

Decapitating Bøje:
Storying the Birth of sc'MOI
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Decapitation is always an emotional experience for me. At the moment the guillotining, the gavel struck, blade dropped, my head suspended in mid-air, and then my head dropped to the ground, and did roll across the ballroom floor of the *International Academy of Business Disciplines* (hereafter IABD), its final event of the 2004 conference now a fait accompli.

I expected to see red blood, but my head beheld a swirl of blue, black, and yellow ooze. These are special Dane colors to me (so I did sign this story with Bøje). The colors have Danish energetic vibrations:

Blue – the ethical question: who is answerable for this decapitation?

Yellow – the aesthetic question: how was the guillotine consummated from the many chaotic parts, and so brilliantly shaped into a whole execution device?

Black - the cognitive intellectualization question: what are these black words, these lines of text that I strike upon this page?

Mikhail Bakhtin (1924/1990) looks at the interanimation of the three spheres of discourse (ethics, aesthetics, & cognitives), he calls them an architectonic dialogism. I simply see them as intervibrating energies, as colors, that mix, in my ooze bleeding together to recolor the IABD ground, to break apart into new ground for the seed of the new conference, actually the retitled reborn conference within the body of the old IABD-mother.

In that moment in time and in that space, the decapitated Bøje separated from the IABD body, to regenerate simultaneously into a new reborn body, the *Standing Conference of Management and Organization Inquiry* (sc'MOI). It is pronounced in the French way of the revolution, a hearty cry, “C'est Moi!”

C'est Moi, non, c'est Nous who was/were decapitated and reborn, in one fateful swoosh of the blade stroke, dropping down the well-oiled rails of the executioner's machine. It is a metamorphosis, one that myself and Yue Cai wrote about in the journal called *Metamorphosis* (Boje & Cai, 2004). Metamorphosis is about language, the D-words and the coming of the R-words (our reading of Bakhtin, 1940/1968).

Table 1 – Metamorphosis of D-Words and R-Words

D-Words	R-Words
-Decapitation	-Rebirth
-Dethronement	-Rethronment
-Degeneration	-Regeneration
-Destruction	-Reconstruction
-Debasement	-Re-emergence
-Dismemberment	-Rememberment

Enough of this intellectualizing, the cognitive, black, ooze on the page. The reader wants to know the real story. Let us tell first the story of the aesthetics, then the blue ethics of answerability for this capitulation.

The aesthetic yellow of the decapitation; it is a very yellow machine, shaped in secret over the period of a year before its use. At the April, 2004 meeting, I was announced at the closing luncheon ceremony as the duly elected by the membership, c'est moi, an incoming-president.

My head in my lap, no place else to put it after the decapitation, two board members (long time friends) members pulled me into a private chamber. “We could not attend your beheading; it made us sick to our stomachs.” They related that a faction of the conference decided to orchestrate my dethronement, led by someone. They said it was the work of a non-board member. The current board members, I could guess who, were their puppets. The out-going president pulled the guillotine cord, but the several board members pulled his, and theirs pulled by the someone. The someone had sharpened the blade to a razor’s edge in a year of phone calls, long exhausting visits with board members, wearing them down. I was never contacted by the one.

Board Member: “Bøje don’t take the beheading personally. It’s really not about you. It is what your election represented to them. An internal power structure between Arab factions. Do you want to know his name?”

Bøje: “No, I would rather not know.”

You see IABD started as quite a Middle-Eastern dominated conference, though of late, the conservative Americana contingent has grown stronger, and the visibility of the postmodern critters was viewed as a threat to certain factions that opposed other factions. Before 911 my election to President was not a problem. Even during the invasion of Iraq, in the first years, I was invited to run for an open seat on the Board; this too was not a problem. Even when two postmodern philosophers (Steve Best & Douglas Kellner) were extended the honor of giving the big keynote address at the closing conference luncheon, that too was not a problem.

But the critical postmodern track and its spin off (spirituality) had grown too large, and other offshoots of the Bøje/Critical Postmod Organization Theory track were

budding (International, critical strategy in the works). Other tracks at the IABD tryed to imitate our successful style of whole-track dialogues of 20-50 persons over 3 days. Those who followed the traditional format often found themselves in rooms where only presenters showed up. So as an academic activist, for 15 years no problem, and operating the <http://peaceaware.com> site and organizing marches and protests, also not a problem. Not a problem until now.

Why now? Because a growing faction supports the Bush Liberation Operation, while the rest are against it.

This is more of my black cognition, not really an aesthetic telling. Yet, the orchestration, the crafting of the executioner's device is an aesthetic consummation. Here are aesthetic elements. The sc'MOI conference for 15 years had a womb, a cozy home, inside the highly conservative IABD. We were treated very well, and we thrived. We were brethren and sistern, both rejects from the great Academy of Management. This a place with Arab, African, and Latino names were too difficult for Academy WASPs to put on the program, and certainly too much to allow radical critters like us on the agenda. Now the critters have a foothold in the Academy, and it prides itself in being so very international.

I spoke in the archy yellow voice of Ronald McDonald, and wore the yellow "M" across my heart, even sported the red shoes, and a yellow jumper over the red and white striped shirt. I thought it was this costume and the archy black "M" eyebrows that got me beheaded, but learned after, that it was not that at all. Still it makes a good story, does it not?ⁱ

At the business breakfast meeting, the day before the beheading, it was packed like never before. The inquisitors made their show, but it was just that, for show:



Exhibit 1: Boje (Ronald) and IABD conference founder, executive director, and good friend to us all, Abbas Alkhafaji

Inquisitor 1: Bøje did dress as a clown and perform an anti-corporate play (McDonald's goes to Iraq), and at the formal dinner no less. We were trapped there, It is so very inappropriate for an in-coming President to do this, to dress as a clown.

Bøje: Are we not all clowns?

Board Member 1: (rising to his feet) "I am not a clown, what an insult to the conference leaders!"

Board Member 2: (also rising to his feet): I am not a clown."

Board Member 3 (still seated): "Me neither, I am not a clown."

Board Member 4 (rising): "You see how Bøje does not see the error of his ways, he cannot be our President; we are not clowns!"

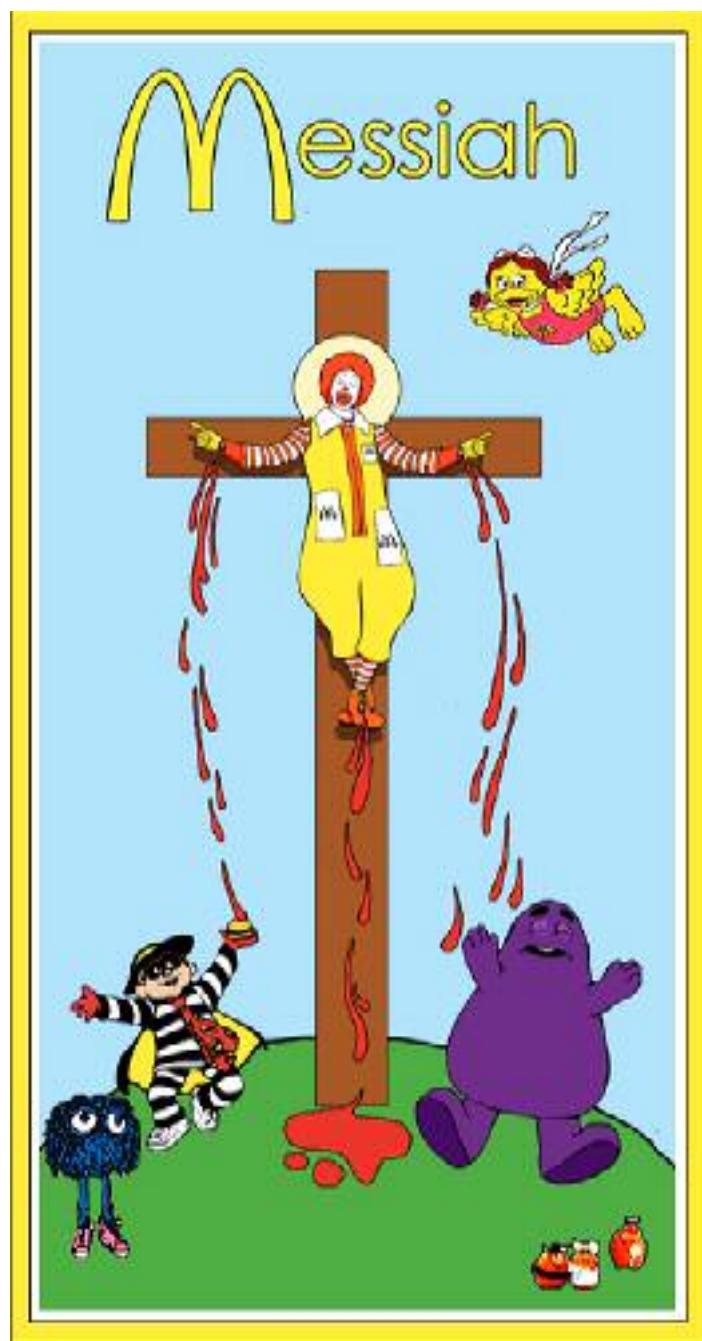


Exhibit 2 – Image Clown Boje displayed during the play (Blood from Ronald is dripping on Hamburglar and Grimace, as Birdie flies as a spirit above)ⁱⁱ

The next Inquisitor (#2): “Bøje defamed all the Evangelicals, showing in the play, an image of Ronald, Grimace, and Hamburglar, all crucified. That is blasphemy! Ronal’s red blood dripped onto the rogue (Hamburglar), and onto that fool (Grimace). And then a second insult, an image of the Christ and the Apostles eating a Big Mac and a Happy Meal at *The Last Supper*”ⁱⁱⁱ

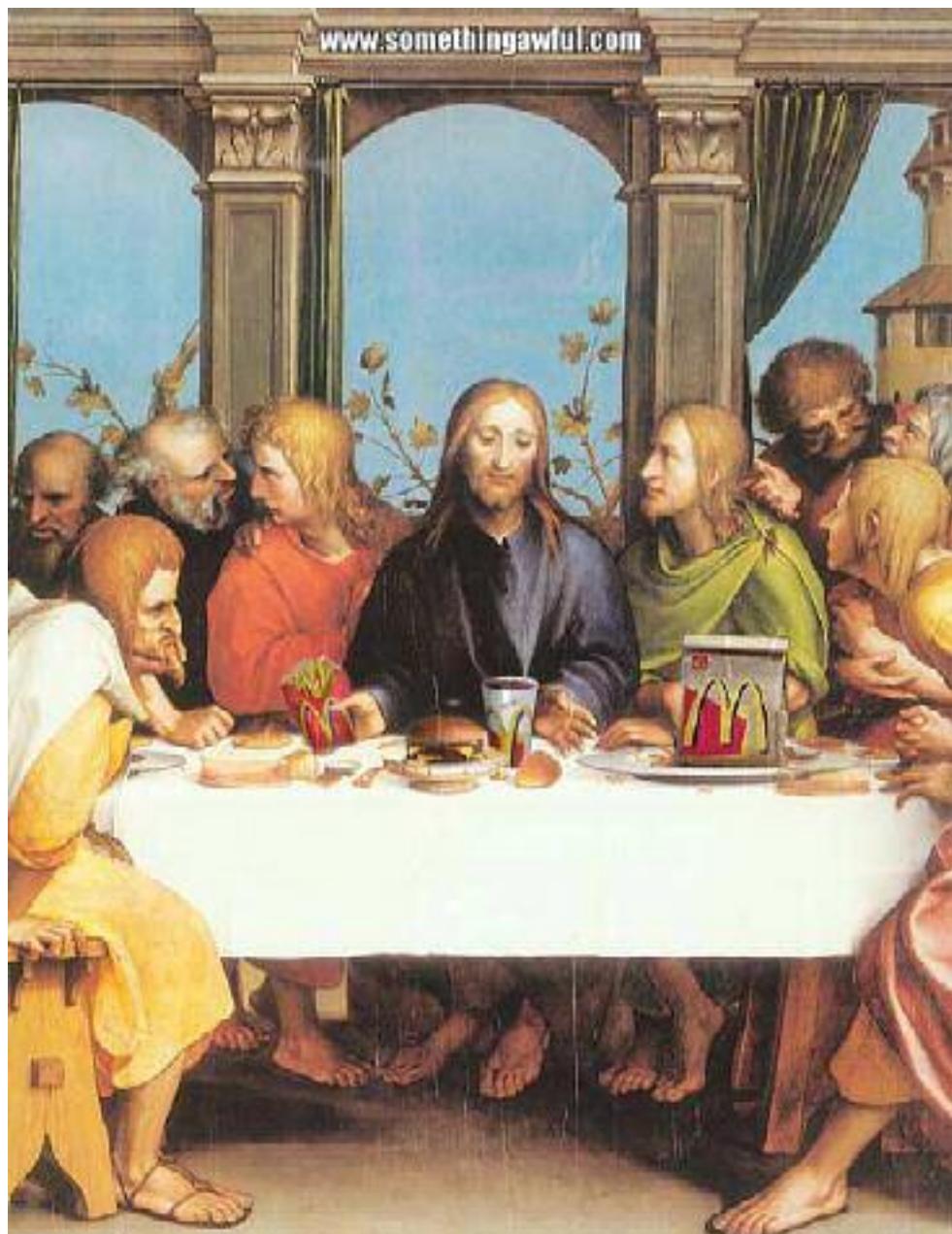


Exhibit 3 – Image Clown Boje displayed: Last McSupper (Source Art Exhibit in UK) [somethingawful.com website]

Bøje: "I hear a petition was signed by all the Christians after the play; or most of them. I did not want to offend Christians; I was once an Evangelical, though I am Jain now. The play was an inquiry into how McDonald's Corporation elevates Ronald to a Christ-symbol, and the images were done by anti-McDonaldization culture jammers; it was a thetic device used by Bertolt Brecht to promote dialogue among the spectators. I only explore the aesthetics of humor and McDonald's spiritual symbolism and its resonance with culture jammers, now with you."^{iv}

Inquisitor (Board Member # 4, enters in): “You Bøje, put the words ‘Evangelical Capitalism’ next to the two images. Your pictures were a provocation, an inappropriate one. (Turning to the crowd) We cannot have a President of our association that is against capitalism.

Bøje: “You and I both know that an article on ‘Evangelical Capitalism’ was published in the conference journal, and by two board members present here. My inquiry is into how an exploitative form of capitalism occurs by appeal to evangelical fundamentalism, and is part of the postmodern war machine...”

The degradation was an aesthetic bit of organizational theatre. It is also blue, an ethical opportunity for the accused to confront his accusers. During that theatre, I thought I was face-to-face, in dialectic encounter with my accusers (but one did not speak). I learned after, it was just a show to legitimate the execution that would take place the next day.

The theatre continued, with more inquisition.



Exhibit 4 – Boje displayed this image of President Bush, as a Ronald Clown during the theatrical event^v

Inquisitor (#3): “Boje, you did show an image of President George W. Bush, in make up as a Ronald McDonald (clown). This is political behavior, inappropriate at an academic conference!”

Boje: “It is true, I did show this piece of culture jammer art as an example of alternative narrations employed by various groups of our American Society. I am also aware that after our play about ‘McDonaldization goes to Iraq’ that another petition was circulated to collect signatures for my removal, this time the signers were all President Bush supporters.

Board Member #4: “Bøje, for the good of the conference, will you resign here-and-now?”

Bøje: “I will not resign. You can hold another election, but I will not resign. I was duly elected by the membership, and none of these charges is significant enough to merit me resigning. No I will not do that.

The aesthetic way of telling this is that Bøje put on a McDonaldland play, dressed as the clown Ronald and was dethroned. But, you know now that in the ethical telling, that is only part of the story, and to tell half a story is a lie.

Decapitation is a moment of separation, power’s desire to control, and contain the victim’s urge to continue to create. Decapitation is a moment of separation between 15 years of sc’MOI incubation, and the IABD mother.

We the newborn sc’MOI had a good parent in IABD. She nurtured us long after it was time to leave the comfort of her nest. The blade severed our umbilical cord to the mother. A father raged with indignation, but our body was nonetheless (re)born.

Just before the decapitation, the keynote speaker gave his presentation. He was the ad executive to the President Bush campaign for re-election. He showed us two ads. The first, a way that he learned from focus groups how to make a democrat convert to a republican. The second was a way to tweak Mexican-American values in the ad to get a young lad to sign up to go to war against Iraq. Afterwards, someone of us is said to have leaned over and asked Board Member (#4), “Say, is this not political, this (keynote) speech?” To which Board Member (#2) replied, “It is, but it is OK, it balances out Bøje.”

WHACK! – The blade severed head from body! Sc’MOI is reborn.

After the decapitation, we organized to fulfill our vow to go to Philadelphia in 2005 and stand before the Liberty Bell. Who is answerable for the crack in that bell?

We are in our 16th year; our birthday for sc’MOI is an independence day, a time for celebration.

Yes, decapitation is a time for emotion. Everyone says, that moving day is when you learn who your friends are. I learned on decapitation day, that I had many great friends, who cared for my welfare, who counseled me. My friends from the UK, who know all about beheading demeanor, told me “conduct yourself with dignity. Do not fulfil their expectation and play the rebel clown!” I am glad I listened to their advice, and sat quietly mediating, as the blade fell across my neck, and the room danced with three brilliant colors: blue, yellow, and black. I was glad it was not all black.



Exhibit 5 – Clown Boje with Edwardo Berrera

After the ceremony, and my private meeting with two Board members, I was taken away by Edwardo Berrera, to a sweat lodge. It was a glorious way to process the emotions of beheading, to rejoin head and body, in a spiritual reunion. It sweated out the rage, shame, anger, and resentment. I actually felt at peace in that lodge, with the music, the prayers, the steam off the rocks so hot they were transparent.



ScMOI Founding Board

Present at the Mar 28 2004 Business Meeting at 15th Annual meeting of sc'MOI (formerly the organization theory track of IABD); meeting in San Antonio, TX. (L-R Jerry Biberman, Casper Hoedemaekers, Ken Ehrensal, Adrian Carr, Rita Durant, Slavek Magala, Carolyn Gardner, Bob Dennehy, Grace Ann Rosile, Helene Fine, David Bøje, Robin Matthews (Current Board Members at this year's event, not shown Terence Krell, Bob Gephart, Sanjiv Dugal, Matthew Eriksen, Bill Smith, Mark Hillon, Cliff Oswick, John Luhman, & Alexis Downs); Board members not at this years meeting: Heather Hopfl & Peter Elsmor; We have also added new board members: Dominique Besson (see <http://scmoi.org> for site of our next meeting).

To me it is all about working the black, yellow, and blue spheres of discourse; that is why for me I did not see any red at all. Red is when you have no friends, when you have no black words to type, that resonate with the ethical-blues, and our new critical aesthetics. So *Viva Sc'MOI!*

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scMOI.org website is at <http://scmoi.org>

ⁱ The conference: International Academy of Business Disciplines; the offending theatre was enacted Thurs March 25 2004 at an, “All Academy Symposium: Globalism and the Future of Capitalism. The script of Boje’s play, “McDonald’s goes to Baghdad” is printed in the Business Research Yearbook (2004), Vol. XI 2004 edited by Carolyn Gardner, Jerry Biberman & Abbass Alkhafaji pp. 747-751; an accompanying article by Boje “Regenerating Ronald McDonald with the Method of Grotesque Realism is published in the same yearbook, pp. 752-756 (it contained the problematic Bush-Ronald photo).

ⁱⁱ Photo once appeared at The Crucifixion of Our Lord – Source
http://www.timboucher.com/journal/2003_11_01_archive.html The image has been removed but was at
http://www.timboucher.com/images/crucified_ronald.gif until May of 2004

ⁱⁱⁱ Bakhtin (1940/1968) develops the Clown-Rogue-Fool chronotope (relativity of time-space), one of nine chronotopes of the novel (see Bakhtin, 1981).

^{iv} For examples of McDonald’s spiritual art of McDonaldland, see <http://peaceaware.com/McD>

^v Latuff (2002) Image of Ronald McMurderer.