have been turned into ‘interests’ (as argued by Hirschman 1977), and thus also prepared the modern knowledge worker for modern capitalism, which can work only if the fiery passions of the collective crowd of humanity is broken down and privatized into appropriate, individual self-interest and rational calculi, that is, restricted self-management under the aegis of a supreme market (which has substituted the supreme deity, cf. M. Taylor 2004).

It is not entirely satisfactory to categorize this juxtaposition as pertaining to the organizational level: the genius of Caravaggio and the deftness of Mintzberg reside partly in their ability to imbue their work with multiple layers of meaning and in their aptitude to simultaneously deal with issues that transgress such categorizations. Caravaggio’s painting discusses not only the nature of the Catholic Church’s bureaucracy and, by implication, the nature of the modern corporation, but also how this nature predisposes the appropriateness of the modern employee and the psycho-cognitivist cosmology to which this employee is subjected. Mintzberg’s model not only encapsulates (the dominant idea of) the internal logic of the corporation, but also draws up a symbol of what it means to labour and to manage in modernity. Juxtaposed, they show the continuity in the cultural icons that shape our everyday activity and thoughts and produce our ‘social imaginaries’ (C. Taylor 2004).
The postmodern manager juxtaposed with four Nigerians

The second juxtaposition I want to present pertains, at the outset, directly to the level of management, in fact a manager: the Danish COE Peter Aalbæk, who is a producer and managing director in renowned film director Lars von Trier’s (Dancer in the Dark from 2000, Antichrist from 2009) film company Zentropa. Peter Aalbæk is something like a celebrity/manager in the Danish media, and would often stage himself and the company in excessive and eccentric ways, which often would be connected to nudity and smoking cigars and the like. However, his ability to create an imaginary of creativity cannot be denied.

While both von Trier and Aalbæk are trained film directors, Aalbæk has taken on the more administrative side of their joint enterprise, a company located in some old but very characterful military barracks in a suburb of Copenhagen. These barracks work very well as the background for the movie from which the juxtaposition in question is taken: the documentary One Day with Peter, a 16-minute movie directed by Pablo Tréhin-Marçot was produced in 2004. The movie follows Peter Aalbæk for what seems to be one day of work at Zentropa. After a morning song session with the whole company, Peter walks around in the corridors and offices and greets everyone: a kiss for the female employees, and a handshake for the boys. Says Aalbæk in the voiceover, ‘There is no system there … but I do not kiss the men. I think that’s disgusting.’ There are signs of mutual disgust as some of the women seem taken considerably aback by the kissing and hugging. When Aalbæk reaches his destination, the steam bath and the outdoor pool swim, he is alone. Figure 3.3 is taken from a particular

Figure 3.3 Aalbæk and the office clerk
Source: Screenshot from One Day with Peter.
scene in the movie where Aalbæk enters a (male) employee’s office and undresses in order to be ready for the steam bath and swimming. The screenshot is actually a juxtaposition in its own right.

To the left, one has the naked, free and liberated CEO, shaking his penis in front of the camera. To the right, one sees a bureaucratic worker, solemnly attending to his business, talking on the phone. He did not react on the actual undressing scene, but, after Aalbæk left, he went and picked up his boss’s clothes, and put them on a hanger in the closet. A more comprehensive account of this bureaucratic knowledge worker and his share of creative work is told elsewhere (Sørensen 2012). Here, we will stay with Aalbæk: if we cut the screenshot in half, we have isolated our manager, and are free to juxtapose him with something other than his employee. One guiding analytical question could be: what other images of ‘creative nakedness’ can we find, and in this way construct the ‘social imaginary’ that is the background for Aalbæk’s type of creative management?

In this juxtaposition, the image of Aalbæk is brought together with a photograph from 1944 depicting four (not identified) Nigerians at a traditional Dunbar festival (Levine 2008). Again, another note on the choice of juxtaposition. The choice of Aalbæk as naked is not, in a national context, anything peculiar, as Aalbæk as mentioned has turned it into a brand to undress: it is a mainstream choice. But it did not, I must admit, fare well with the publisher of a previous publication based on the same images. They wanted me to censor Peter Aalbæk’s penis with a black box, whereas the Nigerians, who are hardly more ‘dressed’, were ‘suitable’ as they appeared. This very reaction – which the publisher reversed after I insisted in describing their reaction in the very same chapter – gave me the sense that I had found the right counter image: Aalbæk, a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male CEO is real and must be censored, whereas the Nigerians are only representatives of our fantasy about them, unreal to the core of their existence, hence it is no problem to visualize them (much the same way one may ‘visualize’ just anything in one’s own mind.)

For this occasion, then, the Nigerians have dressed up to meet the imperial governor, but their dressing up parades the most ridiculous outfit they could imagine that the governor (or, at least, ‘the imperial gaze’) could think of: white painting, odd headgear and penis sheaths. The crowd around them laughed heartedly in appreciation of their mockery: they match the category ‘savage indigenous people’ with great precision. In many, if not all, regards, this category had already worn out. In 1960, there was no longer a British governor in Nigeria.

With the same if only somewhat unconscious precision, Aalbæk mirrors what could be our fantasy of the postmodern, creative boss. And this fantasy is quite parallel to the supposed fantasy of the imperial gaze: with his nakedness and free desire, Aalbæk signals a proximity to the original creativity, creation before the Fall, when Adam and Eve were naked and had no shame. Such creative naivety (a word stemming from French for ‘native’) Westerners connect to women, children and, of course, natives. Consider the Nigerian in the forefront. Just as Aalbæk, he has caught the attention of the camera, and, although he does not hold his penis with his hand, but rather has it managed by his penis sheath, he does, with clear signs of victory and dominance, hold an upright stick. Both men know that a flaccid penis is an embarrassment when it is to appear in front of the gaze, be it imperial, corporate, medical or whatever. They both know that a flaccid penis is in need of a helping hand or a penis sheath: it is in need of management. The word management stems, as already developed above, from the Latin manus, hand, through Italian maneggiare, a term directly connected to handling things and objects (Wensley 1996). The penis needs management in order to appear as a phallus. The unmanaged penis is a disgrace, or, today, when ‘graciousness’ has been outdated as a relevant aesthetic quality, a farce.
Marx (1972) mocked Hegel by claiming that history appears twice: first as tragedy, then as farce. Both the first appearance of modern management in the early industrialization as well as the global imperial zeal were truly tragic as they proudly and erect mistreated the subjected and marginal classes, workers and indigenous people, respectively. In the juxtaposition, we see their second, farcical and impotent appearance: the soft, all-embracing manager who (at least wants to appear as if he) manages by immediate impulses and lust is just as ridiculous as the fantasy of the imperial gaze. The imperial zeal, on its side, is in its second (if not last) appearance met with active sarcasm and contempt.

That the post-bureaucratic manager is farcical does not mean that he or she does not create fantasies that inform the subjectivity of the employees in the creative sector. Zizek expresses this ambivalence well; an ambivalence played out to its fullest extent through Peter Aalbæk’s choreographed mix between parading as a French *Roi Soleil* and as your next-door buddy with a tapped beer. Zizek’s (2009: 202) analysis of such a managerial character runs as follows:

> A ‘postmodern’ boss insists that he is not a master but just a coordinator of our joint creative efforts, the first among equals; there should be no formalities among us, we should address him by his nickname, he shares a dirty joke with us … but during all this, he remains our master.

The postmodern boss appeals to his or her employees in order to make them adopt a certain ironic stance towards themselves as well as towards their colleagues and their work. This is what Fleming and Spicer (2003) refer to as a ‘cynical distance’ adopted towards management: you live out management’s fantasy, just as the Nigerians are living out the fantasy of the empire. The juxtaposition with the Nigerians in this regard is instructive, as they perform what Zizek (2008) refers to as ‘parodic overidentification’ (see also Contu 2008). In the post-bureaucratic corporation, the employee must somehow ‘mirror’ the orgone *jouissance* of the boss (even when he appears not to be the boss). In order to fill this open space of fantasy, the employee becomes a permanent opportunist, who constantly must self-evaluate the opportunities (Maravelias 2009).
Both Aalbæk and the Nigerians parade nakedness in a way that seems to be significant of their character. It has been suggested to me by students at my courses that Albæk’s nakedness is connected to his creativity, and at least such sentiment is supported in the literature on creativity and entrepreneurship. For instance, Po Bronson’s bestseller *The Nudist on the Late Shift, and other Tales of Silicon Valley* (1999) describes the California programmer community where ‘eccentricity is de rigueur’ and where the entrepreneur ‘David Coons and his wife held skinny-dipping parties, to which Mr. Coons invited his friends from work. So nobody made much of it that he took his clothes off at the office after ten p.m.’ While nakedness as such becomes connected to creativity, it also lives on in the Victorian bourgeoisie’s idea of freedom, ultimately the freedom gained through escaping from rationality and civilization, deep into, one may imagine, the dark heart of Nigeria, of Kenya, of the earliest human evolution said to have begun in the mythological Rift Valley. Postcolonial theory describes the ambiguous relation between the knowledge of the gaze and its phantasmagorical Other, the Orient, which is ‘at once both completely knowable through the “scientific” gaze of the colonizer, but at the same time it is an object of desire, a danger and a threat that is mysterious and unknowable’ (Bhabha 1994: 75).

The clothed body has historically been connected to the two qualities of rationality and civilization, to such an extent that Mark (5:15) lets people that are ‘Clothed and in their right mind’ be destined to salvation and sanity. As Levine observes regarding the colonial view on the ‘natives’: they were considered, on account of their lack of shame at being naked, to be ‘people whose souls were in danger’ (2008: 191).

Zentropa’s corporate values expressed in the triumvirate ‘Christianity, Communism and Capitalism’ (see www.zentropa.dk) have obvious predecessors in the missionaries’ triumvirate ‘Christianity, Civilization and Clothing’ (Levine 2008). Levine also observes that the images of colonialized natives that circulated throughout the British Empire and beyond were by default oversexualized:

> The non-Western body, with its absence of shame and its apparent normalizing or incomprehension of nudity, re-mapped that violation [of taboo], creating a safe space for observing naked bodies belonging to nameless, over-sexualized people to whom shame could not, allegedly, attach.

(2008: 210)

However, in addition, this second return of nudity has changed valour. Peter Aalbæk does not come forward as oversexualized, but rather as undersexualized: the tragedy of violent potency and rape has now returned as the farce of impotence and noisy gestures, a ‘parodic overidentification’ (Zizek 2008) with free desire, which becomes utterly untrustworthy and appeals to our pity rather than, as would be the case earlier, to our piety.

The juxtaposition of the screenshot with Peter Aalbæk and the four festive Nigerians at the Dunbar festival again points to the fact that the analytical ‘level’ of organizational analysis only refers to an analytical construct. The juxtaposition sets to work a complicated flow of foldings and unfoldings, which, far from pertaining only to management, come to take up issues of significance to our entire civilization and its history.

**The dark side of organization: a little boy juxtaposed with an angel**

The final juxtaposition I want to present departs from a photo which, like the screenshot of Peter Albæk, in itself is a significant juxtaposition between the deported and their deporting adversaries (see Figure 3.6).
The storm trooper to the right in the picture from World War II’s Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw in 1943 is Josef Blösche of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) of the SS. In 1969, Blösche was interrogated about his role in the event: ‘The picture shows how I, as a member of the Gestapo office in the Warsaw Ghetto, together with a group of SS members, am driving a large number of Jewish citizens out of a house’ (Blösche quoted in Raskin 2004: 95). Blösche becomes juxtaposed in the frame with what is arguably the most famous child from World War II, a little frightened boy stretching his arms in the air, possibly with parts of his family surrounding him. We don’t know this. Blösche is the only person identified beyond doubt in the photo, and, although the identity of some of the refugees is somewhat certain, the identity and destiny of the boy is unknown (Raskin 2004; Porat 2010). Following the logic of this picture, there appears really no way out for him, he is already a victim of circumstances. But the logic of photographs is highly ideological; Paul is more right today than ever: we see enigmas through dark glasses. Sontag maintains a counter-intuitive reading of this very photo: ‘Photographs of the suffering and martyrdom of a people are more than reminders of death, of failure, of victimization. They invoke the miracle of survival’ (2003: 72). In Figures 3.7 and 3.8, I juxtapose the little boy with another little creature, an angel painted by Paul Klee more than 20 years earlier.

Although Klee painted Angelus Novus two decades before the outbreak of World War II, he did paint it in the debris of World War I. Moreover, as he painted at home with his family surrounding him, a child in anguish was well known to him. Angelus Novus was for a period of time owned by the philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin, who wrote some of his most powerful and vivid texts on this painting. Benjamin’s ‘Ninth Thesis’, in his Theses on the Philosophy of History, opens as follows: ‘Angelus Novus shows an angel looking as though he is
about to move away from something that he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread’ (1999: 245ff).

As the angel is caught in a storm (as Benjamin specifies), it can’t get back to ‘us’, but sees us caught in ‘one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of [the angel’s] feet’ (ibid.). The little boy is also caught in wreckage, although he also is ‘about to move away’: the catastrophe that the angel sees is his catastrophe, or, in the eyes of the angel, our, that is, humanity’s joint catastrophe. But we, humans as such, keep looking away from our catastrophe and the little boy caught in it, because we, humans as such, are looking for progress instead, no matter whether we are Marxists or liberalists (Gray 2003). While through this juxtaposition we may become witnesses of the boy’s fate, he remains, by way of the same juxtaposition, our witness to the catastrophe itself. Benjamin speculates that the angel would want to stay in order to awaken the dead and redeem the crushed world, but this is not going to happen. The angel cannot stay – and so ends Benjamin’s (1999: 249) ‘Ninth Thesis’ – because:

a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Progress makes impossible both the boy’s escape from the catastrophe as well as the angel’s return to it, and progress ‘irresistibly propels’ both of them into a nameless future. We observe, however, that the boy carries a rucksack, as is pointed out by artist and Holocaust survivor Samuel Bak, who has used parts of the photo extensively in his own paintings: ‘A rucksack
is something that you take along only if you believe that the next day you will still be alive. In this photo it symbolizes the persistence of hope’ (Bak quoted in Raskin 2004: 149). While I maintain that this juxtaposition harbours hope, there is always the risk that hope is being turned into wishful thinking or ideology, as experienced by Dan Porat, author of another book about the photo The Boy (2010). Porat personally saw the photo of the Warsaw boy when visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. The official guide was showing it to a group consisting of a Slovenian minister and his civil servants:

‘Do you know that this picture tells a good story of the Holocaust?’ The surprised men’s faces turned toward her. She continued unequivocally: ‘This boy survived. After the Holocaust, he studied medicine, became a doctor, and settled in New York. A year ago, he immigrated to Israel.’ The men nodded in approval, and the delegation disappeared down the dark museum hall.

(Porat 2010: 3)

This is a clear and quite practical example of what Sontag (2003) refers to as collective instruction, and, in regards to the Nazi holocaust, it is such instruction that resides at the heart of what Finkelstein (2000) refers to as ‘the Holocaust industry’. The photo of the little boy has itself become a central player in this industry as an ‘emblem of suffering’ (Sontag 2003: 119), at least for Western generations born prior to, say, 1970, for whom it is still a part of their ‘social imaginaries’ (C. Taylor 2004). The organization studies scholar Yannis Gabriel experimented recently with showing the photo to an international group of fifteen doctoral students: only one recognized the picture, and only two connected it to specific Jewish suffering. In one way, the juxtaposition contributes to such ‘defamiliarization’ of the photo: while it, of course, remains important that historically it was a Jewish boy led out of a Jewish ghetto, the juxtaposition with Klee’s angel points to an ahistorical surplus, a suffering that is universal and which begs us to contemplate it in unfamiliar contexts of which the most prominent is our present.

Afterword

In this chapter, I have introduced a concrete method for visual organizational analysis, which I find is applicable to a very broad array of different types of material. The simplicity of the method does not make it an easy one. Both the selection of the items to juxtapose, the concepts with which to analyse the juxtaposition, and the ensuing questions: What do the two items do to each other? Which kind of new space or new production of meaning do they allow for? How does this pertain to organization or organizational memory? Does it pertain to repressed or not so easy accessible material? Did the juxtaposition fail? In a productive or unproductive way?

It may happen that a juxtaposition allows for a reintegration of experiences that in Kristeva’s expression have been ‘abjected’ from the common-sense vocabulary (Kristeva 1982; Cohen et al. 2006; Stokes and Gabriel 2010) and hence become ethical and political. Not all juxtapositions would produce ethical or political ‘spaces’, but one necessary assessment of the value of a given juxtaposition is its ability to turn organizational problems, through such aesthetic analysis, into ethical or political questions. That we live in an image-saturated world only makes us so much more susceptible to control, substantiating Cooper’s (1989) insight that what characterizes the ‘labour of division’ in the disciplinary society is a matter of performing control ‘over the social and material world through enhanced clarity, transparency and visual certainty at a distance’. Visual analysis should be concerned with this disciplining, and allow, possibly through juxtaposition, the breaking up of this gridlock. Unfortunately, much management theory has
The method of juxtaposition

been tied to an ‘appreciative, aesthetically elevated conception of aesthetics and art’ (Schroeder 2006: 87), where it instead should follow Contu’s (2008: 367) injunction to ‘investigate the hidden transcripts, the offstage discourse’ of (aesthetic) organizational practice.

Juxtaposition may liberate memory both through its inbuilt iconoclasm and through its creation of new visual imaginaries. In Parr’s (2006) vision, this is where an ethical potential lies for such experimentation with what we may term our present past. As students of the visual, we are again reminded of Benjamin’s warning: ‘every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably’ (1999: 247, emphasis added).

Notes

1 All three juxtapositions are discussed much more comprehensively in articles that also deal with these issues elsewhere (Sørensen 2010, 2012, under review). The current reproductions of the juxtapositions basically follow the same logic as the original; they are, perhaps, nothing more than slightly different unfoldings and refoldings of the same surface as their ‘origin’.

References


——— (under review) ‘Rendering suffering visible: an organizational aesthetics for the dark side’ for *Organization Studies*, Special Issue on The Dark Side of Organization.


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