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Sub-theme 46: Organizing the Uncanny:  
Rethinking the Uncomfortably Familiar in Organization Studies

**Uncanny resemblances:  
‘Remembering as forgetting’ in organizational commemoration**

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**Introduction**

Our focus in this paper is on practices and artefacts of commemoration - collective remembering - within and through organizational settings. Based upon a critique of organizational commemoration as simultaneously ‘strange and familiar’ (Royle, 2003: vii), the analysis is concerned to explore how organizations commemorate – that is, produce and maintain semblances of coherence and continuity - through the materialization of a collective forgetting of their Other. We consider how this process of ‘remembering as forgetting’ (Casey, 2000) serves to produce an uncanny sense of simultaneously belonging and not belonging for those whose difference is negated through organizational commemoration. At the same time we explore the radical potential of the uncanny as a recognition-based ‘remembering’ of this negation. In doing so, we examine the ways in which organizational commemoration contributes to the maintenance of ideal forms of organizational subjectivity as disembodied, discrete and unencumbered, yet at the same time contains within itself the capacity to provide a radical alternative to these ideals.

In our discussion of organizational commemoration, we draw on Judith Butler’s writing on the politics of mourning, and particularly her critique of the gendered organization of the desire for recognition. Our starting point is Butler’s (2004: xvii) observation that ‘the limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which ... certain kinds of subjects appear as viable’. We focus on what organizations represent, as signs of value and as signifiers of recognition, but also on what they disavow for, as Butler (2004: 146) also notes, it is often the case that ‘normative schemes work precisely through providing no image, no name, no narrative’. Theoretically, we combine Butler’s critique of the normative conditions of subjective viability with a discussion of Edward Casey’s (2000: xi) phenomenological account of ‘remembering as forgetting’. We apply this to a critique of the impact on organizational life of what he calls ‘the othering of memory’. We introduce a third theoretical strand to our analysis in the form of Freud’s (2003 [1919]: 141) discussion of the uncanny, drawing in particular on his reflections on the aesthetic dynamics of repression signified by the uncanny, and articulated most fully through his preoccupation with the double, that is, with ‘those who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike’. We integrate insights from these three theoretical

sources into a conceptual lens through which to view three different settings or sites of organizational commemoration, focusing on the commemorative equivalent of what Butler (2004) calls ‘the liveable life’, namely the grievable death, and its articulation within organizational settings through which, we argue, idealized forms of organizational subjectivity are perpetuated.

We begin by considering the background to the theoretical and empirical ideas explored here, and by outlining the underlying aims of the paper. We then consider the relationship between meaning and materiality as this relationship is articulated through artefacts and practices of mourning and commemoration, drawing on relevant literature within organization studies. Following this review, we move on to outline the theoretical ideas drawn together in our analysis. We then explore organizational commemoration within three different settings, which we consider as examples of distinct approaches to organizational commemoration. First we consider examples of commemorative portraiture at Keele Hall; second, we examine ceremonial commemoration at the University of Sydney. Finally, we explore an alternative approach to commemoration, one characterized by a radical, alternative form of organized commemoration in the form of the Sackville Memorial Gardens, Manchester. Following our discussion of these three commemorative sites we discuss the uncanny politics of organizational commemoration in the penultimate section of the paper, concluding that in managing their uncanny Other, organizations continue to perpetuate narrow ideals of whom or what is valued and deemed worthy of commemoration.

The paper has three broad aims. Theoretically we aim to connect Butler’s critique of the social norms governing the conferral or denial of recognition to Casey’s phenomenology of remembering as a simultaneous process of forgetting, as well as to Freud’s account of the uncanny in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of how commemoration connects to hierarchies of recognition and repression within organizational settings. Empirically, we aim to contribute to studies of organizational life by focusing on the hitherto neglected area of commemorative artefacts and practices to explore how they construct what they purport to represent, namely ideal subjectivities that perpetuate patterns of exclusion and marginalization. With a few notable exceptions focusing on commemorative portraits (Acevedo, 2014; Davison, 2010), commemoration continues to be a relatively neglected theme in the study of organizational life, despite the recognition that commemorative artefacts and practices constitute culturally significant sites of meaning making within social and organizational settings (Legg, 2007; Sargin, 2004; Sievers, 1994). This being the case we would argue that, particularly within organization studies, ‘in view of its recurrent importance, it is bizarre that we do not know more about the nature of commemoration’ (Casey, 2000: 217). Finally, we aim to contribute to the study of the organizational uncanny methodologically by adopting an auto-ethnographic approach through which we collect and reflect on data gathered through our own experiences of the spaces we inhabit. In this aspect of the paper, we take as our starting point, Hockey and Allen-Collinson’s (2009: 220) recent call to develop a more phenomenologically informed and embodied appreciation of the ‘work organization as sensorium’, which they highlight as the need to theorize organizations as the complex perceptual apparatus that constitute the socio-materiality of organizational settings. In doing so, we hope to invite others to do likewise and to encourage a wider critical reflection on the politics of commemoration within our own respective

organizational settings, both to contribute to, and to unsettle our own understanding of the uncanny resemblances that constitute the organizations we inhabit; as Vidler (1992) argues in this respect, paying attention to the uncanny can bring a political dimension to the study of aesthetics and to understanding lived experiences of the spaces and settings we inhabit that we might otherwise overlook.

### **Studying organizational commemoration within academic settings**

Our interest in the issues examined in this paper began some years ago when we all attended a *Gender, Work and Organization* conference at Keele University. Here, staying in the beautiful surroundings of Keele Hall, we were struck by the extent to which the interior walls of this nineteenth century, Jacobean-style mansion, currently used as the University's conference centre, were adorned with an impressive array of portraits of great men connected to the Hall and the University. In contrast to the ornately gilt-framed, imposing oil portraits of men, we found only one painting of a woman seemingly connected to the University. This was a much smaller, under-stated watercolour painting, hanging in the corner of an upstairs landing, of a woman using a vacuum cleaner. The ironic disjuncture between the thematic focus of the conference and the adornment of our surroundings was not lost on us, and we began to get an uncanny sense of what Butler (1993: 219) describes as the uneasiness of 'standing under a sign to which one does and does not belong'. We began reflecting in a more systematic way on the unease with which we each experienced our own working environments, as simultaneously insiders, accorded recognition within our respective organizations, yet at the same time outsiders within institutional settings that, while ostensibly grounded in values such as tolerance, equality and openness to the Other, continue to be marked by structural inequalities such as disparities in pay and status, as well as more subtle symbolic messages conveying what and who is valued. In sum, what this experience reminded us of was our shared sense of what Benhabib (1992) calls 'living beside oneself' within our respective organizational settings; that is, of sharing an uncanny sense of simultaneously belonging but not quite being 'at home'<sup>1</sup>.

As Bleijenbergh et al (2013: 22-23) have recently noted, 'the growing globalization of the academic community suggests the existence of generally shared norms about the "ideal academic" even among those working in academia'. Research focusing on academia indicates that this ideal academic remains strongly gendered in terms of shared perceptions of the relatively narrow range of subject positions associated with the role, yet more research is needed to consider the relationship between the values formally espoused by and within academic organizations, their semiotic landscapes (Gagliardi, 1990) and the symbolism that shapes their material settings, and the perpetuation of social norms defining ideal workers within them. With this in mind, our starting premise is that exploring the artefacts and practices through which we commemorate the past can tell us much about the nature and experience of this relationship within contemporary organizations.

Commemoration is arguably such a widespread, seemingly benign aspect of the material and particularly, visual culture of our organizational settings that as researchers we remain largely insensitive to this particular medium and its power effects; for instance, 'executive portraits now appear so commonplace that they have become hidden in plain sight, with the result that scholars of management,

organization and leadership have not explored the issues they raise in any depth' (Guthey and Jackson, 2005: 1058). Hence, commemorative artefacts have, to date, been given little sustained consideration within organization studies, yet our lived experiences of organizational settings are likely to be shaped by constant, passive exposure to commemorative culture as part of our organizations' 'decoration' (Wolfram Cox and Minahan, 2005), so that we rarely consider the kinds of repetitive imagery they are characterized by and hence, the various normative ideals they perpetuate. Phenomenological accounts of remembering emphasize the poetic resonances of particular places and artefacts (Casey, 2000), as does Foucault's (1986) discussion of heterotopic spaces. While the latter focuses on cemeteries as 'quasi-eternal' culturally ubiquitous spaces of commemoration, remembrance can of course take many different forms. While spaces, places and monuments associated with remembrance are central to what Bell (2012: 4) has described as 'the social construction of organizational memory', so too are other material artefacts such as corporate memorabilia, including named or dedicated buildings and institutions, positions or awards, plaques, statues, portraits and other cultural artefacts, all of which are socially produced and embedded within relations of power and control (Willmott, 2000); such artefacts contribute to the organizational management of 'collective memory work' (Bell and Taylor, 2011). What studies such as these emphasize, but which has yet to be considered in any sustained way within organization studies, is how through practices and artefacts of commemoration some lives (and therefore deaths) come to 'matter' more than others. In other words, through organizational commemoration, who embodies what it is that an organization recognizes as being of value (and conversely, who and what it does not), is materialized.

As indicated above, our approach to the analysis presented here is broadly auto-ethnographic in so far as our reference points are primarily those organizational settings we ourselves inhabit or frequent as University-based researchers; they are spaces and settings in which we ostensibly feel 'at home'. Bearing this in mind, we emphasize two aspects of auto-ethnographic engagement that shape our approach. First, auto-ethnography is not merely a process of reflecting on yourself as an individual but rather understanding the culture in which you and others are situated. Second, auto-ethnography involves not simply a cognitive reflection about disembodied experiences, but a reflexive account of what that situation feels like, and of what it is like to experience and embody that particular setting with others. We therefore consider some of the organizational settings we inhabit, reflecting on what those settings are like for us as researchers who are part of the culture(s) we are studying.

Adopting precisely this kind of approach, a small but developing literature focusing on embodied experiences of auto-ethnographic research is beginning to develop within the fields of management, work and organization studies (Adams, 2007; Mischenko, 2005). Yet to date, there have been few accounts that attempt to apply the theoretical ideas outlined above to critical reflections on the lived experiences of organizational recognition and commemoration. This perhaps reflects, in itself, reluctance on the part of academic researchers, reviewers and journal editors to deviate from more traditional approaches and particularly the credence attached to the disembodied author as knowing subject (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009). Yet, if our concern is to re-present organizational practices through 'thick sensory

description' (Taylor and Hansen, 2005: 1225) then corporeally grounded, auto-ethnographic data constitutes an important and potentially fruitful basis for such an approach, at least as a starting point or as a contributory element of a larger body of knowledge. Hence, below we consider extracts and images collected, discussed and reflected upon by the three of us and gathered through our own experiences of the organizational settings we each feel a sense of connection to as 'insiders' yet at the same time, frequently experience as uncanny, or unhomey. In this respect, our focus is largely on gender as we each share a sense of being both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in academia *as women*, although our analysis is concerned with other aspects of identity at various points in the paper, particularly in terms of how gender intersects with a range of identities and lived experiences.

Recent research on women in academia has highlighted the ways in which women continue to be positioned as Other – *in* the organization, but not necessarily *of* it (Benschop and Brouns, 2003; Thomas and Davies, 2002). Empirical studies indicate that women continue to be relatively structurally disadvantaged and culturally marginalized within academic work, a situation that is manifest for instance in the persistence of the gender pay gap and in sedimented patterns of horizontal and vertical segmentation (Knights and Richards, 2003). Ramsay and Letherby (2006: 26, emphasis added) sum this up when they argue that the gendered organization of academia is characterized by 'a wealth of practices which render women academics' participation undervalued, unrecognized and marginalized, leading to *an overwhelming feeling of otherness*'. In their recent analysis of Dutch universities for instance, Bleijenbergh et al (2013: 33) emphasize how in their research interviews with (all male) academic deans, academia was understood largely as an all-encompassing calling that left little room for caring obligations outside of work. Hence, their view of the 'ideal academic' was of someone entirely unencumbered, an ideal that all of the men in their study felt women could not conform to. In conclusion, they argue that 'the Otherness of women relative to the image of the ideal academic is more constant than the characteristics of these images themselves'. While perceptions of the ideal academic as 'competent through commitment' tend to disadvantage women, in practice they may also of course have adverse implications for men who have caring responsibilities or who do not conform to heteronormative, hegemonic masculinities. Further, certain roles within academic work that emphasize connection such as those that are more pastorally or welfare orientated rather than strategic tend to be accorded relatively less recognition and status. To put it simply, in practice, this often means that

to be successful means working long hours and avoiding teaching and administrative duties in favour of a single-minded pursuit of status-driven research. The ideal academic thus is often construed as a lone, independent individual, who is self-protective, competitive, ruthless and not that collegiate (Bleijenbergh, 2013: 24).

In sum, our focus in the discussion below is on understanding the role of organizational settings in perpetuating these ideals, and in reflecting on the nature and consequences of the gendered organization of recognition, materialized in commemorative practices and artefacts, by which such organizations are underpinned. In drawing on Butler's account of the politics of mourning, we seek to extend insights that feminist theory and phenomenology, as well as Freud's writing, have begun to

make into organization studies in recent years, and to draw on these insights as a theoretical lens through which to view the ways in which commemorative practices and artefacts signify the conferral or denial of recognition within organizational settings, conveying who does and does not ‘matter’.

### **Memorials that matter: Mourning, meaning and materiality**

Butler’s (1990, 1993, 2004) performative critique of gender is grounded largely in a phenomenological understanding of the embodied self as the medium through which we encounter the other and through which gendered subjectivity is brought into being, or ‘made to matter’. In this sense, Butler plays on the term ‘matter’ as referring simultaneously to both a materialization of gender and its successful performance in accordance with the social norms governing the conferral of recognition on oneself as a viable, intelligible subject. It is Butler’s passing reference to the ways in which our gendered selves are ‘instituted in an exterior space’ (Butler, 1990: 141) that most interests us here in terms of the connections between Butler’s analysis of ‘mattering’ as a process through which recognition is materialized, and her account of the relationship between recognition and mourning.

As Butler (2004: xiv) puts it, ‘certain forms of grief become ... recognised and amplified, whereas other losses become unthinkable and ungrievable’. The latter, what she refers to as ‘disavowed mourning’, involves the systematic erasure from the public consciousness of those names, images and narratives deemed unworthy of recognition in death as in life:

Some lives are grievable, and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: *what counts as a liveable life and a grievable death?* (Butler, 2004: xiv-xv, emphasis added).

Our aim in this paper is to examine this question through an organizational lens, considering the role played by organizations in maintaining this exclusionary hierarchy and in signifying its normative effects as part of the semiotic landscape or the ‘melancholic background’ (Butler, 2004: 46) of organizational life (and death). To put it simply, at what cost (and by what means), do the organizations we inhabit establish that certain lives are memorable while others are not? Further, in what ways can the ‘uncanny’ as a conceptual and theoretical lens, enable us to understand how processes of remembering (and forgetting) are organized? These are fundamental questions underpinning debates revolving around dignity at work for, as Butler also notes, the issue of who will be treated humanely presupposes that ‘we have first settled the question of who does and does not count as human’ (Butler, 2004: 91). In organizational terms, and in the examples considered below, this refers particularly to those deemed worthy of recognition as viable, intelligible organizational subjects and hence of the rights and representations that such subjectivity engenders.

Memorials have been part of human culture and integral to communal life throughout our history, perpetuating what social geographers refer to as ‘the lure of the local’, evoking a sense of belonging to a particular place or setting (Lippard, 1983). While

past associations of some places and settings are lovingly restored or preserved for posterity, becoming part of the collective memory, 'others are considered unimportant and are systematically erased, destroyed or sanitized' (Wasserman, 1998: 42). The impact this has on embodied, lived experiences of belonging or not, is the focus of Edward Casey's (2000: 186) phenomenological exploration of remembering, in which he observes how places may 'hold and preserve' memories, but they may also do precisely the opposite. In considering the latter, we examine in more depth below Casey's account of 'remembering as forgetting' along with Freud's discussion of the uncanny, focusing in particular on the significance of the 'double'.

Casey's (2000) starting point is that the phenomenology of memory has been dominated by a preoccupation with the mind, privileging recollection as a process involving visualized recall. Strongly echoing the post-Cartesianism that characterized Merleau Ponty's (2002 [1945]) earlier exploration of lived embodiment in *Phenomenology of Perception*<sup>ii</sup>, Casey moves us well beyond this restriction, inviting us to consider the dynamic relationship between what he terms *body memory*, *place memory* and *commemoration*. The latter constitutes what he understands as a 'triad of non-representational and non-recollective rememberings' going beyond the hegemony of cognitively-orientated models of memory towards a more sensate appreciation of how remembering is lived and experienced in and through the body. As he puts it,

Body memories are not just memories *of* the body but instances of remembering places, events, and people *with* and *in* the lived body. In commemoration, body and place memory conspire with co-participating others in ritualized scenes of co-remembering (Casey, 2000: xi).

Thus, for Casey (2000: xi), it is the commemorative presence of others that is significant to how we experience remembering. For those who are not recognized within such ritualized scenes, a sense of not-belonging is arguably perpetuated through both the past's connection to the present and the shared sense of forgetting implied by co-participation; in short, both the scope and scale of forgetting serves to repeat and perpetuate over time lived experiences of negation and marginalization. In understanding this process and its effects, Casey argues that 'memory must be pursued into its own Otherness' through what he describes as a voyage into 'the othering of memory as traditionally conceived' (Casey, 2000: xi). Ultimately, he contends that such an approach leads us to appreciate both the embodied experience of remembering beyond the hegemony of the cognitive, and in this respect, 'forgetting as the primary other of memory' (Casey, 2000: xi). Much work remains to be done in this respect, he concludes, in recovering the Other of that which is remembered, reminding us that 'in remembering, *we come back to the things that matter*' (Casey, 2000: xxii, emphasis added). In developing these insights from Casey, our focus is on commemoration itself as a process of organization through which who, or what, is to be remembered comes to be classified, categorized and hierarchically ordered.

In his discussion of remembering as recognition, Casey's account connects to Butler's critique of the politics of mourning in several important ways that set up our interest in both the presence and potential of the uncanny within organizational commemoration. First, he frames remembering as a performative act through which 'acts of past recognition ... aid in the constitution of the present' (Casey, 2000: 123); as he puts it, 'this sort of bodily remembering might usefully be termed

“performative” remembering’ (Casey, 2000: 148) in so far as the immanence of the past becomes embodied in the present through repeated acts of remembering and through the repetition of particular commemorative motifs. Second, he connects this process specifically to subjective intelligibility, arguing that through acts of consolidation, identities marked by sameness become settled and situated, ‘acting in concert ... as a coherent and customary entity’ (Casey, 2000: 151), so that past recognition provides the conditions necessary for intelligible perception in the present. To illustrate this latter point, Casey provides the example of a commemorative painting which ‘possesses the quality of being finally and fully expressive of itself, auto-iconic [in] the sense of having-come-already-into-its-own’ (Casey, 2000: 127). Casey emphasizes how acts of commemoration can be ‘deeply orientating ... habituating actions’ (2000: 151) that produce a sense of situated, habituated assurance effecting familiarization. Yet, third, for those rendered unintelligible in the present as a result of acts of commemoration that consolidate past negation, the effect can be profoundly disorientating, producing a sense of the unfamiliar or uncanny. Hence, the uncanny is understood by Casey as a disorientating sense of being unfamiliar or unsettled, resulting from a lack of the kind of bodily memories that only a consolidation of past recognition can provide. In this respect, Casey’s account of ‘remembering as forgetting’ leads us directly to Freud’s discussion of the uncanny.

In particular, it is Freud’s preoccupation with the double - that ‘most prominent of ... motifs that produce an uncanny effect’ (Freud, 2003: 141) - that is of most interest to us here. In articulating the uncanny through the figure of the double, Freud emphasizes not simply the repression or liminality that produces the uncanny as an aesthetic effect, but rather the repetition that is needed to contain that which is repressed and to maintain the apparent coherence of what is posited to be present and discrete. The motif of the double is central to understanding the role of the uncanny in subject formation, for although relatively undeveloped in Freud’s own account, ‘constant recurrence of the same thing’ through repetition of what is identical is how the self is brought into being and maintained (ibid: 142). While the double is evoked as an insurance, ‘a defence against annihilation’ (ibid: 142), it is always also ‘the uncanny harbinger of death’ (ibid: 142).

The double as the articulation of repetition in Freud, (or ‘re-citation’, in Butler’s terms), is therefore framed as the reminder or remainder of what has been repressed in the Other in the formation of the Self. The uncanny is therefore positioned as the recognition that this repetition, rather than reaffirming the latter’s integrity, does precisely the opposite; it reveals its precarity, hence the need for constant reaffirmation. Thus, it is not the presence of certain repetitions that is uncanny, but rather their repressed Other, which through their absence, make their presence felt. ‘Felt’ here is the operative word as in Freud’s account the uncanny is largely experienced as an aesthetic phenomenon – it is what is felt or sensed that renders the uncanny (and hence our own precarity) apparent. This is why the uncanny continues to be associated with death, dead bodies, ghosts and so on, and why the uncanny is also ‘eerie’ as it echoes not simply with the past but a present that never was and a future that will not be. And herein lies, in our view at least, the radical potential of the uncanny and its capacity to ‘undo’, in Butler’s (2004) terms, the politics of mourning as they are currently materialized within organizational commemoration, premised

upon a ‘remembering as forgetting’ in Casey’s (2000) account and a reminder of how commemoration, and hence, recognition, might be ‘done’ differently.

With these ideas and insights in mind, we consider below three distinct organizational settings within academia that, as illustrative examples, enable us to examine different ways in which organizational commemoration negates its uncanny other. Anthropologists such as Douglas (1966) and Levi-Strauss (1968) have long since emphasized how human societies have two basic defences against Otherness – incorporation and over-inclusion. Echoing Burrell’s (1984) earlier work on organization sexuality, Linstead (1997) argues that work organizations display both in their attempts to manage abject phenomena. In the case of Keele Hall, we note how the portraits on display serve to negate otherness through a commemorative exclusion; in relation to the University of Sydney, we discuss how practices of ceremonial remembering serve to perpetuate a commemorative over-inclusion. In the case of our third example, the Sackville Memorial Gardens in Manchester, we explore an alternative, radical form of organizational/organized commemoration, one that arguably ‘undoes’ the negating effects of more traditional forms of commemoration in being characterized not by processes of exclusion or over-inclusion, but rather an openness to the Other, one that reveals and revels in the uncanny.

Before we begin, we would like to make one general observation. Our sense and our understanding is that, within academia, commemorative artefacts are largely restricted to traditional ‘commemorabilia’ (Casey, 2000) such as statues, busts, named or dedicated buildings, portraits (see below), stained glass windows and so on, all of which form what Hancock (2005: 29) calls ‘constellations of meaning’ or chains of signifiers that serve to set the commemorative scene in these particular settings. All of these, we would argue, are largely individualist (often celebrating ‘heroic’, individual achievements – as noted above). They are representational, discrete, disembodied commemorative media that celebrate these values in their subjects, themes we explore in more detail in the first of our examples below.

### **Commemorative exclusions: Portraiture at Keele Hall**

One of the media commonly used by organizations to convey meaning and to materialize memory is the display of past ‘members’ (Höpfl, 2003), with prominent ancestors adorning the walls of sacred organizational spaces often through a process of, in its simplest terms, ‘hero worship’, endorsing ‘who and what should be commemorated’ (Wasserman, 1998: 42). Classic oil painting has long been regarded as a means of ‘performing memory in art’ (Plate and Smelik, 2013). Portraiture is a genre of art that depicts the visual appearance of the subject, one that has tended to flourish in societies that value the individual over the collective (West, 2004). Portraits are often commissioned on the basis of a desire to elongate a particular individual’s period of influence and to convey both authority and longevity (West, 2004) so that historically, portrait paintings have traditionally been the preserve of the rich and powerful, with a well-executed portrait being expected to constitute a flattering representation of inner strength and charisma. Unlike caricature, which often exaggerates particular physical features in order to reveal or emphasize certain character traits, the aesthetic conventions governing the production of classic portraits means that they are often relatively expression-less in order to emphasize longevity, gravitas and moral capacity rather than ‘anything temporary, fleeting or accidental’

(Aymar, 1967: 94). Hence, both aesthetically and politically, portraiture gives the impression of neutrality, either in the form of detached indifference or more commonly, particularly in portraits of relatively powerful subjects, of moral standing. In practice, this all suggests that ‘portraits act as signifiers’ (Acevedo, 2014: 120) of the status of the individuals and institutions they purport to represent. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that such commemorative artefacts continue to adorn contemporary organizational spaces in a wide range of settings, including those in academia, as in the case of Keele Hall, the setting for the bi-annual international *Gender, Work and Organization* conference, hosted by Keele University.

As outlined above, the empirical starting point for our analysis was our attendance at the *Gender, Work and Organization* conference at Keele Hall in 2012, when we became acutely aware of the disjuncture between the thematic focus of the conference and the materiality of its setting. Drawing on Freud, we would argue that the role played by the commemorative portraiture we began to engage with more consciously than might otherwise have been the case is an uncanny one, an uncanny resemblance as it were, that plays on the doubling of the self. In practice, the portraits adorning the walls of Keele Hall produce a sense of the uncanny in two inter-related ways that serve to materialize and perpetuate commemorative exclusions: first, through repression, they evoke (for us at least) a feeling of being both familiar and strange at the same time; that is, of being there but of not being recognized. Second, their repetitive imagery is unsettling; through repetition, the constant recurrence of particular images produces a sense of being surrounded by disembodied doubles, of ‘hollow men’, to evoke Eliot’s terminology. As Latimer (2009) emphasizes in relation to this latter point, what portraits depict in Freudian terms are the ‘double’, which in its objectification in a work of art detaches the individual from his or her lived, embodied form, and from the broader collective of which they are a part.

For us, what we see in commemorative collections and displays of organisational portraiture such as the paintings of ‘great men’ associated with Keele University is exactly the compulsion to repress and repeat that Freud describes. Within Keele Hall there are multiple pictures echoing the same theme – the ‘great man’ – and although there may be minor changes of stance or dress, they typically provide mirror images of the same. Of course this sameness is in itself significant: it is a valorised sameness that *excludes* difference and which, in doing so, negates the organization’s Other. It may be intended to indicate a link and continuity with a past and a tradition, but at the same time it provides an enclosed space of repetition of certain symbols and imaginaries which constitute the homely, the security of the insider – and simultaneously construct the *unheimlich* of the outsider. We see this also in the substance, in the framing and in the positioning of the paintings.

On the main staircase, rich oil paintings of former chancellors and vice chancellors are hung in heavy gilt frames. These are positioned in prominent places, apparently designed to be viewed from several angles and to assume an imposing role within the spaces they occupy. Certain paintings dominate the staircases and galleried areas, for instance (see Figure One, below for an example). The colours used in these are deep, rich, bold and bright – red (velvet) is represented in abundance, as are darker colours conveying authority such as blacks, darks greys, browns and blues. Further signs of the prominence of these portraits and their subjects is indicated by the moulded plaster frames within which they are mounted, themselves adding another layer to the

apparent significance and stability, the solidity and continuity, associated with the figures depicted. This ‘double’ framing also serves to give an impression of protection and containment, preserving the authority of the figures depicted for posterity and in doing so, reinforcing their value.

[Insert Figure One here]

Figure One: Oil painting hung on main staircase, Keele Hall

In stark contrast to the white, middle aged male images that recur in the prominent oil paintings that adorn the wall of the main reception rooms and suites at Keele Hall, we noticed no paintings depicted ethnic minority people, or women. The one notable exception to the latter was (as noted above) the presence of a small watercolour painting, hung in a simple unvarnished wooden frame, with no moulding or additional decoration, of a woman using a vacuum cleaner (see Figure Two, below).

[Insert Figure Two here]

Figure Two: Watercolour painting of a woman vacuuming, Keele Hall

Our own experience of these paintings was broadly uncanny in so far as while we each felt ostensibly ‘at home’ in the space, given that it was a University setting with which we were all familiar at the same time we felt unsettled by the patterns of exclusion and repetition depicted in the paintings, and particularly by the disjuncture between our lived experience of the conference setting, and the narrow range of subject positions that seemed to be valued by and within that setting. We found ourselves being drawn neither to the woman vacuuming – the excluded Other, or to the ‘uncanny resemblances’ of what it means to be an academic depicted in the commemorative portraits. Hence, we felt simultaneously present and absent; there physically but not symbolically so, both at home in a setting with which we were comfortably familiar, but also outsiders. Reflecting on these images, and this particular experience, we began to consider how, in each of our respective institutional settings, commemorative artefacts and practices shape our sense of being simultaneously ‘at home’ and not belonging. We noted in particular how, at the University of Sydney, a different set of practices appear not to exclude the uncanny Other, but rather to co-opt or over-exclude it, to which we now turn.

### **Commemorative over-inclusions: Ceremonial remembering at Sydney**

The Great Hall at the University of Sydney is a place wherein a particular past is evoked in the present through rituals and artefacts of commemoration. Commemorative places effectively ‘contain’ memories, Casey argues, by holding and preserving them: ‘it is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability’ (Casey, 2000: 186). Hence, memory thrives in these kinds of settings, on the persistent particularities of what is ‘properly *in place*: held fast there and made one’s own’ (Casey, 2000: 187). This latter point in particular emphasizes the colonizing capacity of memory, containing the present in the past, and making that which ought to properly know its place ‘one’s own’. The colonizing implications of this process, we would argue, are materialized in the rituals and artefacts that characterize the

particularities of graduation ceremonies held within this commemorative space, a place of recognition of the past in the present, and through which that which is Other becomes co-opted and mobilized.

Sydney University was amongst the first universities in the world to open its doors to female students with the first women enrolling in 1881 and graduating in 1885. Yet it would be more than a century later before the portrait of a woman would hang on the walls of the Great Hall of the University of Sydney. This portrait, of Dame Leonie Kramer, Chancellor of the University of Sydney from 1991 to 2001, mirrors the portraits of male Chancellors that adorn the walls. It was joined in 2012 by a second female portrait of Professor Marie Bashir who served as Chancellor from 2007 until 2012.

All of the portraits of a dozen men and two women are oil paintings, framed with heavy gilt frames and in each portrait the subject wears the robes of the Chancellor. The portraits hang in rows around the Great Hall which is a large sandstone edifice designed by the Colonial Architect, Thomas Blacket, and officially opened in 1859. The sandstone building, which houses a series of stone-glass windows which reference Oxford and Cambridge Universities, marble statues and oil paintings, signifies Sydney University's status as Australia's first university and also stands as testament to the desire of the founders of the University to have a building that was "as old world as possible" (Gamble and van Sommers, 1919: 8). Wentworth, explorer and politician whose marble statue sits within the Great Hall, conveyed his hope to the NSW Parliament in 1849 that he believed that: "from the pregnant womb of this institution will arise a long line of illustrious names – of Statesmen, of Patriots, of Poets, of Heroes, and of Sages, who will shed a deathless halo, not only on their country, but upon that University we are now about to call into being" (Gamble and van Summers, 1919: 10).

The Great Hall is home to Graduation ceremonies where the Chancellor or her representative<sup>1</sup> resides over the ceremony wearing the same robe that her predecessors wear in the oil paintings that adorn the walls. The Senate resolutions describe the Chancellor's dress as: "a black silk gown replete with gold ornaments, the yoke and facings trimmed with gold, and sleeves barred with gold". Every ceremony begins with the Chancellor, or her representative welcoming graduates and their families and acknowledging that:

The campuses of the University of Sydney are located on the traditional lands of a number of Australia's First Peoples. It is with deep respect for our indigenous past that I acknowledge the Cadigal, Gundungurra, Duruk and Wangal peoples and their custodianship of these lands.

The ability of these words to adequately commemorate the Indigenous owners of the University lands is reliant on the way in which the words are performed. Having sat through many graduations, Leanne has heard the words delivered with great sincerity but also at other times in a perfunctory way as if the speaker were simply going through the motions. No matter how much meaning is conveyed in the performance,

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<sup>1</sup> The current Chancellor of the University of Sydney is Ms Belinda Hutchinson.

these 30 words offered fleetingly at the beginning of the ceremony cannot compete with the permanency of the stone walls and the gilt-framed oil portraits that adorned them and whose subjects look down on the audience listening to the words of acknowledgement as if to say, they may have been here first but we overcame.

While the Great Hall and its contents signify the prestige of the University they also stand as symbols of colonisation and the dispossession of Indigenous people. This is the unspoken sub-text in the words of acknowledgement. Beyond these words there is nothing else to acknowledge this dispossession and certainly no permanent memorial to commemorate the lives of the Indigenous peoples whose land the University occupies.

When Professor Marie Bashir stepped down as Chancellor she was presented with a farewell gift from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of the University. It was a Wiradjuri Cloak, made from kangaroo skin and traditionally used for ceremonial purposes. It was given in recognition of Professor Bashir's dedication and support in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. The photo of Professor Bashir wrapped in the cloak (see Figure 3) was one of two photos, the other of her newly completed oil portrait (see Figure 4), that appeared in a University web article entitled 'Celebrating Her Excellency Marie Bashir'.



Figure 3: Lynette Riley presents Professor Marie Bashir with Wiradjuri Cloak



Figure 4: Chinese Australian artist Jiawei Shen presents Marie Bashir with a new portrait to hang in the Great Hall

The oil painting of Marie Bashir wearing the robes of the Chancellor represents her inclusion in the University. This is a life the University is keen to remember and to commemorate, as the Vice Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence, stated at her farewell: “We are indeed privileged to count Marie Bashir as one of us”. Being counted as ‘one of us’ is conditional upon conflating the complexity of the Chancellor’s lived experience into a body that matters and to a body that conforms. In the portrait Professor Bashir sits passively and the fullness of the robe fills the frame and covers her body encompassing and appropriating her. Beyond the wedding ring on her finger and the fine gold chain around her neck the portrait is devoid of any other symbols that might represent the life of this woman who is also the Governor of NSW and a highly respected psychiatrist. The simple gold frame, which contrasts with the more elaborate frames that encase the other Chancellor portraits, represents the modern era in which she served the University.

In the setting of the University of Sydney (and of course in academia more generally), the academic gown serves to cloak women’s bodies, containing their conditional belonging through a process of metaphorical and highly embodied, physical over-inclusion. In commemorative portraits, the gown (or other regalia such as maces, for instance) passes on the mantle as a signifier of the gravitas of the role and its past, present and future incumbents, and all that they represent. The over-inclusion that this cloaking process implies demands that the Other be able to present a conditional likeness that effectively conflates the complexity of lived experience, containing multiplicity and connection into institutional convention and individualistic representations that replicate organizational norms. In the case of Marie Bashir at the University of Sydney, being counted as ‘one of us’ appears to be conditional upon signing up to the normative conditions governing the conferral of recognition on a ‘body that matters’, as Butler might put it. Hence, the complexity and multiplicity of

Bashir's identity and contribution to Australian society is lost in formal, institutional representations of her as an academic leader, and in recognition of her as 'one of us' (and therefore, by implication, not 'one of them').

Furthermore, by wrapping Professor Bashir in the Wiradjuri Cloak, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are wanting to both honour and include the Chancellor as one of them. Yet this inclusion of Professor Bashir does not mean that the Indigenous staff or their ancestors are included beyond the words that open the graduation ceremony. It is important to note that the oil portrait was presented within the walls of the Great Hall at an official farewell function, whereas the Wiradjuri Cloak was presented on the lawn outside the Great Hall at an informal gift-giving. The two spaces in which these attempts to include the Chancellor speak to her inclusion and to the exclusion of the colonised by the coloniser. As Moreton-Robinson (2000, xxii) points out, representations 'are not just symbols they are the means by which we come to know, embody and perform reality and they arise out of differences in the position of knowing subjects in relation to the historicity of interconnected relationships of domination and contestation'. Rather than negated through exclusion, in this instance the uncanny other is set to work through a neo-colonial process of appropriation or over-inclusion through which difference is ultimately negated or 'cloaked'; difference is subject to closure and containment. It is this latter theme in particular, the over-inclusion of otherness within ceremonial 'remembering as forgetting' (Casey, 2000) at Sydney, combined with our uncanny sense of the commemorative exclusions we encountered at Keele Hall, that contrasted markedly for us with our experience of visiting the Sackville Memorial Gardens in Manchester.

### **Commemorative openness: Sackville Memorial Gardens, Manchester**

In his discussion of remembering, Casey makes an important ethico-political distinction between recollection characterized by distance from what is remembered and a positioning of the self as a voyeur of the remembered, from recollection, through which we become more deeply embedded in what is remembered through what he describes as the 'matter of immersion', referring to the socio-materiality of commemoration and our collective, embodied, lived experience of it. Rather than an objectified or reified sense of the past as being 'settled and actual' (Casey, 2000: 174), this understanding of the past's connection to the present frames this relationship as a co-presence through which the phenomenal, lived body 'furnishes an unmediated access to the lived past' (Casey, 2000: 178). The body therefore comes to be recognized as the lived site of a commemorative co-presence of past and present, self and other. We consider below a setting that, in our view, constitutes an alternative site of commemorative immersion, one which rather than materializing an exclusionary or co-optational politics of mourning, moves us beyond either approach, into an ethics of commemoration premised upon a recognition of the negated Other, and a 'recollective' engagement, in Casey's terms, with the radical potential of the uncanny.

Sackville Gardens in Manchester, UK, is a small city park bounded by Canal Street (the heart of Manchester's Gay Village) and various college buildings, some of which form part of the University of Manchester. Owned by the City Council, it is run by a local residents' group, the Friends of Sackville Gardens. Among its paths, lawns and

flowers, it has four memorials: the first is the Tree of Light which was planted in the park on World AIDS Day 1993; the Beacon of Hope is a memorial to victims of AIDS/HIV which was erected in 2000; a statue of Alan Turing, ‘the father of modern computing’ was unveiled in 2001; and the Transgender Remembrance Memorial was established in 2013, the first of its kind in the world to commemorate those who have lost their lives as a result of trans-phobia.

The Beacon of Hope (see Figure 5 below) is a tall decorated steel column sculpture designed by Warren Chapman and Jess Boyn-Daniel and is the UK’s only permanent memorial to those with HIV/AIDS. Around its base it has the inscriptions: “time for tolerance” and “time for action”. It also has a series of plaques which detail what has happened in relation to AIDS/HIV in each of the years from 1982. These include the numbers of people who have AIDS or have died from AIDS-related conditions in the UK; it also acknowledges organizations that have worked towards both medical therapies and social change. The plaque for 2010 notes that 3,000 people attended the Manchester Pride HIV Day.



Figure 5: Beacon of Hope, Sackville Gardens, Manchester

The plaque for 2000, the year the Beacon was erected, says “LIFE. The Beacon of Hope marks a new century of support, prevention and therapy. Hopes for further treatment advances a lowering of infection rates and improved quality of life have become realities. Foundations are in place for significant change. Remembrance remains for those who went before us, who we have lost, who made the difference to our futures and who will never be forgotten”.

The statue of Alan Turing (see Figure 6, below) commemorates someone who made a huge contribution to national life and yet was a victim of state persecution when he was convicted of homosexuality, which was then a crime in the UK. Turing (1912 – 1954) was a British mathematician whose contributions are seen as central to the development of modern computing, through his work at Cambridge in the 1930s which laid the theoretical bases for computing, the code-breaking work he did at Bletchley Park in the second world war which is thought to have shortened the war by

two years, and then at Manchester University where he directed the computing laboratory and laid the foundations of work on Artificial Intelligence (AI).



Figure 6: Statue of Alan Turing, Sackville Gardens, Manchester

The sculptor, Glyn Hughes, commented that the location of Sackville Gardens was chosen because: 'It's got the university science buildings ... on one side and it's got all the gay bars on the other side, where apparently he spent most of his evenings'. Turing was arrested and convicted of homosexuality in 1951. He accepted chemical castration rather than go to jail, was stripped of his security clearance, which meant he could no longer work for GCHQ, and committed suicide in 1954. He is shown in the statue holding an apple, the symbol of forbidden love as well as the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but also thought to be the means of Turing's suicide by an apple laced with cyanide. The design of the statue is deliberately not monumental and distant compared to commemorative bronze figures which are usually placed on high plinths. Rather, Turing is sitting on a bench so that visitors can sit next to him as if able to have a conversation. (While visiting the gardens, we noted several other visitors sitting with the statue and taking photographs on the bench next to Turing.)

The Transgender Memorial (see Figure 7, below) is 12 feet high, carved in situ by artistic carver Shane Green from a sycamore tree. It shows butterflies emerging from the chrysalis. After a number of years and setbacks within the trans community to create this memorial, it was eventually erected in 2013 and has since become known as the 'National' Transgender Memorial since it is the only one in the UK.



Figure 7: Transgender memorial, Sackville Gardens, Manchester

The words on the plaque adjacent to the memorial read:

‘You were known to us.  
Transgender Memorial.  
We remember those who have gone before us.  
And we will fight for those yet to come.  
Erected in 2013 by the Transgender and Gay Community  
to remember all our Transgender  
Sisters and Brothers who have left us.  
Love will always conquer hate.’

A number of plaques remembering individuals are also attached to the memorial. Some of these commemorate the deaths by murder or suicide of members of the transgender community. This impacted on us as researchers in the sense that as we took photographs of these in particular, we (Melissa and Karen) independently experienced uneasiness about what we were doing, not necessarily from reading and sharing in experiencing the loss of others, but because we were taking photographs for research purposes, an act which seemed to disembodify the memorials and which in doing so, felt exploitative. Unlike the sense of containment and passive reception we encountered in viewing the portraits at Keele Hall considered above, or the sense of deference and co-optation we associated with the ceremonials, rituals and artefacts discussed above in relation to the University of Sydney, the Sackville Gardens seemed, to us at least, to be characterized by a spirit of openness and generosity, and of a reflexive sense of mutual, inter-corporeal vulnerability, that ‘capturing’ and co-opting them in the form of photographic data felt like a violation of. What this experience made us acutely aware of, however, was the ethos of openness that characterizes this particular commemorative setting, an ethos that is materialized in its

structure and layout, its commemorative artefacts and also in its open invitation to participate in commemoration as a socially shared form of interaction.

In this respect, the gardens are peaceful and contemplative, but they are also well-used and vibrant, the focus of various commemorative and celebratory events, including World AIDS Day and the Transgender Day of Remembrance, when memorial services and candlelit vigils are held. It is also the setting for the Sparkle festival, which celebrates the trans community, and a focal point for the Manchester Pride LGBT festival. In stark contrast to the commemorative settings discussed above, these community events embody and enact collective remembrance and commemoration; in Casey's (2000: 217) terms, they materialize a sense of commemoration as 'a matter of something thoroughly communal'. On occasion literally, and otherwise symbolically so, within this setting 'we are thrust headlong into a crowd of co-rememberers' (ibid: 217), reminding ourselves of our shared, intercorporeal vulnerability.

The Gardens evoke an ethos of active, participatory commemoration. A number of visitors, both from the gay/trans community and others, comment on the peacefulness and calm of the space which encourages contemplation. This contemplation is centred on collective remembrance, often of those who have been violently persecuted and demeaned by others. The openness of the park is notable, it materializes inclusiveness, but this also allows the possibility of vandalism (which happened to the Transgender Memorial within days of it being erected. As the chair of the Friends of Sackville Gardens said, this violence to the memorial enacts the experiences of trans people throughout their lives). The Gardens are used for a diverse range of functions, from students eating their lunch, couples spending intimate time together, as a destination on Manchester walking tours about Turing or of the Gay Village, to the collective candlelit vigils marking specific occasions. Embodied and engaged interactions with the memorials are encouraged; they are not there solely to be looked at, but invite touch. When we visited there were the remains of red roses on the Transgender Memorial and red ribbons tied around trees in the Gardens. Sackville Gardens, compared to the portraits and ceremonial practices and artefacts discussed above, materializes an understanding of commemoration as a mutually enacted, intercorporeal practice; its underlying ethos is one of commemoration as an open invitation to engage in an inter-subjective process rather than an expectation of passive engagement with a fixed object as the pre-requisite for a conditional form of restricted membership.

In this respect, the garden can be seen as an 'undoing' (Butler, 2004) of commemoration in its conventional sense; that is of 'remembering as forgetting' (Casey, 2000). The Gardens display signs encouraging people to report hate crimes: a signal of an active politics of mourning premised upon a recognition-based ethos of commemoration. This space is very much about the remembrance not of individuals per se, but individuals in relationship and community. There is a diversity of materials, of forms of memorial, of aesthetics, rather than an overall design characterized by the repression or repetition of certain motifs. The memorials are not placed in such a way as to create an aesthetic whole in a planned or structured way. There are a multiplicity of symbols, including the butterflies, the apple, the rainbow mosaics in the paving and the ribbons. This diversity can be compared to the uncanny repetition of the gilt framed portraits at Keele and the marginalization of difference to

the depicted norm, or the ‘cloaking’ devices and homogenously robed academics at Sydney, each an uncanny doubling of the rest. These commemorations are not about a politics of mourning that depends on repression and repetition, in Freud’s terms, or on ‘remembering as forgetting’ in Casey’s account; rather, they materialize an ethos of commemoration based on an inter-corporeal recognition of the negated Other, a radical uncanny that reminds us of our mutual vulnerabilities, and invites us to share rather than exclude or co-opt. Whereas Freud evokes the double as an articulation of the fear of death, what we see in Sackville Gardens is a remembrance of death in a very different way: violence and death as experienced by this community, but this is remembrance both of those who have suffered and with a future purpose to change what this means for the LGBT communities. At the risk of imposing our own interpretation on the site and its significance, we sense that within the conditions of possibility materialized in the Sackville Gardens, unintelligible lives, those whose lives don’t ‘matter’ become, collectively, grievable deaths.

### **Discussion: The uncanny politics of organizational commemoration**

Focusing on the dynamics of managing the uncanny Other within organizations in and through commemoration, we have noted above how the organizational settings we have examined mobilize processes of exclusion and over-inclusion. In the example of Keele Hall, the uncanny Other is excluded through marginalization and absence. At the University of Sydney conflation of the complexity of lived experience involves ‘reducing being to the figure of the individual’ (Latimer, 2009). The aesthetic conventions of the medium considered perpetuate the mythologies attached to the principles of sympathetic likeness which, when combined with techniques such as framing and positioning, perpetuate metaphorical boundaries governing who and what is intelligible, and who and what ‘matters’. Conditional likeness is dependent upon a capacity to mirror and this repetition serves, as Freud suggests, to reiterate the recognition accorded to the self at the expense of the Other, which remains repressed. When, as women or as men who do not mirror the imagery that dominates, we encounter this particular setting, we are simultaneously at home but marginalized: the images bear an uncanny resemblance for us (as we ourselves experienced together at Keele).

Drawing together our sense of the commemorative ethos materialized in the Sackville Gardens considered above, with Casey’s (2000) account of ‘remembering as forgetting’ and combining it with Butler’s critique of the conditions governing the grievable death leads us to reconsider the radical potential of the uncanny in commemoration as a collective, embodied phenomenon through which remembering is lived and mutually enacted rather than simply represented. In the last of our three examples, we note an alternative understanding of commemoration, based not on a negation of the uncanny Other of remembering grounded either in its exclusion or over-inclusion, but rather a place for continuity and connection enacted through commemoration as ‘inter-corporation’ (Casey, 2000: 194), sensing an embodied collective experience through which the past becomes mobilized in the present through an ethos of commemorative openness rather than a politics of co-optation and containment.

Hence, our discussion above emphasizes the radical potential of the uncanny in revealing, ‘commemorating’ in Casey’s terms, the absent presence of the Other in

organizational artefacts and practices of remembering. The practices of repetition, or doubling, discussed in relation to Keele Hall and the University of Sydney, serve as uncanny resemblances that evoke those who belong and those who do not. In the former, Keele Hall, the Other is excluded through its absence, or relegation to a secondary, peripheral presence. The woman vacuuming is kept in her place, both physically and metaphorically. At the University of Sydney, the rituals of cloaking and the simultaneous evocation of a pre-colonial aboriginal past and an almost hyper-colonial material and symbolic connection to British academia serve to simultaneously 'over-include' and exclude Otherness. Following Butler, doing organizational commemoration can be seen as a fundamentally performative act through which organizations assert the co-presence of those who are the same through a ritualized forgetting of those who are different, themes we discussed in both of the first two of our three examples of commemorative settings. Contained within this process, however, is the radical potential of the uncanny as a recognition - and commemoration - of one's own and others' negation.

In the case of Sackville Gardens discussed above, we sensed an alternative, radical potential in the uncanny presence of the Other; an embodied openness not present in other forms of organizational/organized mourning that we have encountered. Here the uncanny is evoked as a reminder of processes of negation and marginalization, through which we are encouraged to actively engage with the complexity of lived experience. 'Doing' commemoration, as a process of 'remembering as forgetting', premised upon patterns of repression and repetition through which the Other is perpetually negated, therefore becomes 'undone' in Butler's terms - its performativity is revealed and we are invited to actively engage with an alternative, potentially radical re-organization of what it means to be commemorative with and through each other. To put it simply, following Casey (2000) the site of mourning is shifted from the visual or cognitive to the sensate and embodied; the fragility of self is revealed through the absence of repression and repetition and through a recognition-based mobilization of the uncanny Other, and otherwise unintelligible lives are made to matter.

### **Concluding thoughts**

Our aim in this paper has been to develop a phenomenological account of organizational commemoration that enables us to understand more about the dynamics of how the latter is lived, experienced and made meaningful. We have argued that commemorative artefacts and settings of ritualistic significance serve to perform relations of belonging through commemoration that depend upon a 'remembering as forgetting' (Casey, 2000), through which the uncanny other is negated. Drawing on Freud's writing on the uncanny, we have argued how the first of the two examples of commemoration we have considered are premised upon a complex dynamic involving a repetition of sameness and a repression of difference, one that materializes idealized forms of organizational subjectivity, framing (both metaphorically and literally) who and what 'matters' within the settings we have examined. Drawing on Butler and Casey, we have also argued that our recognition of this dynamic, of commemoration as a process of 'undoing' in Butler's terms through which the social norms governing the conferral or denial of recognition are perpetuated, highlights the disruptive potential of the uncanny as a reminder of the repressive negation of the Other on which organizations depend (Burrell, 1984;

Douglas, 1066; Levi-Strauss, 1968; Linstead, 1997). Our analytical concern has been with the commemorative constraints through which particular organizational subjectivities are composed and compelled, while others are disavowed and discredited. Drawing on Butler, we have argued that commemorative artefacts and practices such as portraits, rituals and other 'commemorabilia' (Casey, 2000) can be understood as performative artefacts that constitute strategic interventions into the perpetual process of becoming an organizational subject whose life is intelligible and by implication, whose death is grievable. These artefacts compel particular ways of simultaneously doing and undoing subjectivity, and in doing so constitute mechanisms that attempt to materialize particular ways of being that are congruent with underlying organizational imperatives. In our analysis, we have emphasized how these are highly gendered, racialized, individualist and disembodied.

At this point it is incumbent upon us to say something about the media we have considered here in reflecting on the radical potential of the uncanny for encouraging us to 'do commemoration differently' and to address the perpetuation of these ideals within commemorative artefacts and practices. In our view, there are two important dimensions to 'undoing' (Butler, 2004) the hegemony of representational, realist, individualist forms of remembering of which Casey (2000) is particularly critical, within and through organizational settings. First, commemorative artefacts such as portraiture might simply be 'done' differently, of course; that is, they could potentially become more inclusive in their depiction of organizational members (see Rippin, 2012 for a relevant discussion). At the time of writing, for instance, Aston University in the UK has recently commissioned a series of fifty portraits of men and women from a range of backgrounds who are current members of the institution. However, our phenomenological critique of this approach would be that such forms of commemoration remain largely disembodied, individualistic representations; they lose the 'fleshiness' of lived experience, the tactility that is so important to intersubjectivity based on an inter-connected, mutual recognition of our embodied, interdependency (Butler, 2004; Merleau Ponty, 2002). Such media tend to be consumed relatively passively, by simply observing their meaning rather than being actively involved in making and re-making both their meaning and materiality.

An alternative avenue we would like to consider further lies in exploring other commemorative settings and practices such as gardens that, through their very forms, encourage collective, inter-connected commemorative experiences premised upon an openness to the other and a sense of mutuality, an ethos that we have found to be largely absent in hegemonic forms of organizational commemoration that we have considered thus far, with the notable exception of the Sackville Memorial Gardens in Manchester. The theoretical approach that we have taken throughout this paper has sought to emphasize that commemoration is an ongoing process, both an organizational process and a process of organization that classifies, categorizes and orders who and what 'matters' hierarchically. This processual approach is premised on the belief that organizational commemoration is something that we do, and therefore can be done differently, thereby undoing hegemonic ways of remembering by forgetting. Our closing (rhetorical) question would therefore be, if we are to 'undo' commemoration as it is currently practiced and materialized within organizational settings, how might we 'redo' it, so as to do it differently, in such a way as to recognize rather than negate the uncanny Other of organizations past, present and future?

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<sup>i</sup> At the time of writing we reflected on how, in our separate institutions, we had each been given instructions relating to how we were to be represented by the university visually. In preparation for an accreditation review, Karen has been required to sit for a more 'corporate' photograph for the staff website page. Leanne's instructions to sit for an updated University photograph had been accompanied by a clear brief for the women (but not the men involved) on how to present themselves, including not 'over-accessorizing or wearing bright colours', and Melissa had been told she should try to look more feminine for her photograph as her administrative role was student-facing, and hence she was instructed to 'accessorize using a scarf and necklace'.

<sup>ii</sup> In his discussion of 'Body Memory', Casey (2000: 146-7) draws explicitly on insights from Merleau Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, particularly in his discussion of the body as the sensate site of memory. However, he argues that the latter's neglect of 'how we remember in and by and through the body' represents a 'glaring lacuna' in his account of lived experiences of embodiment.