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## On the manager's body as an aesthetics of control

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### Abstract (Article Summary)

This paper stems from a larger project which aims at developing an understanding of the ways in which *managers* are subordinated to the organizations in which they work. Managers make up a large percentage of the students I teach, and I meet them often as part of my research: it seems to me that their jobs are unappealing, their amenity to being exploited is huge, but they are in the best position in which to organise some form of revolt against the conditions of their work. That they remain utterly subordinated to working lives that have little to recommend them is a source of curiosity for me. To suggest that it is their salaries or other perks of their jobs which guarantees their quiescence is, I think, crass and presumptuous. In this paper I explore one of the reasons for their continued subordination, which I find in the aesthetics of the managerial body. The aestheticisation of their bodies has been shown to be forms of control over workers (Hancock & Tyler, 2000; Warhurst & Nickson, in press): here I will develop those arguments to show how managers are similarly controlled. I am, in this paper, drawing upon an earlier suggestion made by Hancock and Tyler (op. cit.) that combining Foucault and Marx could provide a powerful mode of understanding, but I am drawing in large part upon theorists who have developed the works of Foucault or Marx, principally Judith Butler and Fredric Jameson, to develop my arguments.

### Full Text (7,106 words)

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## THE UMIQUITY OF EMBODIEDNESS

Although we are only now consciously recognizing the inescapable ubiquity of bodies in organizations, the *trace* of the embodiedness of managers has been evident throughout classical management literature. Mintzberg's famous study (1973) emphasizes visibility; the empirical studies of the 1950s, 60s and 70s into the 'reality' of management, continued into the 1980s and 1990s in the work of Rosemary Stewart (1983, 1994), reveals it; and the injunction to managers to "walk the talk" embodies it. In the research I have undertaken with colleagues (Alimo-Metcalfe & Lawler, 2001; Ford & Harding, 1999) this embodiedness was encapsulated in the concept of the manager as someone who is "seen". For example, when researching concepts of leadership in organizations in 2000, we asked a senior manager in a large pharmaceutical company whether there were role models for leaders in his organization. He answered:

*If you looked at our CEO, [name], I think everybody would perceive him as a leader. I am not sure everybody would think his style was the best in the world, but nevertheless they see him as a leader. He is very clear. He is out there. He is*

*very visible. He champions the organization. I think people perceive him as a leader.*

In another study of an organizational merger, we asked the chief executive of the newly merged NHS Trust, now one of the largest such organizations in the UK, how he spent his time. He first gave us a long list of the meetings he holds regularly with the senior management team, and then he turned his attention to the staff of the Trust:

*"I spend quite a lot of time speaking to large groups of people, larger groups of staff and managers, um open staff meetings have been a continuing need the way that we're trying to lead the organization. I'm doing one of those today at (outlying) Hospital, I did one yesterday at (even more distant) Hospital. We started to do that quarterly and we're now doing it eh twice a year, and one of those occasions is at the time we published the annual report. And that's about visible leadership and about being prepared to be accountable to the staff if you like."*

His words are echoed throughout interviews with other members of the senior and middle management team. Personnel or HRM policies within this organization of 14,000 employees, the interviewees tell, revolve around the visibility of the management team and its desire to achieve emulation through the managerial exemplar.

Yet bodies remain an "absent presence" within studies of organizations (Ball, 2001). I will bring them into this paper by, firstly, defining the way in which I am using the concept of aesthetics. I will then explore the manager's body, showing how it can be seen as an anankastic<sup>1</sup> aesthetic which seemingly attempts through unspoken appeals to mimesis to function as a mode of control over workers, one that my model of aesthetics suggests can be easily rejected. However, by drawing upon post-modernist and Marxist perspectives, I will show how the manager's body is both produced and consumed by the manager; that it is both subjectified and objectified; and that it thus stands both outside and inside a manager whose agentive capacity lies largely in this production of a commodity which consumes its producer.

## **AESTHETICS**

"Aesthetics" as a term is used somewhat broadly, so I will start by developing the model which will be used in this paper. The collection of papers in *The aesthetics of organizations* (Linstead & Höpfl, 2000a) illustrates the very looseness of the concept, with authors defining aesthetics as:

- Artworks within, or the physical environment of, organizations;
- The study of organizations involved in the development of aesthetic objects;
- A research method; or,
- A form of knowledge based on the senses.

In this paper, I use the last of the above definitions: aesthetics as a form of knowledge based upon the senses. Here, I follow Strati (2000), and Carter and Jackson (2000), who distinguish usefully between two senses of "aesthetic": one which refers to judgements about taste, where the aesthetics are a property of some object and thus are external to the individual; and the other which refers to the emotional response experienced by an individual in relation to some externality, where the aesthetics are a property of the individual rather than the externality. It is this latter sense I use to inform this paper, which sees aesthetics as a process of knowing through tacit knowledge, and understanding achieved through empathy, which allows a contamination of the verbal by the visual and all the other senses (Strati, 2000). The aesthetic works through processes of mimesis which involve "imitating, then bricolating and innovating with the behavior and symbols of others" (Linstead, 2000, p. 63), so that an aesthetic response of subject to object involves an opening up to the object so that it works upon us, unselfconsciously, without the usual comprehensions of significance, meaning, interest or cause and effect, resulting in responses which are pre-conscious, beyond words, and therefore can clash with conscious, logical apprehensions.

But, this definition lacks a critical edge, a shortcoming partially made good by Carter and Jackson (2000) who argue that "all organization(s) produce(s) an aesthetic which is 'designed' to elicit positive responses from all those with whom transactions, of whatever kind, take place". The function of aesthetics is to mask and deny the experienced reality of organization, through a structuring of form and content in such a way as to elicit positive responses. It is an aesthetic, they say, which induces, sustains and rewards *compliance*, and works by appealing to the "shared language" of a community and the unconscious responses and intersubjective recognitions of a particular culture. To accept it without demur is to dull awareness, so "ironically, organizational aesthetics anaesthetize" (Carter and Jackson, 2000, p. 195).

Aesthetic understanding can therefore be seen as *a model of knowing* which adds the sensory to discursive processes, and which can serve to mask, negate, demean and diminish. Embedded within cultures, aesthetics works upon the psyche and, carefully manipulated, can achieve subordination.

Yet there remains something amiss here, for these definitions suggest an ideology that presumes what Pollock (2001) criticizes as a "pure realm of vision that exists before gender, race, class and all other social influences have their effects" (p. 23). It suggests a subject who, although playful, is incapable of agency or of resistance to this single, shared aesthetic language. Eagleton would demur, for his work suggests that the language of the aesthetics is shared within but not between classes. He writes that:

the category of the aesthetic assumes the importance it does in modern Europe because in speaking of art it speaks of .... matters .... which are at the heart of the middle class's struggle for political hegemony. *The construction of the modern notion of the aesthetic artefact is thus inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class-society, and indeed from a whole new form of human subjectivity appropriate to that social order* (italics)

added). (1990, p. 3)

For Eagleton, therefore, aesthetics helps provide understanding of a subjectivity that is peculiar to the middle class. His work warns of the necessity of avoiding the presumption that an aesthetics which is a projection of a middle class subjectivity is easily incorporated into the sensibilities of other classes. Indeed, a homogeneous middle class subjectivity cannot be presumed.

The specular foundations of aesthetics, too, cannot be ignored. Whether in play, poetry, whatever, the role of the eye in the aesthetics of organizations, the eye as the royal road to the psyche, is dominant. The field of vision thus brought into play is imbued through and through with sexual difference, so that all acts of vision and visual representation involve sexuality and sexual difference (Pollock, 2001; Rose, 1986). Here, sexuality and sexual difference does not refer to "woman" (Pollock warns against the "bourgeois fiction that woman is 'the sex' above which man rises in his transcendent universality" [p. 38]) but to the fluidity of sexualities and the multiplicity of genders, the understanding given to us by gender studies and queer theory. An exploration of aesthetics must be informed by gendered susceptibilities. This raises such questions of the visual as who is looking and who is looked at, why and how and with what effects (Pollock, 2001, p. 27). When we as researchers step into organizations, whose imagined worlds are we allowed to see? In the wider definition of the aesthetic, we must therefore ask questions not only of the visual but of the other senses. Thus, Strati's (2000, p. 20 *et passim*) listing of aesthetic categories in this perspective should be qualified by a series of questions. When exploring Beauty - who defines what is Beauty? With regard to the Sublime, which "evinces the *pathos* of the material and non-material organizational artefacts that embodies the organization's memories" (Strati, 2000, p. 21): who decides what should be archived or canonized into memory? The Ugly — who is looking and who looked at? The Comic — who is laughing and whose laughter is suppressed? The Gracious — who is allowed to be gracious and who condemned to unnatural positions? The Picturesque or game-playing — who sets the rules, and who is allowed to break them? The Agogic, grounded in movement and rhythm — who plays the tune and who states what the steps should be? The Tragic — who gives themselves the role of hero? The Sacred, or imaginary territories such as professional competence, on which no-one must trespass — in whose interests are definitions of what is sacred maintained? Who are the high priests and who the sacrificial victims?

Furthermore, I would suggest that post-modernism has taught us that communication takes place in ways which are unintended, unconscious, accidental, etc. Thus the deliberate act of manipulation of the aesthetic which is implied in many applications of an aesthetic understanding to organizations may tell only part of the story: as we are inevitably surrounded by aesthetic objects, aesthetic forms of knowing may occur from communicating with organizational artefacts wherein no conscious attempt at instrumentalization has taken place, and where little appreciation of what has been communicated to us occurs at a conscious level.

Thus, the model of aesthetics I use in this paper is one which agrees that

organizations assail us with sensory forms of knowing and being. We may be subordinated, demeaned and controlled by them, but there is no direct relationship between aesthetic object and subjectivity. The route to the psyche has many turnings and byways; indeed perhaps it is the very playfulness of an aesthetic knowing (humor, poetics, rhythm) that allows resistance to an aesthetics the individual perceives as ugly or clashing. So although organizations, or rather their managers, increasingly seek to instrumentalize the aesthetic (Strati, 1999), resulting in gross examples of attempts at "colonizations of the idea of the beautiful as an instrument of corporate managerialism" (Hancock & Tyler, 2000, p. 109), the attempts may backfire, or perhaps fire off in all directions, for there is no simple causal relationship between aesthetic and its reception. Much aesthetic communication in organizations will arise without conscious intent.

### **THE MANAGER'S BODY: AN ANANKASTIC AESTHETIC**

Hancock and Tyler (2000) have shown how managers may use the bodies of workers to achieve, through the use of the aesthetic of (in this case air stewardesses') bodies, organizational ends. In this section I will suggest that managers' bodies too "embody the desired aesthetic of the company" (op. cit., p. 117), for they signify, using the discursive short-hand of the aesthetic, the behavior that is expected of employees. I will be focusing largely upon male managers, for they set the norms to which women managers must aspire if they are to succeed within the organization, and indeed it is possible to suggest, drawing upon ideas from queer theory, that female managers must 're-gender' themselves. I will here argue that the emphasis upon managers' visibility, upon their being seen to "walk the talk", includes within it an inchoate desire that workers gaze upon the fleshly envelopes that are paraded before them, and through gazing absorb the message contained within that envelope. The invocation inherent in the managers' bodies, a mute appeal to emulate their 'leaders', is a wish that workers become rational, logical, emotionless, utterly devoted to the ends of the organization. The aesthetic way of knowing suggests that the manager's body is an aesthetic code which attempts to insert managers into the minds of employees (Alvesson & Deetz, 1999). The code is to be found in the suit, the tie, and the enforced removal of as many references as possible to the fleshly materiality of the manager's body.

Managers' bodies are denuded, so far as is humanly possible, of all references to flesh and to nature. Clean-shaven, as much flesh as possible is hidden by the suit. The hands, perforce, must be visible, but otherwise only the head protrudes above the collar and tie. The tie has little if any practical value, but its aesthetics is Cartesian at its most profound: it sharply divides the 'head' from the (negated) body; seemingly cutting off the thinking part of the body from the flesh upon which it relies only, it would seem, for locomotion and visibility. The tie is a phalloglinear mark (Reichert, 1992, p. 87) that divides nature from culture.

Managers are clean-shaven. Hair is an ideological symbol (Synott, 1993). Rosabeth Kanter noted in 1977 that: -

*Managers at Indsco had to look the part. They were not exactly cut out of the same mold like paper dolls, but the similarities in appearance were striking. Even this relatively trivial matter revealed the extent of conformity pressures on managers .... The norms were unmistakable, after a visitor saw enough managers, invariably white and male, with a certain shiny, clean-cut look. The only beards, even after beards became merely rather daring rather than radical, were the results of vacation-time experiments on camping trips, except (it was said), for a few in R & D – 'but we know that scientists do strange things', a sales manager commented. (Quoted in Synnott, 1993, p. 112)*

Since the second world war beards have signified either rebellion or the foreign other: a clean shaven appearance signifies conformity and the conservative. Beards represent too a masculine nature that can be untamed and uncontrolled: the male is revealed as close to nature by the evidence of bodily hair that threatens to become uncontrolled if not rigidly removed at regular periods. A clean shaven chin demonstrates the suppression of nature and its elision from the controlled managerial world<sup>2</sup>.

The manager's body is encased in a suit. The suit, J.C. Flugel noted in 1930 in *The Psychology of Clothes*, allows masculine allegiance to the larger social order and man's privileged position therein. The consequence of this, Flugel writes, is that "modern man"s clothing abounds in features which symbolize his devotion to the principles of duty, of renunciation, and of self-control. The whole relatively 'fixed' system of his clothing is, in fact, an outward sign of the strictness of his adherence to the social code (though at the same time, due to its phallic attributes, it symbolizes the most fundamental features of his sexual nature)" (Flugel, 1930, p. 113, quoted in Silverman, 1988, p. 25). In this, Silverman (*op cit*) indicates, Flugel is highlighting the contradiction between a male clothing that allows the detachment of the male body more and more from sexuality, and at the same time its construction of masculine sexuality through its phallic representation. This ambivalence is important. The be-suited, clean-shaven managerial body represents a political desire for the abstract and largely unrealizable ideal that culture and society designates as its masculine norm, expressed in this be-suited cultural production (Solomon-Godeau, 1997, p. 29). Yet, as Silverman (1988) reminds us, the references to sexuality and thus to nature are always there, never totally sublimated or suppressed. It is however too easy to do what Solomon-Godeau does, and argue that the continued presence of signs of 'nature' represent "the more powerful bonds that unite men to one another and which collectively operate to secure the subordinate position of women" (1997, p. 86), for that ignores Pollock's (2001) warning, noted above, that sexuality and sexual difference does not refer to "woman", but to "gender", and "man" is not a homogeneous category. Rather I suggest that the suit and tie, in demonstrating at once both rigid control and signs of a sexuality which always threatens to break through, can allow the manager to claim the *potential* for rampant sexuality (look at the size of that tie!!!!!!) and, importantly, the ability to rigidly subordinate and control it. Were these signs of potency totally absent, the aesthetic would lack its power.

What I will call the "social semiotics of the managerial body" (based upon a discussion in Pritchard, 2000) thus signals to workers the type of body and thus of

embodied behavior to which they should aspire — ascetic, neat, disciplined, controlled, leak-proof — but always masculine and always potent. From body to mind, and here we see the power of the aesthetic — the mind that is in these bodies (Johnson, 1987) should similarly be ascetic, neat, disciplined, organized, rational, masculine. Thus the above-noted emphasis upon the need for visibility of managers and "leaders" signals the way in which managers' bodies enter the discourses of the organization and thus communicate with staff. They signify an organizational aesthetic associated with the powerful discourse of masculinity (Kerfoot, 2000), i.e. imbued with "masculine" reason rather than "feminine" nature (Seidler, 1994). "At all times", Kerfoot writes (2000, p. 231), "managers must be concerned with the effort to prove that they, as managerial bodies, are trustworthy and reliable; for in the accomplishment of managing their own body (sic), managers display the ability to manage others", and in occupying the "privileged bodily designations" of the manager, the "competent" manager's mark is an "ability to display the body in a manner that is culturally acceptable to their organization's bodily code". The suit is thus contrasted with other uniforms, other modes of organizational dress: the suit speaks of power and authority, of its wearer being the person who gets others to do the work.

This be-suited body is the culturally acceptable Western, Cartesian body that has well organized structures, boundaries and organs. It is a male body, one that does not leak (Shildrick, 1997). That is the message given to the senses by the manager's body. It is an anankastic aesthetic which shows that all feelings should be rigidly controlled, an excessive conscientiousness should be maintained, and a constant checking for perfectionism and meticulous accuracy should be undertaken.

This then appears to be the aesthetic of the managerial body: it (literally) embodies a shorthand version of managerial discourse, which signals to employees their encultured, commodified, objectified, subjectified status. However, I have warned above against supposing a straightforward reception of aesthetic messages. The assumption that all communications are performative, bringing into being the desired practices, is to be found in policy documents and textbooks, but agents' apprehensions of the messages are multiple, complex and variable. Eagleton's (1990) perspective suggests that workers looking at the be-suited managerial body will react not with compliance and a desire for mimesis, but with blindness and deafness to an aesthetic that speaks a class-based language. Indeed, rejecting such an aesthetic may represent one form of resistance.

There is however one actor who cannot escape from the aesthetic of the managerial body — the manager himself. The manager looks in the mirror and sees a reflection of himself as manager. This, I suggest, is where we can see the aesthetic of the manager's body working successfully to achieve conformity, rigidity and obedience, for the manager in looking at his own reflection is the most eager recipient of its aesthetic message. This, most obviously in this Foucauldian-informed age, is a body that has been manufactured, or worked on, by the manager. In what follows I will draw upon Foucauldian theories of the body to show how the managerial body is produced as a subjectified body, and then will turn to Marx and Jameson to show that it is also an objectified body.

## THE MANAGERIAL BODY AS SUBJECTIFIED PRODUCT

Implicit in the foregoing is the concept that the manager's body is not a lived body, but one dissolved materially into discourse and sign. Whilst it is important not to lose the materiality of the body (Casey, 2000), in the case of the manager's body what we see is the subordination of flesh to aesthetics, so that this lived body becomes, within organizational time and space, one constituted beyond the material. In such a constitution it becomes a subjectified body, that is a Foucauldian body whereby the material body is revealed to be a "thought body" whose particular locale in a technical, cultural and scientific history provides it with the ideas through which it is thought into being. Deleuze and Guatarri's work famously tells of a body-without-organs, a body that is experienced as a non-organic concept, not in terms of its biological organization but rather as a surface (Lash, 1991). This is a "body of inscription" and it is not the organic, anatomical body of medicine but the "non-organic, political surface". This is a social body, the body which one "does", as distinct from the body one "has" or "is" (Turner, 1992).

Judith Butler (1990, 1993) has developed these ideas powerfully. Combining Foucault with Freud and drawing upon a range of philosophical thinkers, she shows that the body is both a construction and also constitutive in that we could not operate, could not be an "I", without it, so that *construction is constitutive constraint*. She says we must ask how such constraints "produce the domain of intelligible bodies" (Butler, 1993, p. xi) and, following Foucault, replies that materiality must be "rethought as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect" (Butler, 1993, p. 2), whereby "sex" is one of the norms by which the body is qualified for a life within the domain of cultural intelligibility. Thus "the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Dealing with the unavoidable materiality of the body, Butler argues that this materiality is bound up, from its start, with signification, through the "*materiality of the signifier*" (Butler, 1993, p. 30). This materiality of the signifier is related, Butler argues, to a "body posited as prior to the sign" which is "always *posited or signified as prior*. This signification produces as an *effect* of its own procedure the very body that it nevertheless and simultaneously claims to discover as that which *precedes* its own actions" (Butler, 1993, p. 30). Here we have an analogy with the scientist in the laboratory who, the sociology of scientific knowledge has shown, claims to uncover that which was already waiting there, in nature, to be discovered, but who in effect brings nature into being through the constitutive power of scientific language. The body that Butler sees is thus brought into being through the constitutive and *performative* powers of language — the materiality of the body is prior to language, but our comprehension of that matter is achieved through signification. Here we have the familiar argument, in somewhat less familiar language, that language constitutes that which it articulates, that there is a material world but it is only comprehensible to us through language, but Butler goes beyond the familiar in demonstrating how the physical matter of bodies, which prior to Butler had been seen as beyond the reach of signification, are inevitably discursive productions.

Rose (1998), drawing upon Deleuze and psychoanalytical theory, complements this perspective of the body as both construction and constitutive restraint. The Deleuzian body, like that of Foucault and Butler, is not a "bounded envelope" containing within it a depth, but a channel of "processes, organs, flows, connections, the alignment of one aspect with another" that form a "particular body-regime" (Rose, 1998, p. 184). Rose suggests that the ways in which we understand our selves and our bodies at any time, indeed any distinction between the two, is because of "the ways in which particular relations of the exterior have been invaginated, folded, to form an inside to which it appears an outside must always make reference" (Rose, 1998, p. 188). In arguments similar in some respects to Linstead's (2000) understanding of how aesthetics operates. Linstead (2000) argues that we have become psychological creatures because of "the ways in which, in so many locales and practices, psy vectors have come to traverse and link up these machinations" (p. 185). The metaphor of the fold, which calls to mind the further metaphor of the amoeba, "describes a figure in which the inside, the subjective, is itself no more than a moment, or a series of moments, through which a 'depth' has been constituted within human being. The depth and its singularity, then, is no more than that which has been drawn in to create a space or series of cavities, pleats, and fields, which exist only in relation to those very forces, lines, techniques, and inventions that sustain them" (Linstead, 2000, p. 188). A configuration of forces, bodies, buildings and techniques hold in place that which has been folded inside and stabilized.

For Butler, such folding includes the physical materiality of bodies; for Rose it includes those things that at any time have authority. With regard to managers, I suggest that what is folded within the manager's body is the organization "itself", for the mimetic relationship between the human body and organization theory cannot be missed. The urge of physiologists to define and delineate is replicated by organizational theorists. This anthropomorphization, this "elision between organization and organism" (Dale & Burrell, 2000, p. 21) goes far beyond the status of metaphor claimed for it by Døving (1996), for the organization-as-body is not enfolded, it is an "organ without bodies" (Dale & Burrell, 2000, p. 21), without emotions, perhaps even a non-human cyborg or human machine system (Parker, 2000). Importantly, the other of organization is chaos: the organization is order, harmony, control - it is not-chaos.

The mimetic relationship between organization and body is prefigured in Mary Douglas' (1966) analysis of "dirt". The boundaries of the body, she suggests, anticipating post-modern theories by more than two decades, are drawn not by the material but by the limits of the social. So great is the necessity for controlling the body that the transcendence of its boundaries is for Douglas the quintessential metaphor of social disorder and chaos. Douglas writes "each culture must have its own notions of dirt and defilement which are contrasted with its notions of the positive structure which must not be negated" (1966, p. 159). Furthermore, Butler (1993) suggests that a post-structuralist appropriation of Douglas' view might well understand the boundaries of the body as the limits of the socially *hegemonic*. From this perspective the manager's body can be seen as synecdochal for the social system *per se*, as a site in which open systems converge, so any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment. In

societies dominated by organizations, therefore, notions of "dirt and defilement" resolve themselves around notions of chaos: cleanliness signifies order; dirt its other. The be-suited managerial body, hiding away all flesh save for face and hands, clean-shaven and strictly barbered, can be seen as rigorously sweeping away all signs of "dirt" and elevating the "cleanliness" of order over the "dirt" of chaos. So, I am arguing, the manager's body speaks of the fear of unregulated workers who, if they united, could endanger the organization. However, I have suggested that workers are more or less impervious to this message, so which "unregulated worker" is to be feared?

Let me introduce at this point Foucault's concept of dressage, as used by Jackson and Carter (1998). They link two themes from the work of Foucault: governmentality and labor as dressage. Governmentality, of course, concerns the management of a population at both an aggregate and a micro level, while dressage is one of three functions of labor identified by Foucault (the other two being the productive and the symbolic). Dressage means both discipline and taming, and generally refers to the mastering of a horse in deportment and response to controls. It means "making horses perform unnatural movements and obey control which is for control's sake, for the gratification of the controller" (Jackson & Carter, 1998, p. 54). Labor thus, in its dressage sense, is "non-productive, non-utilitarian and unnatural behavior for the satisfaction of the controller and as a public display of compliance, obedience to discipline" (Jackson & Carter, 1998, p. 54). Management, charged with controlling workers but in the absence of any evidence that they need control, instigates labor as dressage, where work is subject to control, not for functional reasons but for the sake of control itself.

I suggest that managers too are subject to their labor as dressage, where they must be controlled *for the sake of control itself*. For who manages the managers? Do we not have here the internalized Panopticon, with managers managing their selves? The manager, putting on his tie in front of the mirror every morning, dressing himself up as manager, inscribing upon this be-suited body the aesthetic of order, thus becomes inscribed within a discourse of self-control, symbolized aesthetically through the peculiar artwork of the managerial body. This is an artwork that the manager appears to have fashioned himself, but in putting on his suit each weekday morning he follows a century-long fashion, seen in management textbooks in photographs of F. W. Taylor, Max Weber, Frank Gilbreth and the other "classical" managerial theorists. The perpetuation of this one fashion says much: in Derrida's (1995) terms, we see here the power of the archive. In *Archive Fever* (1995) he interweaves a complex relationship between the archive of the library or museum and that of the psyche. The archive is built through a "power of consignation" (Derrida, 1995, p. 3), where consignation refers to not only a putting in reserve but also "the act of *consigning through gathering together signs*" (Derrida, 1995, p. 3). Those things, not always discursive writings, stored in archives are kept and so classified by virtue of a privileged topology, "a place of election where law and singularity intersect in privilege. At the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority, a scene of domiciliation becomes at once visible and invisible" (Derrida, 1995, p. 3). The signs consigned to the archive of the library imbricate the signs consigned to the archive of the psyche, and vice versa. The archive of the organization, from this Derridean perspective,

is one which contains laws which work upon the psyche, which suppress and repress as they form and reform. In this light, the archive of the organizational aesthetic is written upon the clean shaven, be-suited managerial body, a representation that has remained largely unchanged through a century of managerial history. The imprint of the organization's history is stored and embodied in the manager's physical appearance. The aesthetic of control represented in that suit and that clean-shaven body is an aesthetic of control over managers; the manager is imprisoned within a conservative aesthetic that locks him within the ever-recycled rules and the cultures of early-20<sup>th</sup> century organizations.

## **THE MANAGERIAL BODY AS OBJECTIFIED PRODUCT**

That then, I suggest, is the subjectified body of the manager, one which states to the manager, every time he looks in the mirror, "this is who you are; this is what you have [literally] made of yourself". In Butler's terms, it is a performative body achieved within citational practices which both enable and discipline subjects. But this is where Butler's analysis fails us, for the constitutive constraints of the gendered body differ from those operating within organizations. Nowhere in her account is there space for exploring how capitalism both constitutes and constrains. It is time therefore to take up Hancock and Tyler's (2000) hint of the possible fruitfulness of combining Foucault with Marx. Stronger hints of the utility of such a combination are now emerging within critical management literature (O'Doherty & Willmott, 2001), and in theories of the body in lived space (Harvey, 1998; Smith & Doel, 2001). Fredric Jameson has however been arguing the merits of such a combination for more than a decade, and it is to his theoretical perspective that I will turn in order to introduce a Marxist analysis of the objectified body<sup>3</sup>. Jameson's analysis does not explore issues relating to embodiment, so I will incorporate ideas from the sociology of the body into a Jamesonian perspective, to explore how bodies are produced under capitalism. This allows a reconciliation of the producer/consumer binary, and facilitates the re-introduction of Marx's theory of alienation, so leading to a more nuanced understanding of the aesthetic of the subjectified/objectified manager's body.

Post-modernism, for Jameson (1991, p. xii), is "not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order ..., but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself". This modification has resulted in post-modern capitalism, in Jameson's view the purest form of capital yet to emerge. Everything now has become a commodity, and by its transformation into a commodity, a thing of whatever type has been reduced to a means for its own consumption, so that "immanent intrinsic satisfactions" (Jameson, 1992, p. 11) from activities are lost as everything becomes means to an end. Here, where modernism could "critique the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself," (Jameson, 1991, p. 1), post-modernism is the "consumption of sheer commodification as a process" (*ibid*). The reach of this form of capitalism is vastly extended: it is globalized so that it reaches outwards, but it has also, crucially, moved into previously uncommodified areas including a colonization of the unconscious, whereby everything in our social lives is penetrated by capitalism.

Significantly for this current analysis, this stage of capitalism is essentially aesthetic and located within the "single protean sense" (Jameson, 1992, p. 1) of the visual, so much so that were an ontology of this "artificial, person-produced universe" (Jameson, 1992, p. 1) still possible, it would have to be an "ontology of the visual, of being as the visible first and foremost, with the other senses draining off it; all the fights about power and desire have to take place here, between the mastery of the gaze and the illimitable richness of the visual object" (Jameson, 1992, p. 1). It is thus through the visual that post-modern capitalism is able to penetrate into the psyche, and it is the psyche which is the locus where individuals transform themselves into commodities designed for their own consumption.

There are no references to the aesthetics of the body in Jameson's work, but writers within the sociology of the body have developed similarly Baudrillardian-inspired ideas to show how the body is achieved through commodification and consumption. Falk (1994), for example, argues that the body is profoundly connected with the sense of self - "I consume therefore I am". It has become an outward sign of inward moral standing (Lupton, 1995) and, most influentially, a bearer of symbolic value (Shilling, 1993). The body within consumer culture, Shilling proposes in an argument which complements Jameson's, is increasingly central to self-identity, related to reflexively, and a project to be worked on, constructed, and consumed.

The sociology of the body lacks the vital political dimension added by Jameson, but the overlap between the objects of their analysis, cultural products and the psyche in Jameson's case, the commodified, constituted body within sociology of the body, suggests the two perspectives can be fruitfully united. This union produces a body that is (a) constructed and consumed within a capitalist economy whereby bodies are used in the undertaking of the role of worker in the production of goods and services and so contribute to surplus value, and (b) as consumer of capitalist goods which maintain and constitute the commodified body, and so contribute to profits. In the organization we thus have the conflation of consumption and production of *managerial bodies*, for as I have shown, the production of his/her managerial body is one of the manager's major tasks. This provides the opening whereby we can introduce Marx's theory of alienation.

Was Marx's account of the estranged laborer as potent when written as it is now, when the lens of psychological discourses (Rose, 1989) predispose our reading towards the construction of a particular type of narrative? Certainly, object-relations theory (Bollas, 1993, 1995) powerfully buttresses Marx's assertion (1986) that the product of one's labor is part of one's "essential being", a being that is confirmed by one's work. For Marx, capitalism estranges the product of one's labor, and thus both commodifies and alienates the worker. The

*object which - labor's product - confronts it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as loss of realization for the*

*workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it, appropriation as estrangement, as alienation.* (Marx, 1986, p. 38, emphasis in the original)

The worker "places his life in the object", but the estrangement of the object results in the alienation of the worker.

*The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.* (op. cit., p. 38, emphasis in the original)

Compare this with Bollas' (1993, 1995) theory of the self, located within a post-modernist object-relations theory which sees the self as a set of idiomatic selves which depend upon significant objects for their elaboration. In Bollas' words, the self is an "internal object" that is "fashioned from several sources: from an inner feel of the authorizing aesthetic that gives polysemous (not unitary) shape to one's being; from an inner feel of internal objects which are the outcome of the other's effect upon one's self; from the shape of discrete episodes of self experience" (Bollas, 1995, p. 173). This "internal object", this "phenomenon of the real", is, he argues, the result of our moving through our lives as a unique set of evolving theories that generate insights and new perspectives about ourselves (Bollas, 1995, p. 69). The theories arise from the effect of objects upon us: people, music, artworks, artefacts, whatever, they "move through" us like ghosts, inhabiting our minds, and conjured up when we evoke their names (Bollas, 1993, pp. 56-57) as we may do in the conscious or unconscious thought processes through which we dream ourselves into being. Thoughts of objects indeed form countless trains, thousands of ideational routes, leading to an explosive creation of meanings which meet up with new units of life experience (Bollas, 1995, p. 55).

There is potential in Bollas' work to develop a "bodily real" (Campbell, 2000), and there is also the potential to turn his work towards more critical ends. Bollas' version of object-relations theory can bring Marx's theory of alienation into an epoch where psychoanalytical theories form dominant constitutive discourses, and Marxist theories can radicalize Bollas' perspective. The workplace can, indeed must, contribute to those highly condensed psychic textures which allow us to be "substantially metamorphosed by the structure of objects; internally transformed by objects that leave their traces within us" (Bollas, 1993, p. 59). Thus what we produce in the world of work becomes part of those 'objects' which form any core sense of who we are. This core sense, Marx tells us, is alienated from us so as to achieve the ends of capitalism. Such a concept of a "core" self seemingly contradicts post-modernist ideas about the self, and indeed Jameson notes that Marx's alienated self has been replaced by a post-modernist fragmented self which has no "core" from which to be alienated. However, the trace of the cohesive, modernist self remains, and so there is the possibility of a self that is alienated from that trace. Indeed perhaps this is the inevitable outcome of the consuming society of post-modern capitalism: rather than the modernist core self we have today fragmented, post-modernist,

embodied selves which include within their "fragments" a self which will stand "outside", observe and control us.

To return to the manager - we see here an employee who spends much time and effort in perfecting the managerial body, a body symbiotic with and symbolic of the organization and thus different from other workers' bodies. This managerial body is the product of the manager's labor, an object for the specular consumption of others in the organization. This is a body bound up with concepts of the self of the manager, and devoted to the ends of the organization and thus to capitalism. This is a body/self, in Marx's terms, that stands 'outside' the producer, to confront and oppress him/her. This, I would suggest, is utter alienation, for here it is my body which I, the manager, have constituted, and which now stands before me and controls me.

### **CONCLUSION: THE AESTHETIC OF THE SUBJECTIFIED-OBJECTIFIED BODY**

For Butler it is not the matter of bodies that matters, but how we constitute that matter. Where capitalism enchants managers into fashioning the matter of their bodies to capitalism's own ends, where those bodies both work in capitalism's workplaces as objectified bodies and constitute and consume themselves as subjectified bodies, those bodies become, in Marx's terms, alienated and thus capable of standing 'outside' the manager and controlling him/her. These subjectified/objectified bodies serve a particular role in the highly aestheticized world of postmodern capitalism. Where others have argued that capitalism uses beautiful bodies as part of the tools of the workplace, I argue that capitalism also uses the power of the aesthetic to render bodies into internalized forms of control. Where many workers may perhaps refuse to conform to such modes of control, managers are unable to resist. Stepping into the subject position of manager means putting on the suit, the tie and the organization, and subjecting the managerial self to the utter subjection of being controlled by that very body which, we traditionally assume, is the locus of the self.

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<sup>1</sup> The anankastic personality disorder is the medical name for anal retention. It is a personality disorder characterised by feelings of personal insecurity, doubt and incompleteness leading to excessive conscientiousness, checking, stubbornness and caution. There may be insistent and unwelcome thoughts or impulses which do not attain the severity of an obsessional neurosis. There is perfectionism and meticulous accuracy and a need to check repeatedly in an attempt to

ensure this. Rigidity and excessive doubt may be conspicuous. (Summary of definition in *International classification of diseases, injuries and causes of death* (9<sup>th</sup> Ed), published in *A glossary of mental disorders and mental health legislation*, Wyeth Laboratories, 1980. )

<sup>2</sup> In the above-mentioned study of one of the NHS' largest trusts, none of the 26 managers interviewed has worn facial hair, but about 20% of the doctors have done (one also wears his hair in a pony tail). Other doctors distinguish themselves from managers by wearing bow ties or other flamboyant signifiers of an authority that allows them to refuse to be controlled. The last resort is, of course, the stethoscope.

<sup>3</sup> Jameson was dismissive of Foucault and preferred a Baudrillardian explication of post-modernism, a perspective which does not contradict the arguments of this paper, but rather assists in their development.

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