

## **TITLE PAGE**

FULL TITLE: Producing moments of pleasure within the confines of an academic quantified self

Dr Eileen Honan, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Dr Linda Henderson, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia

Dr Sarah Loch, International Research Centre for Youth Futures, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

## **CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Dr Eileen Honan, University of Queensland, St Lucia, Brisbane, QLD, 4072, Australia. Phone: +61 7 336 56506, email e.honan@uq.edu.au

## **Producing moments of pleasure within the confines of an academic quantified self**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article was originally performed as a solo (tripartite) conference paper at the 2014 Joint Australian Association for Research in Education/New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, held in Brisbane, Australia, in December 2014. In preparing our contributions for publication as an article we create an assemblage of the desires and resistances shaping our academic identities which we express as sometimes piecemeal, inadequate and powerless. We assemble, through movements of falling away and coming together, the situations which almost derailed the paper's delivery as we work back along what we had planned, what we encountered, and how three presenters became one. In the inter-meshing of our communication we explore ways of becoming academic and performing academia which open us to the productive possibilities of a stronger commitment to pleasure through re-assembling Deleuze's desiring machine. The texts presented in this paper include online links to video clips played at the conference.

### **KEY WORDS**

Desire, permission, quantified self

## Producing moments of pleasure within the confines of an academic quantified self

### And then there was one (1)

There were three of us. We submitted a symposium abstract, wrote three abstracts, drawing on an abstract we had written for a book chapter. Here is part of the abstract:

*The aim here will be to illustrate the institution's role in controlling desiring machines to achieve the bureaucratic outcomes associated with becoming successful academics; timely completions, quality research outputs, correctly completed administrative tasks, high scores in student evaluations etc. etc.*

To vividly illustrate the institution's role in controlling desiring machines within the restricted codes of the neoliberal academy, my two colleagues had to pull out of the symposium. Sarah has just finished her PhD and is in that awful place/space of trying to work out where to next. Linda is an early career academic who is in that awful place/space where teaching commitments are supposed to take precedence. And we are all three in that awful place/space where ... well, I'll let Sarah tell you:

*I've had various changes come in to make the four days hard to do. Linda has hit brick walls with finding anyone to swap workloads to free up her prac commitments. We were both hopeful a one day attendance would be possible and save on the time and money fronts, but it's clear AARE don't have that in their pricing schedule. It's not about not being members, but the determining factor being that presenters need to pay the rate for all days. This overrides member or non-member, and, sadly, doesn't reflect, I think, the people who work in universities casually, part time etc. or in programs which don't conclude in November.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> This article was originally performed as a solo (tripartite) conference paper at the 2014 Joint Australian Association for Research in Education/New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, held in Brisbane, Australia, in December 2014. AARE is the national association for fostering educational research in Australia. In 2014 the 'earlybird' registration rates for the conference were AUD\$695 for members and AUD\$945 for non-members. Annual membership fees are AUD\$180. The day registration was AUD\$348 with the qualification that: "To qualify for a day rate, you must be an AARE or NZARE member who is NOT presenting a paper at the conference or who has not submitted a poster for an award at the conference" (<http://aare-nzare2014.com.au/registration/>). Both Sarah and Linda applied for an exemption to this rule but both applications were refused.

So, I guess this partly explains why I am finding it so difficult to write about moments of pleasure.

But at least I can write easily about lack.

*Desiring my/our own repression.*

I am not going to explain Deleuze/Guattari, nor am I going to define schizoanalysis, and I am certainly not going to position myself as expert or knower or philosopher. <sup>2</sup>

And I'm not into psychoanalysis.

But what I think I am thinking, is that Deleuze and Guattari help me understand why I don't like psychoanalysis. As a woman, and a feminist, and a poststructural feminist, this was first explained to me by Cixous, when she said,

What psychoanalysis points to as defining woman is that she lacks lack. She lacks lack? Curious to put it in so contradictory, so extremely paradoxical, a manner: she lacks lack. To say she lacks lack is also, after all, to say she doesn't miss lack ... since she doesn't miss the lack of lack. Yes, they say, but the point is "she lacks The Lack," The Lack, lack of the Phallus. And so, supposedly, she misses the great lack, so that without man she would be indefinite, indefinable, nonsexed, unable to recognize herself: outside the Symbolic. But fortunately there is man: he who comes ... Prince Charming.

(Cixous & Kuhn, p.46)

So, if we are all the time desiring something to fill us, something that we lack, but we also lack the sense of lacking, then what do we desire to fill us? And then Deleuze and Guattari say that, 'in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 105). We desire our own repression? We want to be repressed?

No! But we certainly want to be counted, to belong, to be hailed as academic, to be successful, to be recognised – hey you, I know you! And within the restricted codes of the

---

<sup>2</sup> But I can tell you that we began writing this paper in response to our readings of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of schizoanalysis and to this question: "what are the machinic, social and technical indices on a socius that open to desiring-machines, that enter into the parts, wheels, and motors of these machines, as much as they cause them to enter into their own parts, wheels and motors" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 381).

academy, in order to be hailed, and belong, permission to speak/read/write (think?) is condemned to lack as the institution's task is one of (re)directing/(re)ordering to achieve its requisite outcomes.

The postmodern neoliberal apparatus of the university works to construct our selves as lacking. We lack the qualities of a 'good' teacher according to our student evaluations, we lack the qualities of a 'good' researcher according to the metrics that quantify our inputs and outputs, we lack an Australian Research Council grant, we lack a publication in a "Tier 1" journal, we lack tenure, we lack a promotion, we are voids. There are huge gaping holes in our credibilities as academics and we spend our days and nights, hours and hours, trying to plug up the holes, trying to stuff them with the cotton wool stuffing of appeasement, of reassurance, endlessly completing futile and empty tasks, searching for that moment of completeness, of success.

*The production of the academic quantified self.*

In this endless ceaseless search for fulfilment, for completion, we have discovered (apparently?) that numbers help. We collaborate, we conspire, we accede, we encourage each other to produce ourselves as quantified. St Pierre describes this quantified knowledge as 'value-free':

The goals of producing knowledge that is value-free, mathematized and 'scientific', and used in the service of free market values, economic rationalism, efficiency models (e.g. creating the disposable worker), outsourcing, competitive individualism, entrepreneurship and privatization. In this ideology, everything must be scientized and reduced to the brute (value-free) data of mathematics for the purpose of control.

(St Pierre, 2012, 484)

Until writing this paper, I had little knowledge of the Quantified Self movement – but Wikipedia tells me that,

The Quantified Self is a movement to incorporate technology into data acquisition on aspects of a person's daily life in terms of inputs (e.g. food consumed, quality of surrounding air), states (e.g. mood, arousal, blood oxygen levels), and performance (mental and physical). Such self-monitoring and self-sensing, which combines wearable sensors (EEG, ECG, video, etc.) and wearable computing, is also known as lifelogging.

In short, quantified self is self-knowledge through self-tracking with technology.

Quantified self-advancement have allowed individuals to quantify biometrics that they never knew existed, as well as make data collection cheaper and more convenient.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantified\\_Self](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantified_Self))

So, that sounds kinda liberating, doesn't it? Having all this data about ourselves at our disposal? Downloading an app to track how many steps I take each day, monitor my heart rate, using a calorie counter; you know, you can even track your mood with;

mood panda.com: a mood tracking website and iphone app. Tracking is very simple: you rate your happiness on a 0-10 scale, and optionally add a brief twitter like comment on what's influencing your mood.

(<http://www.kwamecorp.com/2012/moodpanda-mood-tracking-hub/>)

**BUT!**

Deborah Lupton, a sociologist, has written about self-tracking and the Foucauldian self-surveillance mechanism that disciplines our selves, that produces 'the citizen who needs no coercion to behave productively and in the interests of the state [or the university apparatus]. Rather, the citizen voluntarily takes up modes of practice that both achieves self-interest and conforms to state objectives'. In her blog piece (2012, Nov 4), Lupton says:

Self-tracking may viewed as one of many heterogeneous strategies and discourses that position the neoliberal self as a responsible citizen, willing and able to take care of her or his self-interest and welfare ...

Neoliberalism promotes the concept of the citizen who needs no coercion to behave productively and in the interests of the state. Rather, the citizen voluntarily takes up modes of practice that both achieves self-interest and conforms to state objectives.

The QS movement takes up and interprets a view of the body/self that positions it as amenable to improvement, an object of persona enterprise and work. ... The

statistical aspect of the practice of self-tracking – the ability to produce ‘numbers’ measuring aspects of one’s life – is integral to the approach. It is assumed that the production of such hard/objective data is the best way of assessing and representing the value of one’s life and that better ‘self-knowledge’ will result ...

(<http://simplysociology.wordpress.com/2012/11/04/the-quantitative-self-movement-some-sociological-perspectives/>)

Of course, we are all familiar with this process – we don’t need a new movement, or the business media to tell us that the ‘quantified self comes to work’ or what happens when ‘quantified self meets the quantified employee’.

Well, the Quantified Self movement has come to work. Each day more and more tools are being developed to help employers monitor, track, and better understand the activity of workers. These tools are real-time, often anonymous, and usually invisible. And many of the startups in Human Resources believe that bringing the Quantified Self movement to HR is the next big thing.

(<http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshbersin/2014/06/25/quantified-self-meet-the-quantified-employee/>)

I’ve collected just a few examples from my own desk.

(Please place an “X” in the appropriate box.)	Satisfactory	Requires improvement	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable
Teaching duties		X		
Research, scholarship and original achievement	X			
Service to the University	X			
Contribution to the profession/discipline and the external community	X			
Participated in appraisal and completion of developmental activity	X			
Occupational Health and Safety responsibilities				

*The outcome of my latest ‘appraisal’ meeting with my supervisor*

At a recent Board Meeting, our publisher, Wiley-Blackwell, gave us **the figures** for the **articles downloaded** via the Synergy system **during 2008**. I thought you should know that the article you wrote. 'Barriers to teachers using digital texts in literacy classrooms' in issue 42,1 was among the **top ten**, having been downloaded **817 times**.

*Evidence of impact included in my academic portfolio of achievement*

Q-index provides each UQ academic with an individual composite index of research and teaching performance over a rolling 6-year window plus the current year to date, e.g., 2005-2010 + 2011 year to date. Research data is drawn nightly from eSpace, Research Master, and SI-net; teaching data is updated at the end of each semester.

**Each staff member can see details of how their individual index has been calculated based upon the best available data, as well as a comparison against an average of their peers.**

*From <https://www.mis.admin.uq.edu.au/Content/Dashboards/Qindex.aspx>*

You have successfully completed the competency assessment for the following UQ OH&S training module:

OHSB09 - Fire Safety Assessment

**Completion Date: 16/12/2013 15:26**

**Your results have been automatically recorded against your electronic staff / student profile**

*Results from one of the many mandatory online training modules required to be completed by all employees*

It would therefore be most helpful if you can 'contextualize' each of your publications. The best way of doing this is to:

- *Identify its 'Tier' status: Provide brief details of the publisher*
- *Describe the process of review:*
- *List, where appropriate, the impact factor, other citation measures or other relevant information*
- *Indicate your contribution to any jointly-authored paper*
- *State how it fits with your research interests:*

This is not a prescriptive list of 'tasks' but, rather, a checklist that can be referred to when writing your application for continuing appointment or promotion.

*Part of advice given to those seeking promotion*



Surname	Given Names	Faculty / Institute	School / Centre	Function	Level	FTE	Flags	RIP	ROP	HDRC	HDRL	Qr Index	Qt Index
Honan	Eileen Margaret	Humanities and Social Sciences	Education	T&R	C	1.00		8.0	13.4	12.2	6.7	34.8	3.44

**Q-Index: Research Performance Quality Index measured for years 2008 -2014** Click on a Staff Member for more details  
The Q-index scores are to be considered in context, taking into account discipline-specific factors and personal circumstances.  
It is not a comprehensive nor definitive measure of performance, and should only be used to inform discussion during performance appraisal processes.

*My QIndex results*

The Office recently conducted a survey on Dean’s Commendation recipients, where respondents were asked to nominate their most effective lecturer and tutor for Semester 1, 2014 and state the reason/s. I’m delighted to inform you that I’ve received notification that you were nominated by one of these students as **“most effective lecturer”** for EDUC4702. The comments submitted are below:

Eileen was **well organised and passionate** about Primary and MYS English and literacy. It is evident that she **spent considerable time and effort** developing the EDUC4702 course content. Her knowledge of English and literacy was not only demonstrated through her lectures and course content, but also through her professional background as a teacher. The lecture content was **logically sequenced** in order to scaffold required knowledge for assessment items. Furthermore, it was apparent that assessment items were **deliberately designed to make explicit real-world connections** to what happens in classrooms.

*Part of an email about my teaching*

24781  
COURSE

What were the best aspects of this course?  
*Getting my assignment back*

What improvements would you suggest?  
*A different course co-ordinator*

**TEACHING**  
What aspects of this teacher's approach to teaching best helped your learning?  
*I found Eileen very rude to some students and she was not a nice/approachable person. No compassion or consideration for emergency circumstances*

What would you have liked this teacher to have done differently?  
*Everything - she is the wrong person for a course - coordinators position. She needs lessons in how to teach!!*

Page 2

Part of a student evaluation form about my teaching

Summary table of appended teaching evaluations					
Course Code	Title of Course	Semester /Year	Number of Students	Course Rating	Teacher/ Tutor Rating
EDUC7005	Teaching reading in the middle and secondary years of schooling	Sem 2/ 2011	7		4.29
EDUC6530	Middle Years Curriculum English	Sem 1/ 2011	19	3.93	4.13
EDUC1707	Literacy in primary and mys contexts	Sem 2/2010	36	3.57	3.68

Applicants for Mid-Term review, Final Review for Continuing Appointment and Promotion must include their approved independent summary sheets of teaching evaluations

In the above, I am produced in numbers, in codes that confine and constrain me. In the document that records the production of this coded, quantified self, known in the university as "Form A Academic portfolio of achievement", most of the pages are devoted to tables such as those reproduced above. When there are sections where text can be entered, there are

often instructions such as, “*Section 2.8 may be used to explain aberrations and low results and any actions taken in response to evaluations*”.

### **Pleasure, desire and our (3) capacity to act**

BUT...I am more than a composite of numbers!

#### ***About permission: From a book chapter abstract submitted by all three:***

Permission, as a concept though, can be thought of as being part of a school-girl/policeman/parent-child assemblage, and as such, is just one of many desiring machines caught up in the institution’s restricted codes. According to Deleuze and Guattari desire is never singular, but always assembled, meaning that permission is more than just a thing that is consciously sought or given. Permission is desire itself operating within an assemblage of desire and where desiring machines are at play. When something happens within an assemblage of permission, change occurs, bodies are affected or are affecting. The act of granting permission can either restrict or expand desiring bodies’ capacity to act. What the authors seek to do is illustrate how in three singular moments of crises, where permission itself was at stake, desire was released from its restricted codes of the Oedipus and set itself going in a more productive form to bring about change.

There are moments, cracks and fissures, tiny spaces where we produce pleasure, when desire is released from the restricted codes of the academy, when the transformative production of desire moves us beyond and away. We are interested in exploring how these moments of pleasure are produced and how those moments expand our capacities to act. While these moments may be small, an analysis of the assemblages that produce these moments can provide some illustration of ways to bring about change, to move beyond, to create anew, a different and productive way of being and becoming academic.

So, the first moment of pleasure is produced here in this room at this time<sup>3</sup>. Take a breath, stop for a moment. I'm here. I take up the position of academic with pleasure – I love conferences, I love talking, eating, drinking, laughing, complaining, bitching, moaning, congratulating, listening, I love THINKING! I remember the pleasurable exhaustion after a day of meetings with doctoral students; the pleasures of “head work”; as well as those other “perverse pleasures of being a feminist academic” (Hey, 2004).

The second moment of pleasure is in the coming together of these three voices through thoughts, text, email and video. Our speaking together allows us to plug one piece with another piece, and another, following Deleuze's insistence/resistance to the notion of the “sovereign individual” (Deleuze, 2004, 138-40) as the sole source of anything that is thought and done.

*So,*

*Stop*

*Watch*

*Listen (<http://youtu.be/3CG6oI0n098>)*

***Thinking through what happened, November 20, 2014 – Sarah.***

My voice is in a sticky state and when I pick up my feet to head to work, I think about how others see me, what I will do today, who they might imagine me to be. I am not sure why I still do this as opposed to my situation a few months ago, I have now become who I wanted to be. I have the PhD. I have the job as lecturer. I am no longer a student. But I feel, of these

---

<sup>3</sup> And even in this room, in this moment of writing, of producing this text to be submitted to a journal

identities, that I am *'not really'*. These happened to me *'only almost'*. And, even though I should give myself some credit for achieving the desired outcomes of this long journey, I cannot fail to acknowledge that my employment contract is temporary, casual; ending in one year. And then ...? I start again.

My voice is in a strong state because from a stammer towards permission came fluency, fluidity, ability; an unblocking and I now know I can do it. Achieving a PhD has been an important part of me. There was that moment in my dissertation process, a moment of assemblage when I came together with a panel of others, it was the moment Eileen read me as needing someone to say *'...'*<sup>4</sup> and I responded to her recognition of permission with fluency. In a flush of connection, I moved to the sublime of Cixous' evocation of *'writing in the present'* (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 78). I mean - writing *in* the present - pulling my present state into my writing, as well as giving myself permission to write amongst what was happening to me today.

What's that? We're back to permissions. I mentioned flow and fluency and ability and it was a beautiful time as I immersed myself in the routine of writing, the pleasurable repulsive struggle of pushing through difficulties to it all working out. Other PhD students desire that ending and it can be cruel to give talks about *'your journey'* and make it sound too neat. I did give one talk and I tried hard to make it honest, but the fact remained that I was done.

Complete. Submitted. Accepted. I saw in the struggles of others, the metallic taste of fear and cotton wool uncertainty. I am not sure what I can offer someone else. Permission? Must you have to know what someone else wants in order to offer?

---

<sup>4</sup> What was it I said in that moment? Here are my notes that I sent Sarah after the meeting, Do you have too much data? Do you need permission to get rid of some of it? Sometimes you do need to take up the challenge of providing your own interpretation of what is going on. P. 74 – you can't *'make sense'* of this for Caitlin or even for you – all you can do is offer a possible interpretation – give yourself permission to do this.

It was the afterwards that struck me hard when I realised I not only lacked permission to do or be anything, but I had no one to seek permission from and nothing particular for which to ask. There were ‘no jobs in universities’, ‘funding was uncertain’, ‘people not being replaced’. Women with whom I was writing in various projects were expressing alienation and sometimes, importantly, deep dissatisfaction with their academic lives and I could not ignore their distress. I was the ‘in-between’ in which I had wallowed luxuriously and ignorantly in my Deleuze and Guattari dissertation. I was the mess. The folding. The voiceless. The minor. And as much as I had made it sound productive, generative, fluent and vital, it sucked. Being significantly under-employed after four degrees and realising that I too was on the casualised academic track so well worn by thousands of other casual, female, parenting, PhD capable women happy for the scrap of a one semester course, happy to be remembered the following year. It was a joke.

I stammered. Gave it away. Applied for jobs in two schools. Activated my network of school leader friends. But luckily got nowhere. The rhizomatic bundle that I had otherwise been cultivating caught my tears and came to life. The thing for which I had wanted to be known - to be able to write well – connected to another, and funds came through; our centre was endorsed by the faculty, positions became available with an upgrade from support to academic staff. I am not meaning to say this is the neat and tidy happy ending and that good girls who ask will get the permission they need. I think I am saying that being lost is frightening and that being found feels good.

*They have made me an organism, November 23, 2014 - Linda.*

Watching Sarah’s video I am reminded that being lost and found is always cyclical and also productive. It gives me hope for I want to begin by plugging into a moment of crisis experienced as an early career researcher in the academy.

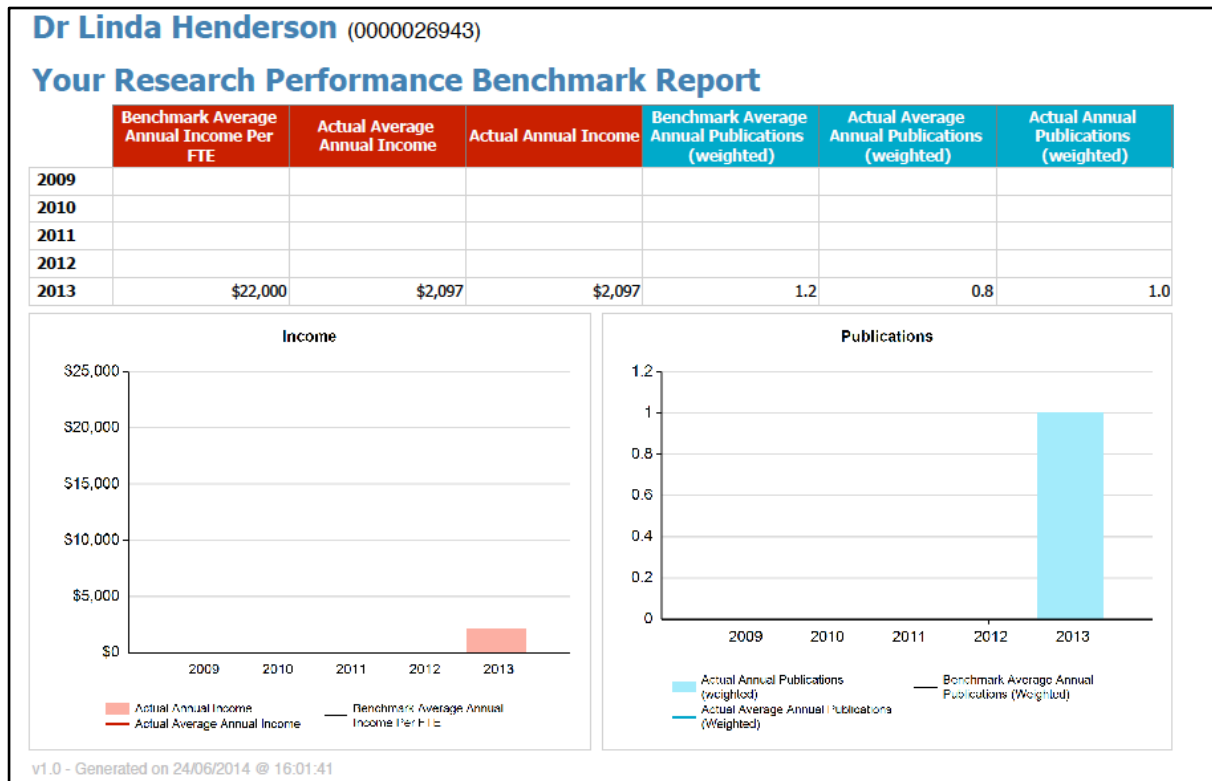
*A moment of wrongful folding*

*Of my body-organ parts*

*A moment of being measured*

*Quantified*

*Determined to be “below benchmark”*



Dear Dr Henderson

Following the submission of your Research Performance Review and Plan (RPRP) and consideration of your RPRP by the Faculty Research Workload Review Panel (FRWRP) and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, I am writing to confirm your C3 research workload allocation for 2015 is 180 (prorated for fraction).

I have been reduced to the value of 180 hours as a researcher/academic. Just under a day per fortnight for research, or 11% of my workload. I am advised to liaise with my supervisor to determine the “best way to utilise” my C3 research workload to enable the achievement of

the research outcomes I had quantified in my research plan. Publications, grant writing, research projects, HDR supervision and the list went on.

And I am to do all this in 180 hours!

To reach this point of being quantified and reduced to 180 hours, I submitted myself to a process of being measured and quantified. A three-year research plan carefully detailed my publications, grants, PhD supervisions along with a statement addressing the quality of my research achievements. This plan was then judged by a panel to determine if I met the university's classification for "research active". Clearly, I am no longer a legitimate "researcher". I did not meet the benchmark to be classified "research active". Instead, I face the threat of being forced into a "teaching focused" position. As a subject I am a huge gaping hole. I am lacking what the symbolic order has determined to be a legitimate academic, producing legitimate knowledge within this legitimate institution.

Elsewhere<sup>5</sup> this has been described as a "collision course" between staff and university and where the aim has been to force staff onto teaching only pathways by "stealth". Over 50% of staff have been faced with reduced research allocations with a further 15% having their research hours cancelled. The university responds with a statement that the changes align with the new Enterprise Agreement Bargain negotiated earlier this year. They say they are focused on the development of a "performance excellence" culture; a culture that positions me as the gaping hole within their never-ending pursuit for "performance excellence".

To speak about this moment of crisis is risky. There is a strict code of conduct being enforced about speaking out. The great symbolic order has spoken. I must submit myself to the law of the father who holds the phallus. But for 'Deleuze and Guattari politics could only begin with

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/slashed-research-triggers-dispute-at-australian-catholic-university/story-e6frgcjx-1227127405060>



this organised and oedipal body, a body centred on the speaking voice submitted to the law of the signifier, always articulating a desire for mastery and phallic dominance that is possessed by no one' (Colebrook, 2011, p.12). Life is threatened. Yet as Colebrook (2011) reminds me, it is only by acknowledging "the crucial role of the body in politics can one begin to think of the body without organs" (p.12). Therefore, life is always only ever "between-times and between-moments" resisting the thousand tiny partial deaths that are always coextensive with life (Deleuze, 2001, p.29). To acknowledge my body-without-organs and to connect with other bodies opens up moments of connections that provides for moments of permission to think of the "composition of organic powers, powers of organs and not the organism" (Colebrook, 2011, p.12). It provides me with a space where permission is made possible to enter into an assemblage of words/voices/emails/ with two women offering me permission to be something other than a body of lack. Something other than a huge gaping hole. In effect, it is an in-between moment offering me permission to nourish my body-without-organs through maintaining relations and sustaining bodily encounters. And so this is what I have chosen to do: sustain bodily encounters through speaking/reading/writing in response to a series of events that saw my ability to attend this conference pulled up from under by feet. Pulled up because my negotiations failed to make possible my release from the administrative/teaching/supervision/coordinating roles I must maintain and sustain as an early career researcher.

As I think about all these roles I am reminded of Sarah's email the other day. I laughed when reading one of our series of our email exchanges and Sarah commented: 'Linda, it's interesting how your email signature is as long as your email!' Yes, my email signature follows university protocol. I clearly list my position and roles followed by other university information provided to us by HR. But, just before my 'official' signature, I have deliberately inserted a quote; *"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world*

*around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make"* (Jane Goodall, "*In the Shadow of Man*") This is my in-between moment in an institution where I am a body of lack. Just as this act of reading/speaking/writing with Sarah and Eileen is another in-between moment. In-between moments that provide me with permission to sustain relations and sustain the production of knowledge that I hope opens up a space of potentiality for new ways of living the life of an academic.

*Listen, the clacking of the wind chime, the burble of a bird, the rustling of leaves*

*See, the soft stroking, the relaxed sitting*

*Hear the softness of the voice. Don't speak up! Don't be heard!*

*Watch the determination, the steely resolve, I will ... we will give ourselves permission to think, to write, to enjoy our words*

### **In-between waiting and performing**

#### ***Sarah responds to Linda***

Linda, watching your video, 'They have made me an organism' brings me back with a sick thud to recognition of my total naivety of this academic life. Indeed, my boss told me today that 'they' had been asking what I was publishing. At the time of her asking this question, I was midway through emailing her a notification that my very first chapter was included in a book just published. She mentioned she had found out that even though mostly produced whilst a student at my PhD university, I could count this publication under 'them', my current employer. Of course, I realise how 'important' such counts are. But from your piece, I realise how they work. And what happens next. And how such data are used.

It is difficult to read your piece but I am finding it much more difficult to cease reading and realise you are in this. And Eileen too, I guess. I feel I am on the periphery, mostly through ignorance of the machine and the university's unwillingness to *buy me* for more than a year at

a time. Perhaps there are advantages in being *casual* and on short-term contracts? Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 457) draw my attention to something like a combine harvester, “one is not enslaved by the technical machine but rather subjected to it”.

Your piece and emails I have received recently from other co-writers have unsettled me - sending further fissures through what I desire(d) to be. You mentioned you cannot really speak out about your situation. It is risky. You mentioned though that our writing space gives you permission to be someone other than a body of lack; nourishing, sustaining. It just seems so ironic that we are writing for output as well as for sustenance, and that our writing in risky spaces might satisfy both hungry bodies? But can it? We seem to be trying to serve two masters? I don't know. It's all kind of sickening.

Did you see this article? How academia resembles a drug gang? (Afonso, 2013)

*Feel the quiet of a dark room at night*

*The mother shut away from the busy life of her children*

*Hear the one who has woken from a warm comfortable pleasurable slumber*

*Hear the sensible one – who accepts the crumbs*

*And who knows, like I do, that going back is not an option*

*I was a teacher. I never wanted to be, and now I've stopped, I never will be again, but for several years it took my heart. I entered a place of darkness, a long tunnel of days: retreat from the world (Steedman, 1992, p. 52).*

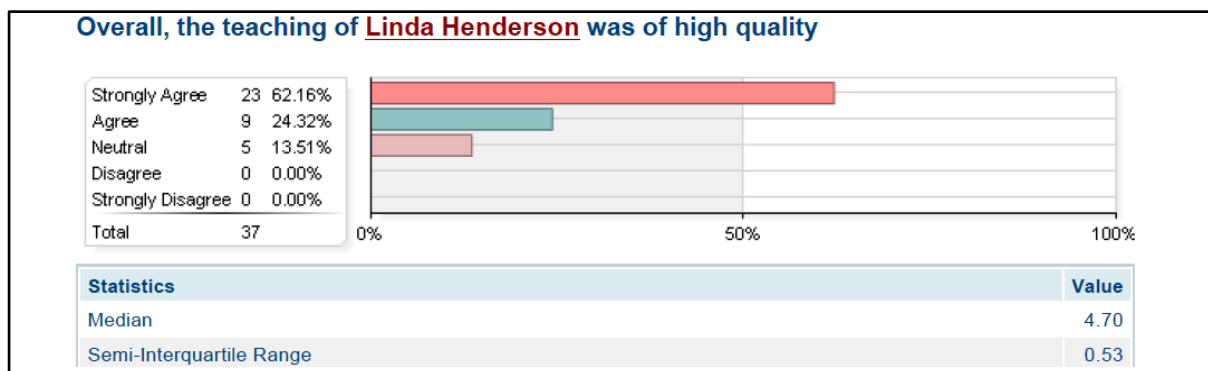
### ***Linda responds to Sarah***

I am so pleased with how this has come together and, yes, there is a sense of sadness that I will not be there to share this time/space with you. So, thank you Eileen for what you have done and I really hope the audience responds positively. But, like you Sarah, I also have a sense of trepidation not knowing who will be in the audience as my video is played.

However, I know that what I have said is not about seeking retribution or an act of retaliation

but comes from a deep need to write/speak/act in ways that connected with self/others. Do let us know how it goes, Eileen. I will be thinking of you. <sup>6</sup>

I have to say I admire your courage, Eileen, to share your student evaluations. As I read the students' comments I was reminded of this other element of our work. Our quantifiable teaching self that has to achieve certain scores to be determined a 'good' academic/teacher. Students are so quick to judge. The relationship between this quantifiable self and the ease with which we judge others and assign them a score is interesting. Our students are products of this quantified self, well trained in modes of practices that conforms and achieves university objectives. Just the other day my supervisor suggested, based on my student evaluations, my students seemed to “love me”.



Love? What an interesting way of qualifying the numbers that determine my ‘goodness’ in my teaching. Protevi (2003) argues Deleuze would say love is a:

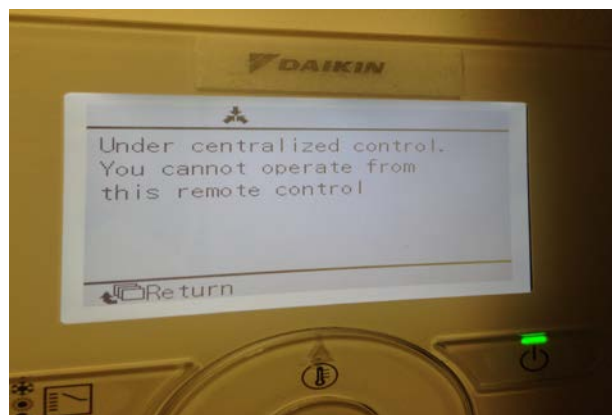
...freeing [of] bodies from the organism and subject, allowing their triggers and patterns to interact and form new maps (new longitudes and latitudes) that allow new types of flows and hence new effects. When bodies join in the mutual experimental deterritorialisation that is love... (p.191)

<sup>6</sup> How did it go? We cried, presenter and audience. There was a stillness in the room, a hush, a holding of breath as I spoke, as I stumbled and stuttered over the words on the page in front of me. One woman in the audience started sobbing, loudly. I dared not look at her. I did not look at anyone. My eyes stayed fixed on the page to avoid the gaze of the academics ready to judge.

Sarah, I am struck by the two very different times/spaces we chose to record our videos.

Darkness and lightness are contrasted in these two spaces. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to move from work spaces, to spaces that allow me to think/read/write/move/connect.

For this space of a garden is a space that triggers new flows and new effects. In contrast, the space of my work office subjects me to the confines of this academic quantified self. For it is difficult to join with other bodies in mutual experimental deterritorialisation in this small office space with its small window looking at a concrete wall and air conditioning unit that reminds me I am “under centralized control”:



In the space of a garden/home/community I am a multiplicity. A wandering body-without-organs connecting/thinking/feeling. Trees, plants, wind, sounds, animals, thoughts, words, ideas assemble forming my connecting/thinking/feeling body-without-organs. Writing is more than just an academic exercise it is an embodied act:

*I bring my body to this act of writing and through this act I write my body out*

### ***Sarah responds to Linda***

I learnt to work at night as I could only write my thesis when my young son slept and his night time sleep was the longest one. And I now work at uni during the day. My choice of

setting in a night-time room allows me to feel cocooned; there's the sound of crickets outside, the glow of my computer and no interruptions to turn toward.

I think celebrating the small is the way to go; completing a task through collaboration is worthy of celebration as we explore how it feels to stitch together the fallings-apart; our task is a step, it is movement; heightening our awareness of others through difficult to talk about work/life situations; playing our videos to an unseen audience is scary and we would like to celebrate that.

### **Coda**

We take this moment as a small celebration of an assemblage that produces. In these moments of writing, recording, crying, reading, viewing, and crying some more, we produce ourselves as collective academics who are strong, who are united in our desire to live beyond the restricted codes that measure us as lacking.

I am lucky. I have tenure. I'm too old to care about promotion – I wouldn't get one anyway. I give myself permission not to care, I try to give myself permission not to be envious. I try to be generous, generous with my time, generous with my advice, generous with my support for others who want to produce change.

Being generous, crying, talking, listening, reading, thinking, these are the acts that cannot be counted, there is no form of measurement – No! I ignore your hand – you want to tell me about the university that has told staff they must be happy (Preiss, 2012), or the university who suspended a professor for giving off 'negative vibes' and 'inappropriate sighing' (Gardner, 2014). Sigh!

I refuse to listen. I will listen instead again to Linda and Sarah, and to the other wonderful thinkers at this conference who puzzle and inspire, who lead me to think differently and to

make space for all that is normally “excluded, disregarded, minimized, relegated to a subjugated place” in the story of lack (Slack, 2005, p.132). We will find time/space to produce moments of pleasure while residing in the confines of an academic quantified self.

## REFERENCES

- Afonso, A. (2013). How academia resembles a drug gang [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/12/11/how-academia-resembles-a-drug-gang/>
- Bersin, J. (2014, June 25). Quantified self: Meet the quantified employee [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshbersin/2014/06/25/quantified-self-meet-the-quantified-employee/>
- Cixous, H., & Calle-Gruber, M. (1997). *Hélène Cixous, Rootprints: Memory and life writing* (E. Prenowitz, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Cixous, H., & Kuhn, A. (1981). Castration or decapitation? *Signs*, 7(1), 41-55.
- Colebrook, C. (2011). Time and autopoiesis. In L. Guillaume & J. Hughes (Eds.), *Deleuze and the body* (pp.9-28). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2001). *Pure immanence: Essays on a life* (A. Boyman, Trans.). New York: Urzone.
- Deleuze, G. (2004). *The logic of sense*. (M. Lester & C. Stivale, Trans.). London: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2004). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gardner, B (2014) Professor suspended from top university for giving off 'negative vibes', *The Telegraph*, Available at



<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/11187063/Professor-suspended-from-top-university-for-giving-off-negative-vibes.html>

Hey, Valerie (2004). Perverse Pleasures – Identity Work and the Paradoxes of Greedy Institutions. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(3), 33-43. Retrieved from <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol5/iss3/4>

Lupton, D. (2012, November 4). *The quantified self movement: Some sociological perspectives* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://simplysociology.wordpress.com/2012/11/04/the-quantitative-self-movement-some-sociological-perspectives/>

Mood Panda. (2014). *Mood panda: Mood tracking hub*. Retrieved from <http://www.kwamecorp.com/2012/moodpanda-mood-tracking-hub/>

Preiss, B. (2012). RMIT academics really not happy about having to be happy at work, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/rmit-academics-really-not-happy-about-having-to-be-happy-at-work-20120326-1vuob.html>

Protevi, J. (2003). Love. In P. Patton & J. Protevi (Eds.). *Between Deleuze & Derrida* (pp.183-194). London: Continuum.

Slack, J. (2005). Logic of sensation. In C. Stivale (Ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: Key concepts* (pp. 131-140). Chesham: Acumen.

Steedman, C. (1992). *Past tenses: essays on writing, autobiography and history*. London: Rivers Oram Press.

St. Pierre. E. A. (2012). Another postmodern report on knowledge: positivism and its others,  
*International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, 15:4, 483-503

Wikipedia, 13 February 2015. Quantified self. Retrieved from

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantified\\_Self](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantified_Self)