# ephemera
**I** reviews
*critical dialogues on organization*

# Out of the Cynical Bind? A Reflection on Resistance in *Fight Club*[1]

## André Spicer

University of Melbourne, Australia

**review of:**   *Fight Club,* USA, 1999
(Dir. David Fincher, 135 min., Cert. 18, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation)

## Why Film?

A colleague was recently speaking to an eminent labour historian about the how we can understand the conditions that people have worked in through history. The labour historian commented that fictional texts are usually far more insightful than many social science investigations. Fictional work such as literature, poetry, visual arts and film often give a brilliant expression of how people experience modern workplaces.

The potential of fictional works as a source of 'data' when studying the social world has been recently opened up by the so-called linguistic turn (Jameson, 1998) that has pointed out meaning as a central question in understanding the social world. An obvious source of 'data' that is rich in meaning is the arts. This has led researchers in many social sciences to suggest that fictional works are an ideal means of investigating the social world. The strict distinction between scientifically validated truth and fictional work has been challenged. This has led to many researchers examining discourses (Calás and Smirchich, 1999). Writers like Boje (1995), Case (1999), Phillips and Zylidopoulos (1999) and Putnam and Fairhurst (2000) have argued that narrative is a key organisational process. They therefore suggest examining stories or narratives within organisations. This does not only mean examining the official narratives such as a dominant corporate culture, but also 'marginal' narratives such as workers' stories. The importance of stories is not just limited to those told 'within' organisations. The way work has been understood has been shaped significantly by works of fiction. Think for instance of the novels of Charles Dickens that shaped nineteenth century England's understand of the urban poor and sweated labour. The images of the dirt covered faces of coal miners was also permanently etched on the

_____
1   This review has benefited immensely from an ongoing writing project with Peter Fleming.

memories of the English middle classes by novels like D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and photographs of coal miners emerging from the pits covered with coal dust.

One medium that has a significant history of representing people's experiences of organisation is film. In order to tap into this significant archive of reflection on the contemporary workplace, I shall focus on a single film that examines the brutalities of contemporary corporate capitalism – *Fight Club*. Moreover I will focus on one of the most significant themes in this film – strategies of resistance in the context of corporate capitalism.

## Introducing *Fight Club*

David Fincher's film *Fight Club* is a look at the malaise produced by contemporary corporate capitalism in the United States. This world of water-coolers, multinational corporations, and rampant consumerism is investigated through the actions of Jack (played by Edward Norton) – a cynical technocrat employed by a multinational corporation, and Tyler (played by Brad Pitt) – a rebellious entrepreneur and film projectionist. Although both characters are central functionaries in the post-industrial accumulation process, both have a keen critical sense of the alienating nature of the economic and social system they prop up. After the two meet during a business trip on an aeroplane, Jack's shoe-box apartment is mysteriously blown up. As he has nowhere to go, he rings Tyler who meets him at a bar. Jack subsequently moves into Tyler's dilapidated house in an abandoned industrial zone. After some typical boyish antics, an evening of drinking leads to the two engaged in a 'friendly' brawl in the car park outside a seedy bar. This fight seems to reveal Jack's passions that have been destroyed by long hours of staring at a computer screen. Tyler and Jack feel this exhilaration needs to be shared with other men, who are invited to join in their underground fight club. Soon enough, fight club gains a cult following amongst men from all walks of life (car cleaners to computer programmers). As the ranks of fight club swells it takes on a definite flavour of a male secret society ('the first rule of fight club, you don't tell anyone about fight club'), and Jack begins to drift away from his work-a-day world, becoming ensnared in this parallel underground world.

Sensing the significant malaise fight club members share towards their corporate 'day world', Tyler begins to plot. He reasons that the passion, energy and commitment that the members of fight club currently direct towards fighting one another, could be organised in a more sustained effort against the very condition which causes their alienation – corporate capitalism. The newly focused fight club becomes a squad of terrorists who train their efforts on illicit activities such as destroying corporate art and replacing the saccharine air-plane safety cards with cards that depict more realistic air disaster scenarios. Slowly these plans become more serious and culminate in the planned bombing of large credit card companies in order to crash the consumer credit system.

This particular film is relevant for organisation studies for a number of reasons. First it gives an excellent depiction of contemporary work and consumption through the eyes of one disgruntled 'knowledge worker' – Jack. It is therefore similar to films such as *Clockwatchers*, *Clerks*, and *Human Traffic* among many other films that depict the malaise

suffered by post-industrial workers. What is particularly interesting for organisation studies are the patterns of resistance to corporate capitalism found in *Fight Club*. In order to contribute to the burgeoning literature on resistance in organisations (e.g. Jerimer, Knights and Nord, 1994), in particular the current debate around 'micro' and contingent forms of resistance, I will examine three forms of resistance to corporate capitalism in *Fight Club* – cynicism, parody, and organised opposition. I will then consider the violence driven model of masculinity that underpins many of these forms of resistance depicted in *Fight Club*, and conclude with an agenda of resistance through 'strategic universalism'.

## Cynicism on Planet Starbucks

The first aspect of *Fight Club* we are struck with is the airless world of pre-prepared airline food, the typically blandly furnished office cubicles, and bloodless technocratic tasks in which the story begins. The workplace has exceeded alienation, it is a world of endless games of Microsoft *Solitaire*, and terminal boredom disguised by a succession of 'action lists'. It is the world of white-collar alienation that critical management studies and labour process theory have recently focused attention on. The most morally questionable tasks are undertaken in the guise of simple technocratic calculation. Jack's job is to calculate whether it would be cheaper for a large car corporation to recall cars with potentially fatal faults, or to simply pay out the reparations for the fatalities resulting from these faulty vehicles. Although Jack deals on a day-to-day basis with life and death, he is plagued by a lack of any semblance of meaning or emotion in his work. The attempts by various functionaries within the organisation to 'motivate' or 'inspire' him are instantly seen through, and come off looking like hollow promises. The reactions of Jack to his post industrial family are similar to the cynical reactions to corporate culture programs we find described in Casey (1995), Kunda (1992), and Collinson (1992). In an almost perfect mirror of Jack's cynicism, we find the engineers Kunda studied announcing that the corporate culture was 'California bathtub crap'.

Equally important in *Fight Club* is the realm outside of work. We find Jack attempting to seek solace in various consumption activities. In one scene he fantasises over a catalogue of new furniture that will allow him to remodel his shoe-box apartment. This furniture passes itself off as an easy tonic for the woes of post-modern life, and will construct his nest as a genuine retreat in which he can nourish his soul. However, Norton sees through the promises of this new-age consumerism with ease, cynically pointing out "I would flip through catalogues and wonder, "What kind of dining set defines me as a person?" We used to read pornography. Now it was the Horchow Collection" (Fight Club Script: 11).

Jack also attempts to conquer his alienation in therapy groups. Jack attends a variety of support groups for a various of afflictions that he is not, and has never been, affected by. Although Jack does not share the 'real' concerns of his fellow group members, he gains a kind of comfort that he cannot find in the modern metropolis or his place of work. This comfort is a cynical one as Jack can see through the methods of these therapy groups, understanding they are based on fantasies fuelled by a 1960s nostalgia. He goes along with these fantasies nonetheless because they make him feel good. Indeed it is this cynical 'enlightened false consciousness' (Sloterdijk, 1984) that characterises Jack's world at the

beginning of *Fight Club*. He can 'ironically' see through Starbucks, photocopier slavery, and a world dominated by corporations. The dilemma Jack (and others like him) face is that he is quite enlightened about the 'true state of affairs', and needs little 'consciousness raising'. However Jack continues to *act* as if he had accepted this state of affairs he knows to be irrational and morally perverse. He continues to buy IKEA tables. He continues to attend support groups. He continues to complement his boss on his boring and predictable ties. Most of all, he keeps the wheels of the corporation he works for rolling in a well-oiled manner.

## Parodying the Flesh Market

The initial world that one encounters in *Fight Club* is a telling portrait of the cynical reactions of working people to living amongst a world increasingly dominated by large corporations. This leads the viewer to directly encounter the cynical bind in which many find themselves in - we can see perfectly clearly what is wrong with this world, but feel powerless to challenge it all the same. The only 'escape attempts' (Cohen and Taylor, 1976) from this corporate world extend to a cynical joke at the expense of a superior's tie, and illicit use of counselling groups. With the introduction of Tyler Derden (played by Brad Pitt) we find that the pathetic nature of this cynical bind is quickly collapsed.

When Jack meets Tyler, they develop a rapid agreement as to the problems with the corporate dominated world in which they exist. Where they part ways is with the great question 'what is to be done'. Unlike Jack, Tyler is not pleased with the cynical sneer as a strategy of engagement. Instead Tyler begins by being a savage participant in the market, who lives by the everyday dictum, 'one must take advantage of the corporation before it takes advantage of you'. Tyler does this by participating in an underground economy of making soap from the body-fat disposed of in liposuction procedures. Unlike the passive cynicism of Jack, Tyler displays a kind of 'active' cynicism. He takes the demands of the corporate world at their word. He engages in the free market (World Bank), he recycles (Body Shop), he enjoys (Coke). But Tyler delivers these demands of the corporate world back in an all-too-literal manner. Through selling soap made from human fat for exorbitant prices, Tyler is able to parody the irrationalities of consumerism – "Tyler sold it (the soap) to the stores for twenty bucks a bar. God knows what they charged. We were selling rich women their own fat back to them" (Fight Club Script: 71). The most subversive point made here is that there is a market for everything – even human flesh.

Strategies of parody are not limited to *Fight Club*. Parody as strategy of resistance is seen in Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Solider Šveik* where a recalcitrant solider in the Austro-Hungarian army named Šveik throws the military machine into disarray through obsessively following his superiors' orders to the letter (Fleming and Sewell, 2000). Similarly, unions have realised the ability to paralyse a labour process through the parodying process of 'working to rule' – that is taking the bureaucratic rules of an organisation at their word. Finally, it has become a popular strategy amongst anti-consumer groups to parody corporate advertising in order to critique the products they are selling. For instance, the organisation Adbusters brings us the sickly 'Jo Chemo' instead of

'Jo Camel'. In each of these instances we find that parody can be used as a potential force of resistance to organisations beyond the screen.

The success of parodies such as Tyler's as an effective form of resistance against the irrationalities he identified in contemporary capitalism is questionable. Through the act of parody he continues to reproduce the cash nexus he loathes so much, albeit in a clever, mocking fashion. His parody of corporate capitalism merely ends up producing an 'exciting new start up company' which may grace the pages of a business magazine. At the same time this kind of parody allows a feeling that corporate capitalism doesn't have the fascist tendencies many attribute to it after all. Indeed one could point to the ability of capitalism to produce a parody of itself, not take its values too seriously, or even develop an 'ironic' attitude towards itself (Rorty, 1989). Although not all forms of parody are guilty of surreptitiously propping up the social relations they try to critique, it is possible that parodying a system which one aims to critique may simply reproduce this very same system with a playful, ironic character. Indeed, as Richard Harvey Brown (1987) suggests, it is vital to discern whether the parody or ironic gestures one produces are functional (by providing an pressure release valve for the pressures of a given system) or radical (by significantly challenging the very basis on which this society operates).

## Organised Resistance in *Fight Club*

If *Fight Club* remained as a dynamic between the cynical Jack, and the parody driven Tyler, it would have been an exploration of reactions to the contemporary workplace and consumer society. *Fight Club* would have been on the familiar terrain of 'micro strategies' of resistance to the contemporary organisation of production. What make *Fight Club* push beyond these bounds is the path of transgression and transformation that Jack finds himself dragged down by Tyler as his antics move away from playful lawlessness and gradually make the viewer increasingly uneasy. This unease seems to be injected into the situation as soon as Jack and Tyler's minor and boyish challenges to 'the system' move from randomly breaking windows in abandoned factories with golf balls to inflicting damage on their own bodies through regularly participating in organised brawls. The bruises and spots of blood that Jack sports during his day job begin to make his boss and co-workers uneasy. Indeed the fight club is a space where the physically harmless nature of the work-a-day world of corporate life is violently inverted. This inversion comes in the form of organised bare-fisted fights between two men, while others stand around and cheer. The normal spectator role whilst watching televised sport is dropped in favour of an active, very bodily participation (all spectators must fight on their first night). Indeed this is a similar inversion to the active participation in overturning the rules and mores of the normal world that were performed in medieval carnivals (Bakhtin, 1984).

An important aspect of this overturning of social mores is that it does not have the same ad-hoc nature as the cynical sneer or the parodying gesture. Rather, the fight club is organised. Being organised, fight club does not take the corporate world as its basis, but rather brings into being another basis from which to challenge the demands of work and consumerism. Tyler is quite clear that fight club is set up to counteract the malaise that he sees its members wallowing in. The first way in which it counteracts this malaise is by the

carnivalesque fighting. The second, more radical strategy pursued by Tyler is to organise the members of fight club into a focused group of anti-corporate terrorists. The activities this group initially mount are of a symbolic nature such as destroying corporate art, smashing up chain store windows, and placing air-plane safety cards depicting the horror of a real air accident. These actions of 'symbolic guerrilla warfare' are similar to campaigns that are already being carried out around the world, such as defacing sexist advertising, reworking corporate art, and creating illegal art work on store fronts[2]. In this respect *Fight Club* reflects the growing attitude of dissent to corporate globalisation, and resistances to it through acts of 'symbolic guerilla warfare'. *Fight Club* highlights resistance that has been sharply bought into focus by an international wave of protest that started at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in November 1999, and continued through Washington, Melbourne, and Prague in 2000.

The fight club however goes beyond important symbolic gestures such as the destruction of corporate art. Instead of defacing more Starbuck's coffee houses, they turn their tightly organised capacities to destroying one the central systems which keeps consumer capitalism functioning – the credit card system. In order to wipe consumers credit records (which would free many from the burden of paying them back through mindless labour), the fight club, under the direction of Tyler, goes about planting bombs under inner city sky-scrapers. What we see on the screen is truly quite unusual – a vision that corporate capitalism can actually be shaken to its very core in order to establish a less alienating world. This is a sentiment that seems to have suffered a degree of demise in the critical imagination along with concepts such as justice, equality, and non-capitalist social relations.

## Violence and Masculinity

*Fight Club* can be read as a significant insight into strategies of resistance that are employed within, and against contemporary capitalism. However, underpinning the forms of resistance identified in *Fight Club* is a very strong issue of masculinity. The fight club is an all male secret society. The primary goal of the fight club appears to be resisting corporate capitalism, but not because of its dynamics of exploitation, inequity, and environmental degradation. Rather corporate capitalism is to be resisted because contemporary work, consumption, and therapy have alienated men from true masculinity, not allowing them to be 'true men'. This 'gender alienation' can be seen clearly in Tyler's diagnosis of the world in which fight club operates:

> "Look at the guys in fight club. The strongest and smartest men who have ever lived - - and they're pumping gas and waiting tables; or they're slaves with white collars. Advertising has them chasing cars and clothes. A whole generation working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy shit they don't need." (Fight Club Script: 71)

The fight club is explicitly set up to overcome this gender alienation, and assert what it means to be a 'true man' once more.

---

2  See www.adbusters.org for some excellent examples. Earlier examples can be found in the artwork of the French Situationists.

As 'masculine', like 'feminine', is not innate or self evident but constructed (Silverman, 1992; Brewis, Hampton and Linstead, 1997), it is important to ask what form of masculinity is asserted in *Fight Club*. The central feature of masculinity in *Fight Club* is obviously violence. By beating, and being beaten, during the fighting matches the men in fight club are able to assert and develop their sense of masculinity in the face of characterless corporate world which has previously sapped this violent masculinity:

> "A guy comes to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a wad of cookie dough. After a few weeks, he looks carved out of wood. He trusts himself to handle anything." (Fight Club Script: 49)

This assertion of masculinity as a resistance strategy seems to be based on an idea of a 'real man' who is independent from emasculating corporations and consumption activities. Indeed these ideal figures are probably the cowboys, action heroes, and hard-boiled detectives the men of fight club watch on television and film.

This assertion of violent masculinity carries on from the fight club into the action oriented terrorist activities. As the terrorist unit based at Tyler and Jack's seedy house develops, one begins to recognise an army boot camp, even with tinges of fascism. The principles that these crack troops live under appear to be conditioned by violence and authoritarian order. The actions taken by this increasingly fascist group are also oriented by violence. Instead of picketing credit card companies or planting a virus in their computer systems, the 'brotherhood' opts for an extremely violent option worthy of their on-screen heroes – blowing up the buildings in which the credit card companies are housed.

The theme of resistance which is driven by a threat to masculinity is not unique to *Fight Club*. Collinson (1992) points out that one of the key forms of solidarity amongst the factory workers he studied was a sense of working class masculinity, which was threatened by proposed changes and challenges to the union. A similar point of resistance in organisations amongst the printing workers Cockburn (1983) studied was the (re)assertion of their sense of masculinity against management. Masculinity, in particular violent masculinity, continues to colonise how resistance becomes possible both inside *Fight Club* and beyond.

The strategies of resistance we find in *Fight Club* are underpinned by a particular construction of masculinity. This construction of what it means to be a man is oriented around violent resistance to the emasculating world of corporations and consumption. Although this strategy of resistance may appear appealing on the silver screen, it is questionable whether the particular model of violent masculinity that underpins it is an effective, and indeed ethical approach to resistance. Although violence has been a common strategy of resistance to capital, we must recognise the possible draw-backs. The violent masculine model of resistance underpinning the fight club's strategies simply reasserts the violence of various hues (be it physically painless alienation, or more immediate exploitation of peoples bodies) that fight club exists to challenge. As the fight club becomes more organised and begins to take more radical strategies, we begin to recognise in the fight club the very structures of the corporations which they hope to challenge. The viewer begins to see in this squad of budding terrorists the very behaviors of the corporate automatons they hoped to escape being. Moreover, the men of the fight club seem to simply reassert the violence and militarism which bell hooks (1996) suggests exists at the basis of contemporary (American) capitalism.

## Reclaiming the Universal?

*Fight Club* offers us a limited range of strategies of resistance. In particular the strategy of resistance *Fight Club* ultimately recommends to the viewer is based upon a reassertion of the model of violent masculinity that underlies the very system fight club hopes to challenge. In the remainder of this review I aim to ask what are the other possible approaches to resistance that reach beyond the kind of violent, masculine resistance we find in *Fight Club*. To explore this question, I will attempt to reach 'beyond' *Fight Club*, and concentrate on the general issue of resistance. One strategy of resistance I suggest that does not seek violent dialectical opposition or passive cynical resignation is radical identification with the espoused values of society.

One typical critical approach when examining the espoused values of our society is to dialectically oppose them as they provide the ideological underpinning for capitalism, modernity, patriarchy and so on. This leads to actions that range from blistering critiques of dominant systems of thought (eg. Liberalism) in the pages of academic journals to brutal strategies of 're-education' such as those used during the Chinese Cultural Revolution or the era of anti-communist hysteria in the West. This strategy of resistance is of course exemplified by violently didactic Tyler and his followers towards the end of *Fight Club*.

A second common critical strategy is to examine the ideals espoused by a particular system, then turn to the empirical realities within this system, and point out the yawning gap between them. The next step in this strategy is to sadly reject the espoused ideals in favour of nasty brutish 'reality'. This of course is the kind of cynicism that characterises common responses to corporate culture and many critiques of globalisation. The key problem with this strategy is that it simply asserts the existing state of affairs, and leave the possibility for social change disabled by the 'unstoppable realities' one observes. This is the strategy exemplified by the early cynical Jack in *Fight Club*.

In the remainder of this review, I would like to chart out an alternative strategy of resistance - 'strategic universalism' (Butler, Laclau and Žižek, 2000) which operates by simply taking the espoused values of a particular society at their word. 'Strategic universalism' is *universal* because it recognises any particular articulation of values relies on a claim to an Other, an unquestioned, and unchallenged basis. It is *strategic* because it recognises that the basis of Other is consistently slipping away and it is impossible to subject it to a systematic analysis. Given a particular ethico-political project, we may want to cautiously embrace a set of particular universals on which our articulations are based. For instance, to challenge the masculine violence that appears to underlie the fight club's resistance strategies, we unwittingly invoke the 'universal' of equality that is challenged by the exclusionary masculinity of the fight club. We may also invoke the 'universal' of peace that is undercut by the violence leveled by the fight club against its own members and others (Tyler's 'girlfriend' Marla becomes a target). A strategy of resistance through strategic universalism would explicitly recognise that articulations are based on universals, and that these universals may be evoked for an ethico-political project. Moreover this strategy would radicalise these universals that common articulations are based upon. This would mean radicalising or universalising commonly espoused values such as democracy, care for the natural environment, and equality.

One condition that modern capitalism has produced which may serve as its failing is a set of statements of values. The typical values espoused by a modern capitalist nation include democracy, equality, human rights, and care for the environment. However we are consistently 'putting off' or deferring the achievement of these basic values in favour of further repression. For instance, at the beginning of *Fight Club* we find Jack working in a job that he hates in order to purchase consumer goods so he may gain a faint glimmer of happiness. A similar scenario is that of impoverished workers who are told by the IMF to curtail their demands for wages so that market forces can be 'got right' in order to deliver them freedom. By simply taking seriously the basic value claims that institutions like nation states and the United Nations operate under, it is possible to chart futures far different from the inevitable acceptance of the market. If we are told that we live in a democracy, then why is it we have practically no say in how our workplaces, government institutions and schools operate? Why can't we have democracy now? If we are told that we live in an increasingly prosperous society, why is it that so many people are excluded from the so-called benefits of the market? Why can't all benefit from this prosperity now?

There is a whole raft of examples where social movements have simply 'taken seriously' the espoused values of the dominant and oppressive aspects of society in order to negotiate some degree of emancipation. The feminist movement partially relies on taking seriously the values of equality that are espoused in the founding documents of patriarchy. The union movement relies on taking seriously the founding assertions of liberal capitalism by radicalising freedom to include not just the freedom of capital, but the freedom of workers. Indeed Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suggest that by simply taking the commonly agreed upon values of democracy seriously, using them 'to the hilt', then a significant radical agenda of changes to contemporary society emerges.

This strategy of radicalising the espoused values of our time may prove to be very productive in advancing the project of emancipation. By taking seriously the broad claims of democracy, one is rapidly focused on asking the question why is democracy limited to a vote every three years or so? Why is it not possible to have a say in how the institutions we work in are structured? By taking seriously the ethic of human rights espoused by most nation-states and corporations, one is able to ask why is it that so many of people's basic human rights are contravened on an everyday basis, and what proposals we can make to eliminate these abuses. David Harvey (2000) points out that if we simply take the United Nations' 'Declaration of Human Rights' (a document which many nations are signatory to) at its word, then many of the practices associated with corporate capitalism would be up for debate. The ridiculously unjust health system of the United States (held up as a paragon for other countries) convenes basic rights to health detailed in article 25. The anti-union policies being pursued by many governments contravene the International Labour Organisation's 'declaration on fundamental principals and rights at work' and article 23 of the declaration of human rights.

A careful examination of key documents containing the espoused values of many nation states and global institutions reveals quite a significant project for critical organisation theory. Three key international documents that represent the espoused ethics that are to be taken seriously are the United Nations' 'Declaration of Human Rights', the International Labour Organisation's declaration of the fundamental rights at work, and various United

Nations' environmental agreements[3]. Each of these documents charts out what it is we should expect as basic rights. The point for critical organisation theory is to not only highlight the yawning gaps between what is espoused and what organisations actually do, but to tease out what these espoused values might actually mean for organisations. Most of all, a project of strategic universalism for critical organisation studies would ask how this gap between the espoused values and the reality many be closed in practice.

## Conclusion

In order for critical organisation studies to advance its espoused purpose of emancipation a continued focus on strategies of resistance is vital. The film *Fight Club* dramatically raises the possibility of resistance to corporate capitalism. In particular we find three different strategies of resistance in *Fight Club* – cynicism, parody, and organised resistance. Only the last strategy of resistance appears to provide an effective challenge. However this strategy of resistance is underpinned by a model of violent masculinity that simply reasserts many of the structures that the fight club hopes to challenge. In order to provide a model of resistance that avoids the problems associated with this violent approach to resistance found in *Fight Club*, I have sketched the outlines of a 'strategic universalism'. This not only provides a fragile solution to the issue of how it may be possible to articulate resistance beyond violent opposition or passive cynicism, it also charts a significant political program for critical organisation studies.

**references**

Bakhtin, M. (1984) *Rabelais and his World* (trans H. Iswolsky). Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press.

Boje, D.M. (1995) 'Stories of the Storytelling Organization – A Postmodern Analysis of Disney as Tamara-Land', *Academy of Managament Journal*, 38(4): 997-1035 .

Brewis, J., M.P. Hampton and S. Linstead (1997) 'Unpacking Priscillla: Subjectivity and Identity in the Organization of Gendered Appearance', *Human Relations*, 50(10): 1275-1304.

Brown, R.H. (1987) *Society as Text: Essays On Rhetoric, Reason, and Reality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Butler, J., E. Laclau and S. Žižek (2000) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso.

Calás. M. and L. Smirchich (1999) 'Past postmodernism? Reflections and tentative directions', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 649 – 671.

Case, P. (1999) 'Organizational studies in space: Stanislaw Lem and the writing of social science fiction', *Organization,* 6(4): 649-671.

Casey, C. (1995) *Work, Self, and Society: After Industrialism*. London: Routledge.

Cockburn, C. (1983) *Brothers: Male Dominance And Technological Change*. London: Pluto Press.

Cohen, S. and L. Taylor (1976) *Escape Attempts: The Theory And Practice Of Resistance To Everyday Life*. London: Allen and Lane.

---

3  For the United Nations' 'Declaration of Human Rights' see http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm. For the key United Nations' Environmental agreements see http://www.unep.org. For the International Labour Organization's 'Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principals at Work' see: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/decl/index.htm

Collinson, D.L. (1992) *Managing The Shopfloor: Subjectivity, Masculinity, And Workplace Culture*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.

Fight Club Script. www.compsoc.man.ac.uk/~heather/mustard/text/fcshoot

Fleming, P. and G. Sewell (2000) Svejkism and Resistance in Contemporary Workplaces. Department of Management Working Paper, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Harvey, D. (2000) *Spaces of Hope*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.

hooks, bell (1996) *Reel to real: Sex, Race and Class at the movies*. New York: Routledge.

Jameson, F. (1998) *The Culture Turn: Selected Writings On Postmodernism, 1983 –1998*. London: Verso.

Jerimer, J.M., D. Knights and W.R. Nord (eds.) (1994) *Resistance And Power In Organizations*. London: Routledge.

Kunda, G. (1992) *Engineering Culture: Control And Commitment In A High-Tech Corporation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (1985) *Hegemoney and Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democracy*. London: Verso.

Phillips, N. and S. Zyglidopoulos (1999) Learning from Foundation: Asimov's Psychohistory And The Limits Of Organization Theory, *Organization,* 6(4): 591-608.

Putnam, L. L. and G.T. Fairhurst (2000) 'Discourse Analysis in Organizations: Issues And Concerns', *Handbook Of Organizational Communication*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Rorty, R. (1989) *Contingency, Irony, And Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silverman, K. (1992) *Male Subjectivity At The Margins*. New York: Routledge.

Sloterdijk, P. (1984) *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**the author**  André Spicer's interests focus on the relationship between the 'material' and the 'discursive'. He is currently involved in projects focusing on cynicism and industrial relations disputes on the Australian waterfront. He is writing his PhD dissertation on discourses of globalisation in state media organisations at the University of Melbourne, Australia.
Address: Department of Management, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 3010, Victoria, Australia.
Email: a.spicer@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

**discussion**  To discuss this article, email ephemeraweb@yahoogroups.com using the following subject line:
*1(1) Spicer – Fightclub*
To register for the ephemera discussion forum visit http://www.ephemeraweb.org/discussion
To view the archive of discussion on this article visit http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ephemeraweb/messages
The discussion archive is also searchable by keyword and/or contributor.