## Author Queries & Comments:

**Q1 :** The reference "McConn-Palfreyman, McInnes and Mangan, this issue" is cited in the text but is not listed in the references list. Please either delete the in-text citation or provide full reference details following journal style [hyperlink to relevant style-sheet].

Response: this is just a reference to one of the articles in this issue, to introduce the paper, not a citation

**Q2 :** The reference "Biehl and Volkmann, this issue" is cited in the text but is not listed in the references list. Please either delete the in-text citation or provide full reference details following journal style [hyperlink to relevant style-sheet].

Response: this is just a reference to one of the articles in this issue, to introduce the paper, not a citation

**Q3 :** The reference "Goffman's (1990)" is cited in the text but is not listed in the references list. Please either delete the in-text citation or provide full reference details following journal style.

Response: Goffman, Erving. 1990. *The presentation of self in everyday life* [1959]. na.

**Q4 :** Please provide missing page range for reference "Moraga 2015" references list entry.

Response: 19-24

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# *Carne* – flesh and organization

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This special issue emerges from the 35th Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism which we co-organized and which was held at the Faculty of Economics, Management Department, Universita' degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza in Rome in July 2017. The conference and the issue alike were inspired by the longstanding use of the notion of flesh in academic investigations of the more or less porous boundaries between the self, others and the world around us. Flesh, these works suggest, is both ontologically slippery and definitionally elusive. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964), flesh reconnects the viewing and the visible, the touching and the touched, the body and the world. Perception itself is a fleshly – auditory, visual, gustatory, haptic, olfactory – activity. Moreover, as Antonio Strati ( 2007) points out in his discussion of the connections between practice-based learning and 'sensible knowledge' in organizations, when we perceive others, we always perceive them as fundamentally corporeal. Equally, the world acts upon our flesh, so that what or whom we touch, see, smell, taste and hear may also touch, see, smell, taste and hear us. Elsewhere, Michel Foucault locates modern western *scientia sexualis* as having its origins in the earliest years of Christianity and its confessional regime which seeks to unearth 'the important secrets of the flesh' (1977, 154) as the deepest truths of the human subject. In this reading, flesh is the natural body, always and irrevocably bound to sin and to death.

Cherríe Moraga (2015, 19), on the other hand, identifies a theory in the flesh as 'one where the physical realities of our lives – our skin colour, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity'. In a very different feminist analysis, Judith Butler (1990, 96, 33) defines gender as the 'styles of the flesh' which 'congeal over time'; whereas Vicki Kirby (1997) takes her and other feminist poststructuralists to task in *Telling Flesh* for their overstatement of the cultural inscription of the body. Kirby argues that 'once you are seriously displacing the nature/language opposition, you have to be

arguing that nature, far from being written on, and insofar as it cannot be said to "lack language", "must be articulate"' (page 90).

Elspeth Probyn (2001), on the other hand, provides a dazzling array of ways to understand skin both materially, metonymically and metaphorically – it protects and is vulnerable, it can be bruised and breached, it is porous, it expands and retracts, it devours and is devoured, it has colour, texture and sensation.

Organization studies scholars have, nonetheless, perhaps been somewhat neglectful of flesh in our various endeavours. Whilst for the last three decades or so we have paid a great deal of attention to the body (e.g. Wolkowitz 2006; Bell and King 2010; Fotaki, Metcalfe, and Harding 2014; Moore 2017), we have largely overlooked flesh.

This backdrop was our metaphorical gauntlet, thrown down to encourage submissions addressing the connections between flesh and organization. We were very lucky to attract a high number of extremely interesting submissions to the issue, which we then had to work to whittle down to the four which appear here. Interestingly, although not atypically for conference special issues in this journal, only one of these was presented at the conference itself. All four are empirical and two make detailed use of Merleau-Ponty. Two use variants of ethnography and the other two arts-based methods. However, beyond that the papers are extremely diverse in their subject matter – professional sport, people who identify as transgender and gender non-conforming, hotel work and fat workers.

The first paper in the special issue is entitled 'From bodies as "meat" to bodies as "flesh": the expression of performance management as "sacrificial acts" within professional rugby', written by Will McConn-Palfreyman, Peter McInnes and Anita Mangan. Will, Peter and Anita use rich and evocative data from Will's ten month ethnography of a professional English rugby club to offer a provocative argument about performance management, inspired by Merleau-Ponty's reversible ontology. Their central thesis is that the various technologies used in the performance management of these elite players – including micro-timers to record how fast players complete specific drills in training – do not simply mould or manipulate the flesh of these players in a straightforward, uni-directional way. Instead the players actually weave these devices into their work as elite sportsmen – for example, not wanting to rank lowest on the statistical reports that the devices generate.

But players also forge their own ways of representing what the devices miss. One example is the way in which they valorize injuries, including one player breaking his thumb so badly in a match that the bone was sticking out. Because he simply carried on playing, he earned himself a place on the team's Courage Board. Taken together, these various interweavings allow the players to 'define and evaluate themselves against "good rugby"' (McConn-Palfreyman, McInnes, and Mangan this issue **[Q1]**). This highly localized reversibility of the players' flesh and the various performance management devices which survey them come together in a reading which places courage, martyrdom, intense physical work and sacrifice at the centre of what it means to be a good rugby player in this context.

Our second paper is 'Cutting my dick off', written by Saoirse O'Shea. In this compelling autoethnographic narrative, Saoirse gives voice to the experience of transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people who are still subjected to the normalization of their bodies within a binary social context. The touching first-person narrative – honest, direct and unapologetic, just like its title – explores various aspects of the TGNC experience which have insofar been either marginalized or silenced in organizations and organization studies alike.

Saoirse provides an account of the complex medical, physical and emotional process of undergoing gender affirmation surgery. In addition, they share their personal reflections and bodily lived experience, linking together tattooing, self-harm, self-mutilation and auto-castration. By offering a non-binary and non-normative view of the body within a largely cisgender heteronormative social context that continues to reduce people's sex and gender to the presence (or absence) of genital traits and flesh, Saoirse also advocates the need for fully recognizing and understanding different or subjectively experienced gendered bodies.

Third is '"Spirits, dancing in the flesh": choreography and organization', written by Brigitte Biehl and Christina Volkmann. They address the porous boundaries between the self and the other as theorized by Merleau-Ponty by means of art-based methods. Therefore, they examine the fleshy practices of the body as evinced during a dance-based training workshop run for staff in a hotel. Brigitte and Christina apply the notion of choreography, as composed of the elements of 'writing' (graphós) and 'movement' (chorós) in their analysis. Using a phenomenological perspective, they suggest choreography helps us to understand that flesh is a movement-related, kinaesthetic phenomenon that connects bodies and organizations. Their analysis surfaces social practices which they discuss regarding the extent to which they are built on structures of embodiment performed through everyday enactment. In particular, they suggest their innovative method shows 'that through [their] fleshly and perceptual interpenetrations on the job, participants develop a sense for hierarchies and rules of the game and submit to social choreographies' (Biehl and Volkmann this issue**[Q2]**).

Equally, Brigitte and Christina argue that 'The participants in our study showed a conscious awareness of their fleshly interconnection. Like a dancer developing their "compound eye" during their training, they had developed a similar perceptual apparatus they rely on routinely in their work situation' (Biehl and Volkmann this issue). They emphasize how the dance-based workshop and subsequent focus group reflections allowed them to surface these findings in ways that more conventional

organization studies methods would not.

Our fourth and final paper is entitled 'In the flesh: a poetic inquiry into how fat female employees manage weight-related stigma' and is written by Noortje van Amsterdam and Dide van Eck. Understanding fatness as 'excess' flesh, they use Goffman's (1990) **[Q3]** seminal work as means of uncovering how self-identifying full-figured, fat, overweight or obese women manage their 'fat stigma' in working lives. Based on 22 interviews and poetic inquiry, Noortje and Dide produce poems that show honestly the feelings of anxiety, shame and fear encountered by participants, demonstrating how it feels to be stigmatized based on one's size at work, and the different subject positions that individuals adopt to deal with 'fat stigma'. These subjectivities include 'the anxious fat employee', 'the super-smart fat employee', 'the impeccable fat employee', 'the funny fat employee' and the 'confident/rebellious employee'. The last poem is a touching piece produced by a participant in reaction to reading the poems that Noortje and Dide have written.

Overall, their thought-provoking paper, which uses poetry both to analyse but also represent their findings, makes a political statement regarding the stigmatizing practices in organizations related to size and health. Like Brigitte and Christina's paper, it is also notable for its innovative methodology.

In conclusion, we would like to thank our amazing reviewers, who all worked hard to turn round their comments in the more-than-usually tight timeline required for a special issue, and our eight lovely authors, who were patient and accommodating all the way through the process from the original submission deadline in late May 2018 to the final tweaks and adjustments during the early months of 2019. We hope that they are as pleased with the special issue as we are.

Turn the page now, dear reader: many fleshly delights await!

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