

Figurations

Newsletter of the Norbert Elias Foundation

■ FROM THE NORBERT ELIAS FOUNDATION

Collected Works of Norbert Elias in English

Since Elias's death, one of the Foundation's prime objectives has been to arrange publication of collected works in uniform scholarly editions in major languages, and most obviously German and English, the two languages in which Elias himself wrote. The German collected works were given priority because the great German publishing house of Suhrkamp was eager to undertake the project, and had already published almost all of Elias's works.

The Foundation has now signed a contract with University College Dublin Press for the publication of the collected works of Norbert Elias in English, in eighteen volumes over the period 2005–11. The eighteen volumes will correspond to those in the German *Gesammelte Schriften*, with the exception that it is unlikely that the poems and aphorisms will be included in full. The final volume will be a consolidated index to the entire works.

UCD Press was founded in 1995 and, although still very small in comparison with the major international publishers, it is now the most active university publishing house on the island of Ireland (see www.ucdpress.ie). It has the advantage and security of being part of Ireland's biggest university.

The Press's typographical consultant, Lyn Davies, will design the entire series of volumes from the start, so the format and appearance of all will be uniform. The first two volumes, the *Early Writings* and *The Court Society* will be published in the autumn of 2005.

*Johan Goudsblom
Hermann Korte
Stephen Mennell*

Reminder: Fourth Norbert Elias Prize 2005

To reiterate the announcement made in *Figurations* 20 and 21, the Fourth Norbert Elias Prize will be awarded in 2005. The Prize consists in a sum of €1000 and it will be awarded to a significant *first* book by a European author published *between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2004*.

On this occasion, the jury will consist of the previous three winners of the prize, David Lepoutre (France), Wilbert van Vree (Netherlands) and Nikola Tietze (Germany), under the chairmanship of one of the members of the Board of the Norbert Elias Foundation.

A nomination form is enclosed with this issue of *Figurations*. Please return it *not later than 1 March 2005* to:

Saskia Visser
Secretary, Norbert Elias Foundation
J.J. Viottastraat 13
1071 JM Amsterdam
The Netherlands

In the case of books written in a language other than English, French or German, nominators are asked to provide an outline in English of the content of the book.

The jury's decision will be announced in the second half of 2005.

Norbert Elias Chair moves to Rotterdam

The part-time Norbert Elias chair, financed by the Foundation and currently held by Professor Johan Heilbron, has until recently been located in the Department of General Social Science at the University of Utrecht, but has now moved to the Department of Sociology at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam. The department is one of the largest in the Netherlands, and has experienced a marked renewal in recent years, becoming one of the most active and certainly one of the youngest departments in the country. Godfried Engbersen and Jack Burgers run a Masters programme on migration and urban problems. They were joined this year by, among others, Romke van der Veen, who is a specialist in the welfare state and responsible for a Masters programme in the sociology of labour and organisations. Johan Heilbron will participate in the core courses of the curriculum, supervise Masters students, and probably also teach a course on economic sociology.

Appeal to the eagle-eyed

In spite of our best efforts, some errors still slipped through into the revised edition of *The Civilising Process* published by Blackwells in 2000. We are now collating them. If you have noticed any, please e-mail them (with page and line numbers if possible) to Stephen. Mennell@ucd.ie.

Recent honours

Stephen Mennell has been elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, or KNAW). He has also recently been awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters (LittD) by the University of Cambridge; this is one of the old British 'higher doctorates', granted not for a specific book but for a whole body of work written, in this case, over three decades.

First Norbert Elias Memorial Artist's Prize awarded to Joshua Nyatefe

As first announced a year ago, the Foundation has, in memory of Norbert Elias's love of African art, created a prize for young artists in Ghana. Joshua Edem Kofi Nyatefe, a computer graphic designer by profession, is the first recipient. Joshua won the best student award in 'picture making' in his first year at Mawuli Secondary School. When he left school he had an internship in Ghana Textile Printing, a textile manufacturing company. Then he enrolled in the Ghanatta College of Art and Design. Having graduated from this college, he applied for an internship with WIZ, a professional painter in Ghana. Then, he writes: 'While I was with WIZ, a new world in art was opened to me – communicating with my art in all I do. I have found a new language to use for the voiceless. My aim is to have all children in the world living better and meaningful lives, safe from harm and fear. I have made it my goal to use my art, my life, and all that I will be involved in to accomplish this. And I plan sometime in the future to venture into sculpture, because I see a whole world embodied in it. I dream of using my works in the campaign against child exploitation.'

The prize is administered on the Foundation's behalf by the Goethe Institute in Ghana, which will organise publicity and exhibitions by Joshua and the artists who follow him as recipients of the prize. Joshua will work in the ArtHAUS in Accra, founded by the Ghanaian artist Kofi Setordji. The jury for the prize is composed of Kofi Setordji, together with Dr Eleonore Sylla, Director of the Goethe Institute, and a representative of the National Museum of Ghana.



From left to right: Eleonore Sylla, Joshua Nyatefe, Kofi Setordji, Ann-Christine Klaassen-Kruse and, above, some examples of Joshua's work

■ ADEMIR GEBARA PROPOSES AN INTERNATIONAL FIGURATIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Ademir Gebara has proposed that an International Figurational Studies Association be formed. Over the last decade, Ademir has organised a series of conferences in Brazil, which were initially focused on the sociology of sport but have gradually come to be concerned with Elias's sociology and the figurational research tradition more broadly. Now he argues that the figurational network has grown so much, spreading right across the world, that there is a need for an international conference – he suggests every second year, if possible. These conferences would provide a forum in which everyone, from grizzled veterans to new postgraduate students, could meet to discuss their work and get to know each other.

To support and sponsor such an ambitious enterprise, it would be necessary to form an association, to which members would pay subscriptions according to their financial ability (which, if this were truly worldwide, would vary widely).

Some potential benefits of an association

Apart from the biennial conferences, benefits to subscribing members could include:

- register of members for networking
- creating links for academic exchange visits between countries and continents
- support for research proposals
- opportunities for research students to meet their counterparts and to work with senior scholars from other countries
- e-publication of working papers on the association's website
- discussion groups
- discounts on certain publications, including the Collected Works of Elias
- *Figurations* would be mailed twice yearly to all members

In the longer term, membership might also carry with it the subscription to a journal – discussions are afoot to create a new journal, provisionally entitled *Anthroposphere*, which would carry



articles in the figurational style, though not exclusively so.

How the biennial conferences might be structured

Ademir envisages an initial conference lasting four or five days. (To justify participants travelling from around the world, it would have to last more than one or two days.) The programme for it might look something like this:

Sunday evening: An opening lecture.

Monday–Thursday:

Mornings:

From 9.00 to 12.00: round tables focusing the main themes of the conference.

Afternoons:

14.00 to 15.00: simultaneous workshops on research students' projects. These would involve one established academic figure in discussion with a very small number of postgraduates: in one hour as many sections would be organised as there were discussants and rooms available.

15.00 to 17.00: General session with presentation of work on the main topics.

17.30 to 18.30 Poster Presentations. (Important for people who do not have a good command of the English language)

The last afternoon should be reserved for a business meeting on the creation of our international network.

An ambitious plan

Plainly, Ademir's proposals are ambitious, and much consideration will have to be given to their financial feasibility. He notes, for instance, that it would be necessary to be able to offer low-cost hostel accommodation for students, and lower subscription rates for those who could not claim any funding from their institutions. He adds that it would be essential to publish the proceedings of the conference – e-publication might be easy enough, but publication in book form is costly and difficult to achieve.

The next step is for readers of *Figurations* to express their views on Ademir Gebara's proposal, and help him to develop them further. Please send him your views by e-mail to: amgebara@terra.com.br. (This whole question could also be aired on the Elias discussion list: ELIAS-I@hearn.nic.surfnet.nl)

■ A TENTATIVE APPROACH TO THE QUESTION OF CIVILISATION AND FINANCE

Elias has left some unsolved questions behind, that we, interested in his theory, cannot neglect. The one that is most often mentioned is the question of the role of religion in society. But questions of the role of finance in society seem to me equally important. He himself knew from his own life that there are things like inflation that have hitherto not been very well analysed by sociologists.

What is the role of finance?

What Elias did point to is the transformation of the role of physical violence, which disappears from public view, its forces being internalised into the self and bound. The aggressive forces are civilised not by suppressing them, but by sublimation and transformation through erudition to skills of conflict management by 'virtual violence'. We obviously cannot overlook the fact that financial constraints are a sort of social power, deeply influencing the social formation of character. So finance is a sort of virtual violence, and a sort of exercise of power. What does this mean for the theory of civilising processes?

Self-constraints

Saving is a sort of power exercised over oneself. But it is also a sort of power exercised over others. Shareholders with big stockholdings (which are normal on the Continent, but not normal in the Anglo-Saxon countries) exercise much power over their corporation, and managers are their servants. In Anglo-Saxon countries managers have more power, but they need to have good relations with the analysts: a financial analyst has power to comment adversely on their corporation, which can lead to an exodus out of the shares of the corporation and eventually to the managers losing their posts and power.

External constraints

States have taken over the power of punishment in financial conflicts between private citizens – and so cases of unpaid debts are no longer private conflicts, but public cases before courts and punished with fines or imprisonment (something that does not work between states). State regulation means not only rules for the functioning of contracts, but much more: in every civilised nation can be found rules against usury – limits upon rates of interest and limits on conduct in relation to any contract between citizens of the same culture or nation. The Central Bank's duty in most countries is 'taming inflation', stabilising the price of money. Here the question posed by economists is whether states should determine the decisions of the central bank, or a group of specialists – normally insiders of the banking branch? Economists tend to count these insiders as among their own kind, in whom they have confidence, and to mistrust politicians – see Dawns and his school. But as long as insiders without democratic political control rule the central banks, there will obviously be a heavy power weighting in the hands of the finance branch, which exerts power on other social groups.

Taxation seems to be a sideline in the civilising process – raising taxes for maintaining the military and police power is a self-evident and necessary part of that process. But states have not only taxing power, but also power over credit and investment, through expenditure for military, police, traffic, schools

and so on. States (or politics) mean spending money, reducing or increasing taxes, and giving or reducing subsidies.

State debts and credits are the two sides of this power. As Elias put it, the balance of power has two sides: it binds those with little as well as those with much power. And the power can change sides: a big debtor has more power than a small debtor. (The USA is the biggest debtor in international finance, but this has not [yet] damaged its position as superpower).

State regulation works through supervising the institutions of banks or stock exchanges. According to mainstream economic theory, markets work best on their own, but it seems to me – and to Keynesian economists – that every crisis shows that markets cannot work without regulation. In some countries, states are regulating monetary affairs more, and in some others less. Is there a direction in this movement?

My thesis is that the state is in the long run a necessary regulator of and counterbalance to finance, as all outcomes of crisis have hitherto shown.

Take for example the IT and telecommunications industry. The 'excesses' in ITC in the 1990s meant not only market exuberance (to use Alan Greenspan's word) and excessively high expectations, but intentional misinformation of markets, profiteering through insider trading, analysts forgetting their duty and losing their independence, accounting firms inventing creative bookkeeping methods. All this was made possible by deregulation, the loosening of state power. State power over the financial sector is obviously not a game that can be won once and for all. It brings its own backlashes. Whoever gained influence over legislative and executive powers, the American governments from Reagan to Clinton forgot the lessons of the Great Depression, when an exuberant market crashed disastrously through fraudulent manoeuvres by financial criminals and the shenanigans of managers of untransparent holding companies (see e.g. Galbraith, *The Great Crash* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954]). The Great Depression brought about the

biggest crisis of the Western world and ended in war and the strengthening of state power everywhere. In the USA, Roosevelt installed the Securities and Exchange Commission to supervise the stock exchange, and the rules that were enacted in the 1930s were designed to make the stock exchange more controllable, democratic and fair. The lesson from the Telecom Bubble, as Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz argues in his book *The Roaring Nineties* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), is to restore effective state regulation, under which markets are controllable and can work in a fair and democratic way.

Reinhard Blomert

Humboldt University, Berlin

■ MAARTEN BRANDS ON ELIAS'S *THE GERMANS*

Professor Maarten Brands gave the following lecture at the Goethe Institute in Amsterdam on 26 November 2003 to mark the publication of Bart Jonker's translation into Dutch of Elias's The Germans (Studies over de Duitsers: Machtsstrijd en habitus-ontwikkeling. Amsterdam: Boom, 2003). Maarten Brands was Professor of Modern History at the University of Amsterdam from 1970 to 1999, and first Director of the university's Duitsland Instituut from its foundation in 1996.

The advantage of not being quite so young any more is that over time one has met more than a few interesting people. I will not brag here that I have held elaborate discussions with Gorbachev, the Pope, the Dalai Lama, Mandela and others. I have not. But Norbert Elias is one of the most interesting people I have met. Not being a sociologist, I was able – easily and without irritation – to disagree with him seriously on many issues. Two subjects regularly surfaced in our conversations: the German Question and the tensions in the balance of power between the USA and the USSR. I will not discuss the second subject here; there is not much left of that balance.

But Germany is still very much existent and the age-old questions, 'Deutschland, wo liegt es politisch?' [Germany, what is its political situation?] and 'Was

heisst Deutsch?' [German, what does it mean?] are still very relevant; indeed, they seem to have eternal relevance. The continuity of breaks in modern German history vouches for that: 1871, 1918, 1933, 1945, 1949, 1990, 2003. If at any moment we thought we had reached an approximation of the answers to the questions just raised, then a new *Wende* (turn) in German history would immediately cut the ground from under these answers.

For Norbert Elias, Bismarck's Second Empire was the period of his youth, that overwhelming concentration of anachronisms with which German history in general is saturated. Did not Nietzsche already say of Germany that it was 'von Gestern' [yesterday's country], even 'von Vorgestern' [the day before yesterday's], 'oder von Übermorgen' [or the day after tomorrow's]? And did not Jay Winter label Germany 'the carrier of all the contradictions of "modernism"'? In his engrossing *Reflections on a Life*, Norbert describes and analyses that peculiar mixture of hypermodern elements existing alongside so many very feudal elements. The German Empire was a society in which birthright was of greater importance than money. For instance duelling by 'Schlagende Verbindungen' [student fighting fraternities] was very characteristic of the Wilhelminian empire in so far as it was concerned with honour and dishonour. That is, the duel characterised a social-strategic form of behaviour which had been widespread in the less pacified regions of earlier times, but which, restricted by a formalised ritual, was continuing into a more pacified society. In Germany the distance between formality and informality was clearly greater. Formal behaviour, Elias noted, was much more ostentatious there than in most Western European countries. On the other hand, however, the chances for informal lack of restraint were also greater. 'Military domination of Germany's still relatively undeveloped political structures kept classical humanistic values at bay. Ruling military elites ruled on the basis of a code of honour. Socialists, Jews and other outsiders were seen as lacking in honour and as a threat to the national ideal.'

Personal experiences certainly played their part in increasingly focusing Elias's attention at an early stage on what he came to describe as the problems of the monopoly of violence of the state and its effects on the collective behavioural changes in citizens – or rather, subjects – be it in a civilising or in a barbarising direction. Or should we add, as far as the Federal Republic is concerned, in a *re-civilising* direction, after the barbarism of Nazism? Elias himself did not yet have so much confidence in the development of the Federal Republic to speak of *re-civilisation*, as is clear from this book.

His own beautiful *Reflections on a Life* intertwines developments in Germany during its most turbulent period, the development of the social sciences, and his own personal development.

Norbert was born in the German, now Polish, town of Wrocław. He was an only child, a loner – perhaps even an *homo clausus*? He experienced moments of horrible loneliness. For a long time he must have felt a neglected genius, and that can be traumatising. Let us not beat about the bush: he was very conceited; he had messianistic ideas with regard to his own work; he wanted to become the Newton of the human sciences. With his broad education he felt competent to eliminate the fences and hedges that used to separate the old disciplines. He did not, incidentally, use the fashionable term 'interdisciplinary' for this labour of ground clearing. Not only was he in many respects an outsider, but he also cultivated his status as an outsider. He did not belong, and he also did not want to belong, to any one school, certainly not to any one discipline, one nation, one specific social group.

He excelled in texts connecting history and sociology, Marx and Freud, in a manner totally different from what Adorno and Horkheimer were doing. After all, he had found an Archimedean starting point in state formation. Placing such central importance on state formation has been called very German, very un-British. The German process of state formation, the decline of central authority, and the German 'Sonderweg' (Germany's own special

path of development) as regards the process of civilisation are the principal issues with which this book on the Germans deals. The theme at the core of this study is the question of why the process of civilisation was derailed in Germany. What caused the aversion from the West? Elias is a great advocate of the theory of the German 'Sonderweg' regarding the relationship between civilisation and barbarism: the great difference with Western Europe. It is for that reason that some reviewers have called this book about the Germans a supplement to his great work on the civilising process. The relationship between 'Fremdzwängen' and 'Selbstzwängen' [external constraints and self-constraints] was, according to Elias, strongly defined by that state formation. Germany took a direction different from Western Europe's. There was not enough time and not enough opportunity to develop that kind of self-control, that type of conscience, which enables individuals to keep themselves under control in conflicts with other groups. Germans only learned self-control under external constraint, by order from above. The personality structure of the Germans had been geared to an absolutist tradition which had continued undisturbed for centuries. In order to free itself from this authoritarianism a number of techniques had to be learned and a skill was needed which appealed strongly to one's independence and self-control and the ability to judge for oneself.

The period of German history from the Thirty Years War up to 1871 saw a lot of decline and elements of futility. German unity was imposed from above; it was not the result of a civic movement. Elias posed the central question: How would the fate of a nation in a centuries-long development like that affect the habitus of the subjects? In his work one of his aims was finally to vanquish the German fantasy of abstraction which had reached its pinnacle in German philosophy, with the disconnection between thought and hard reality. After all, the famous misery of German philosophy was that air was usually transported in leaden conceptions. In this respect Elias was far removed from Theodor Adorno, who in Norbert's view, despite all his

pretensions, had failed to escape the delusion of German idealism and a 'Jargon der (Un)Eigentlichkeit' [jargon of true and untrue reality]. Elias must have been very irritated by the attitude of Adorno, who, in spite of all his pessimism, seemed certain that in his work the 'Weltgeist' [world-spirit] would eventually come into itself, albeit in his 'Grandhotel Abgrund' [Grand Hotel Abyss].

In addition, there was the irritation about the eel-like dialectics of enlightenment of the so-called critical Frankfurters who had come to belong to the culture-industry of the future and who were all too uncritical towards their own criticism. Their self-complacency was evident in, among other things, the fact that they overlooked Elias's work. For instance, state-formation is absent from Adorno's famous work on the authoritarian personality. Norbert speaks of 'philosophoider Zweige der fragmentierten Soziologie' [philosophoidal branches of fragmented sociology]. In all of his work, Elias clearly distanced himself from such self-pollinating behaviour, from this German 'sickness of abstraction'. One effect of this may have been that he was so convinced of his own originality that he had extremely little interest in the very extensive modern historical literature on German history. Was he not interested, or did he fear contamination and loss of the uniqueness of his own views?

There was something Archimedean about him in this sense: do not confound my circles with further data and details. 'The originality of the analysis lies in the attention to the dynamic relation between the macro-level of state-formation and the micro-level of personality structure', wrote one reviewer. In general, Norbert did not have a high opinion of historical writing, in particular German historical writing, which in his eyes placed too much importance on official sources, too much emphasis on details, resulting in a neglect of long-term developments. He felt himself under no obligation at all to study this profuse literature on Germany.

Another explanation for this limited interest could be that Norbert's *magnum*

opus, which had appeared in 1939, had found little response because of the outbreak of the war. His attitude was generally one of 'Let them first take my message to heart. Then we will talk'. From literature everywhere he thought he could ascertain that his message had not yet been satisfactorily communicated, let alone understood ('process' instead of 'situation', the main developments in the civilising process, etc.).

A long time passed before Elias finally returned to Germany. Adorno and Horkheimer had preceded him by twenty years. Norbert's homecoming in Germany did not take place until the 1970s and 1980s. To him it was like taking a warm bath, albeit not without the occasional icy jets of cold water left over from the old regime. It was touching to see how much he could enjoy the warm reception in his own country – his fatherland – which had chased him away so violently. His late return to Germany meant that he managed to avoid the aggressive student revolts of the 1960s which sank Adorno. He filled a vacuum after the revolutionary storm that had raged in academic Germany and had caused so much demolition. However, coming home may have been beautiful, but to settle down and actually live there was a 'Wald' too far. Amsterdam was to be preferred.

Elias's reception in Germany was especially warm among students, who saw in him a uniting link with the better Germany of the Weimar Republic which had been brought to ruin so horribly. To this young generation of Germans, Elias was a living Classic; he belonged to the unblemished grandfather generation, and restored the link with great German traditions. So he was a re-civiliser of the purest water. As a consequence he devoted himself to profound conversations with the young generation who could not find a positive collective identity, who did not feel at home in the Federal Republic: the 'Heimat' was 'unheimisch' to them. Norbert knew all too well from his own experience what it meant to be displaced. ('The image of a nation experienced by an individual who forms part of that nation, is also constituent of that person's self-image' – *The Germans*, p. 151).

On this, Elias's assistant Michael Schröter wrote: 'Freud and Marx thus became the fixed stars in our firmament precisely because their books had been burnt, and the adepts of their teachings had been banished or murdered. And the banishment had even continued – in the Adenauer era, when both these German speaking classics' works were forbidden food.

To connect to them seemed to be the solution to an insoluble dilemma: it founded a national continuity, bridging over the breakdown of 1933, and symbolised restoration. Elias, Jew and survivor from Weimar, for me, jumped into the historical father gap, as Adorno and Plessner did elsewhere' (*Erfahrungen mit Norbert Elias*, 1997, p. 271).

Elias took his understanding for the lack of orientation of this young generation so far that he even had some understanding – albeit with clear limitations – for the terrorist extremists, though he sharply disapproved of their methods. He saw the Red Army Fraction as an explosion of German absolutist culture in which everything had to be subordinated to theory. In Germany, this behaviour was associated with a traditional culture of hatred, of which Bismarck had been a great teacher; he really had been a great hater. Chancellors Brandt and Schmidt, in Red Army Fraction perspective, were both seen as traitors. Elias's condemnation of the Red Army Fraction is clear from, among other things, his comparison of this terrorist group with the Nazis. According to Elias, both believed that 'victims are not human beings; they are symbols in the framework of a theory'.

The Germans is not a chronological account, nor is it a 'history of Germany for beginners'. It is a collection of essays, an 'Ergänzungsband' [supplementary volume] to his large *oeuvre*. The book itself is clearly a 'process', and as such – by definition – unfinished. It is work under construction. The author spent a long time working on it and one can get a good insight into the way he worked from the lengthy additions in the footnotes, for example. The most interesting part of this collection of essays deals with the German tradition of authoritarianism at its height during the era of the Emperor

Wilhelm – a period which the author experienced first-hand. The behavioural constraint of the German bourgeoisie – still very much in existence even today – is the main theme.

It is understandable that Norbert's interpretation of Nazism was guided by a strong emphasis on continuity: he describes Nazism as an extreme extension of the authoritarian tradition, even though the Nazi movement was actually also a negation of this, as he himself admits from time to time. Significant in this piece is also his well-known dislike of person-orientated explanations. Notice how little attention he pays to the innovative political 'medicine man' – as he calls Hitler. By contrast, in the more sociologically orientated historical literature of today, it is exactly this charisma of 'der grosse Trommler' [the great drummer] that is placed centre stage in order to explain the totalitarian revolution of Nazism, this extraordinary caesura in German history.

The piece about the Federal Republic stands out because the author had very little confidence – even in the 1960s – in the grand restructuring of the Federal Republic. His emphasis remains strongly on continuity with earlier authoritarian regimes; he still seems unable to believe that the big break (with the past) which the Federal Republic experienced under Chancellor Adenauer is real and tenable – a process steered from outside and from above, away from German authoritarian absolutism; a democratisation, westernisation, an end to the 'Sonderweg' which Elias thought was evident as a continuous thread running through Germany's history. However, history often features multiple continuities. German history has not just one line of continuity but many. The French–German reconciliation, European integration – they all fall outside his field of vision. And it is precisely this integration that produced a clear break with the past and introduced a post-nationalist development.

Norbert's conspicuous pessimism about the future of the Federal Republic can be seen as characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s, when this piece was written. Perhaps he was not yet sufficiently detached from those years when he

wrote it. Indeed, it was not until the 1970s that the 'digestion' of the Nazi past got properly under way. On this difficult subject Elias wrote: 'Much has been said about coming to terms with the past. But it is quite clear that this has only been repressed and in no way overcome. To speak about it is certainly not easy. I realise that by doing so, one is touching an open wound in the we-consciousness of the Germans. But precisely because it has not healed it is necessary to talk about it – not in order to accuse, but as a prelude to the attempt to explain the temporary breakdown of human civilisation in Germany' (*The Germans*, p. 429)

But in one respect Elias was definitely right: Germany remains a difficult fatherland where the experience of a positive 'we-feeling' is still lacking for many people. For myself, while I was in Berlin this past year, I noticed again and again what it means for Germans not to have an obvious fatherland, and how the post-war generation of students saw Europe as a substitute for this. It is much less so now: Europe seems to have lost that role for the present generation of students.

'A disintegration of the Federal Republic or its transformation into a dictatorial regime' might still be possible, according to Elias. That pessimism goes a bit too far. There is yet another explanation for Elias's negative opinion of the Federal Republic. His return to Germany in later life and his many contacts with the younger, critical generation, led him to join with them in their fierce rejection of the Federal Republic which in their view had gone astray. Was it not, however, exactly this same newly-established republic that wanted to break radically with so many long-term trends from German history, which wanted to abolish the German 'Sonderweg' through reconciliation with the West, and which abandoned the dangerous ideology of 'Mitte Europas' [at the heart of Europe]?

As mentioned before, Norbert was not the only one to have such a negative opinion. The philosopher Habermas admitted much later that he too had been very slow to realise the great positive change that the autocratic Adenauer

had brought about in modern German history. The fact that Norbert did not foresee the unification of the two Germanies can be explained in the same way. Even in the 1980s, many West German writers and historians even considered such a unification to be undesirable. And it is not as if there is not enough democracy in the Federal Republic. In fact there are rather too many elections, which can give rise to political gridlock. The Länder, originally intended to diffuse power, now often create a barrier to the decision-making process. Democratisation can lead to stagnation in this large country with its enormous differences, where there is still a great lack of a tradition of doing things together and at the same time. Expectations with respect to the state and government authorities are also still far too high in Germany. To lessen the influence of the many authorities is thus a laborious process.

The same can be said for the strong formalism that still exists: rules and regulations are still of great consequence. They seem more important than the hard reality. A remarkable abstractionism/absolutism also remains, and as a result there is a cramped quality of mind and behaviour. Elias speaks of the 'informalisierung Spanne' [informalisation span], seen for example in the persistence of using 'Sie' instead of 'du' (the formal instead of the informal mode of addressing people) even in so-called informal company. (And let me add that there are still elements of style and discipline in Germany that have all but vanished in Holland.) There is a lack of flexibility and adaptability, and an inability to improvise in circumstances that are totally different now – notably when confronting the problems posed by unification. A good example of the present situation is that the city of Berlin has been bankrupt for years now, but the level of public services is still considerably higher than in the Netherlands. There is still widespread fear of reforms necessitated by economic recession. There is endless talk – 'Zerreden' – and a great gap between the wealth of words and dearth of actions. We don't hear much about the 'Angstkartell' [conspiracy of fear], unfortunately, even though it could have been an obvious topic for Elias.

(Fear of change is a central factor; another one is the fact of having long been pampered.)

A current form of this formalism can be found in the fact that international law still tends to be perceived as a system of laws and rules that is inflexible, universal, and beyond question. This German 'Friedenselbstgefälligkeit' [feeling of complacency about peace], where there is a serious lack of thinking in terms of freedom, is characteristic of German discussions this year [2003].

The Federal Republic became a successful democracy thanks to 'Aussenzwang' [external constraint]. Is 'Aussenzwang' needed again now in order to achieve real change? Doing things 'under their own steam' is not enough, apparently. Rights that can no longer be claimed are still compulsively adhered to. The big question now is to what extent, on the basis of 'Selbstzwang' [self-constraint], these very radical reforms can be carried through politically, socially and economically, within the democratic system.

In summary, this book contains lovely vignettes of aspects of German history, for instance the duel. It draws vividly on personal experiences. Elias perceives 'Doppelbinderprozesse' [double-bind processes] in many places and 'Doppelbinder-Beziehung' (pp. 294, 344) – double bind – is a favourite core concept in his arsenal of concepts.

The book makes the advantages and disadvantages of long-term perspectives very obvious. They help to show the continuity of the 'breaks' in German history, and its varied lines of continuity. The caesura of the Federal Republic is sometimes underestimated. At the moment it is more the tough rigidity of the structures which dominates, and this makes it very difficult to bring about change.

As mentioned before, the swing in favour of the Federal Republic is rather underestimated here, unless the EU – by disintegrating and re-nationalisation – were at some point in the future to entice Germany to return to a 'Sonderweg'. (Fortunately it doesn't look like that yet, despite Chancellor Schröder's

experimenting with a German 'own way' – and here we shall have to wait and see what the results will be.)

Finally I would say: read this book, if only to see more clearly that history continues to play a very strong part, even in today's Europe. In no way does Europeanisation mean that everything will become increasingly homogenised: it also accentuates the differences, certainly in a big country like Germany. The book shows clearly how tough and enduring patterns of collective acting and thinking can be.

■ ELIAS'S FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY AND ITS RECEPTION INTO ITALIAN SOCIOLOGY.

This article presents a brief overview of the writings of Italian researchers who have dealt with Norbert Elias's work and drawn upon it in their own research.

Flaminio Squazzoni is a careful commentator upon Elias's sociology. His most prominent contribution on Elias is his essay 'La Sociologia morfogenetica e processuale di Norbert Elias: modelli, configurazioni e dimensioni dell'intreccio sociale' (2000). It focuses on the two original aspects of his revolutionary approach to sociological research methodology. Criticising Parsons's structural-functionalism, the article is basically an appraisal of Elias's perspective on the study of social phenomena. Squazzoni argues that the focus has to be on their processual aspect, with changes in social structures being determined by and determining the ever changing intertwining in patterns of social relationships. Moreover, he highlights Elias's double-edged perspective on such dynamics, which needs to encompass both diachronic and synchronic perspectives on social change.

'Figurations', intended to be the conceptual representation of the inextricable relationship between such interweaving and social action, are framed in a 'literary' perspective by Marcello Strazzeri (2003), who interprets it through examples drawn from the narratives of outstanding Italian authors (Verga, De Roberto, Pirandello, Tomasi di Lampedusa, Sciascia). The develop-

mental and synthetic perspective also permeates the collection of essays on Elias edited by Prof. Strazzeri (2000), with pieces by Alessandro Cavalli, Umberto Cerroni, Mariano Longo, Bruno Benvenuti, Donato Margarito, Johan Goudsblom, and Francesco Pardi.

In all these works, the emphasis is on Elias's approach as a sharp break with the 'linear approaches' to investigation in traditional studies. That criticism also inspires Carlo Mongardini (1991), whose essay is an appraisal of the sociologist's developmental and synthetic perspective on society. The same goes for Simonetta Tabboni, whose monograph *Norbert Elias: Un ritratto intellettuale* (1993), is an in-depth analysis of the social construction of 'power' as the outcome of the ongoing interweaving of social structures and social actors operating on them. She presents an historical framework for the development of the court society, as well as for the theory of the 'established' and the 'outsiders'.

These aspects of Elias's work also inspire Franco Crespi (1999), and underlie the review symposium in *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* (1985) by A. Roversi, C. Rossetti, S. Bertelli, and G. Calvi, where Roversi provides biographical data on Elias, Rossetti refers to figurations as Elias's key concept in an history-based research methodology and the others discuss his theory of cultural models.

Elias's political insight is stressed by E. Resta (1986), who deals with the crisis of political aggregation, drawing upon Elias's attack on unique 'factors' as the legacy of relativistic studies in sociology.

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■ DEVELOPING SPACES FOR CHILDREN

In developing spaces for children to learn about the world we live in, where should we begin? We seldom consider how children experience the spaces they are expected to inhabit – young children rarely make choices about the classroom environment, or decide which activity is the most important. In this article, I want to suggest that there are different aspects to the concept of space, each of them relevant and important. Let's begin by looking at children's own use of space, and how this can be built upon for teaching activities. Pahl (1999) describes the way in which children in a nursery setting use space not only to express their awareness of forms and shapes, but changes to their own body shapes. Such a preoccupation with body-space manifests itself by drawing around feet, or mapping the contours of the classroom by running around the tables and chairs. She noted that children drew playgrounds, or walks they had been on, as extensions of their experience of movement through time and space.

In a similar context, the developmental movement founded by Veronica Sherborne (2001) is based upon children feeling at home with their bodies in secure and friendly relationships. Her techniques encourage children to develop good body and spatial awareness by sharing movement experiences with others. Personal confidence and positive relationships are developed by exploring the various aspects of spatial dimensions: in, on, under, over, through, behind, in front and out can be experienced in movement by co-operation with partners or groups. Whole body movement involving the free flow of weight is also considered to have a harmonious and calming effect on children. This can be experienced by rolling on the floor and in forms of bouncing – for example, on a trampoline, children can feel the full weight of the body against the bed of the trampoline and learn to use weight in a positive way.

Play Spaces

Where do children have opportunities to get together to 'do their own thing', to mess or hang about? On the margins of the adult world, play is an important activity where children develop their own unique peer friendships. But in an urban environment is it sufficient to increase the number of parks and playgrounds? Do these reinforce the idea that adults and children should live in separate worlds? In many European cities, children's spontaneous play in the streets has been replaced by car-dependent, adult supervised games that are formally organised and distant from the local neighbourhood. In these situations of spatially demarcated play, parents have to exercise more duty and control. However, this demarcation has not taken place in other European countries. For example, in Sweden children can be found playing in the school grounds and in the local woods, with no clear boundaries between them. And in Denmark, there has also been a recent expansion of forest kindergartens, where young children, accompanied by their teachers, can go into the local countryside.

But how can we begin to reclaim city streets as a play space for children? One particularly effective strategy has been

traffic calming, which includes a range of initiatives designed to reduce the volume and speed of traffic. The techniques include changes in road surface, paved streets, speed humps, changes in direction, street planning and chicanes, all used to support reduced speeds of 15 km per hour or lower. A good example of the way in which these techniques can work is the *woonerf*, or street yards, introduced in the Netherlands in the mid-1970s. They incorporated new designs that took away the division between pavements and carriage ways, encouraging the idea that the *woonerf* was a shared street – children were able to play everywhere and pedestrians were allowed to use the whole street, as long as they did not hinder cars.

Spaces in between – Listening and Learning

For Moss and Petrie (2002) the concept of a children's space does not just imply a *physical* space, in terms of a particular setting or environment for different groups of children. It is also intended to convey a social space where meanings are kept open for adults and children, a place for wonder and amazement, curiosity and fun. In this alternative view of childhood, children's questions are taken seriously by pedagogues who are themselves open to listening and learning from children:

Listening to thought is not the spending of time in the production of an autonomous subject, or an autonomous body of knowledge. Rather it is to think besides each other and to explore an open network of obligations that keeps the question of meaning open as a locus for debate. Doing justice to thought means trying to hear that which cannot be said but which tries to make itself heard (Readings, 1997: 158, 165).

In learning encounters, this interpersonal relationship is based on mutuality and reciprocity – children are partners in the co-construction of knowledge with adults and other children. An 'ethics of care' can open up the possibility that children would be treated as unique others, rather than as instruments to be exchanged in predetermined outcomes. However, it is also important to consider how the affective or emotional aspects of learning pro-

cesses that take place in the relations between adults and children change over time. These ethical encounters do not happen outside society, but are historically influenced by the structure of relations between adults and children.

In a long-term trend from the Middle Ages, there has emerged in European societies a growing psychological and bodily distance between adults and children, one that makes it increasingly difficult to 'dissolve' these differences by more democratic learning relationships. Adults 'grow up' and erect emotional barriers between themselves, their own children and other children. As the degree of self-control exercised by adults increased, children have to learn more to become acceptable members of society. Today children have only a few years to reach the advanced level of 'shame, revulsion and knowledge that has developed over many centuries' (Elias, 2000). It is therefore wishful thinking to suppose that these barriers can be eradicated between generations, and more realistic to assume that the outer layers can be slowly challenged and overcome in attempts to form new learning partnerships.

Community Spaces – Children Organising for the World

How can we begin to understand the experiences of children throughout the world? Children are 40% of the world's population, which is the largest generation of children in history. Yet in 2001, almost 160 million children under five were undernourished (White, 2001). In a message delivered from the Children's Forum to the Special Session on Children at the United Nations General Assembly, two child delegates made it clear who the world's children were: victims of exploitation and abuse, street children, child soldiers, victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS, children without any access to education and health care, and those facing economic, cultural, religious, and environmental discrimination. In such an oppressive environment, can children influence their communities?

A good example of children organising themselves on a democratic basis was the establishment of a Children's Parliament in rural Rajasthan, a semi-arid

state in North West India, one of the country's poorest regions with a population of 45 million. The Children's Parliament is unique because children exercise power by persuading adults to accept their view of reality. It emerged from the growth of night schools, a cooperative development between the villagers and the Barefoot College about how to best provide a relevant education that did not alienate children from their surroundings. In the night schools, there was a strong emphasis on environmental education, learning from doing rather than formal classroom instruction. The traditional teacher-pupil relationship was restructured into a joint teaching experience, in which everyone can teach and learn.

Conclusion

In this article, I have presented some of the important aspects of space that are perhaps overlooked when trying to teach children about the world in which they live. Professional pressures and anxieties that stem from the delivery of the National Curriculum and Foundation Stage do not always allow teachers a breathing space to step back and consider more carefully how children are using different spaces. Children's early drawing of shapes and the movement techniques developed by Sherborne show that their experience of moving can help to bring about a greater awareness of their own body movements and encourage personal friendships. But we also need to be aware that these bonding relationships take place in a modern society where it is increasingly difficult for children to find spaces to play with their peers. Moreover, opportunities for playful exploration of thoughts between teachers and children have been further reduced by narrow instrumental views of education that emphasise prescribed outcomes. In turning our attention to the global aspects of children's spaces, we should be inspired by the Barefoot College in India, where children have organised themselves into democratic learning communities.

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■ **CHILDBIRTH AND THE CIVILISING PROCESS**

No, this isn't a report of a study of inter-generational changes in social standards governing yet another bodily function. Rather it is a story of the proselytising zeal of Eric Dunning, and will astonish all those who – whatever their devotion to Elias's work – never thought of *The Civilising Process* as light bedtime reading. But let Anita Naoko Pilgrim, who is Deputy Director of the Centre for Social and Evaluation Research at London Metropolitan University, tell the tale in her own words:

'When I fell pregnant with our baby, my partner persuaded me to move up to Leicester to live with him. One of his main inducements was a promise to introduce me to Eric, whom I was keen to meet as I have an interest in football research. Finally he managed to sort out the promised meeting – on the night before the due date of our baby's delivery. Unfortunately I couldn't drink very much but my partner and Eric kindly made up for this. It was a good thing the baby took another ten days as my partner spent most of the due date recovering from a formidable wine and jazz evening!

Eric had of course mentioned *The Civilising Process*, making me promise to read only the edition revised in 2000.

Contrary to the midwives' promises (don't panic when the contractions start, have a warm bath, eat a light meal), our

baby started coming quite rapidly and we had to leave for hospital in such a rush that we forgot some vital things. The list I gave my partner to bring in next day included fresh fruit and *The Civilising Process*, which I used to enjoy reading while our new baby slept in her bassinette beside me.'

Next time they are hospital visiting and looking for a soothing gift, readers may wish to bear in mind this original aid to recuperation.

■ ELIAS'S POEMS AND APHORISMS PUBLISHED IN GESAMMELTE SCHRIFTEN

Volume 18 of the Norbert Elias Gesammelte Schriften, *Gedichte und Sprüche* [Poems and Aphorisms] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004. 144 pp. ISBN: 3-518-58386-7.) has now been published. It was edited by Sandra Goetz, who writes:

'There are', said Elias, 'human experiences and deeper insights that you can put into words more clearly and convincingly by a work of art, especially in a poem, than in a scientific essay.' Only a few people were aware that Elias was referring to his own lyrical production in his response on receiving the Theodor W. Adorno Preis back in 1977. His unexpected success when he gave a reading of some of his own poems in a bookstore in Frankfurt encouraged Elias to publish some of them from time to time in various



newspapers and magazines. A book of his poetry was published by Suhrkamp Verlag in 1987, under the title *Los der Menschen: Gedichte/Nachdichtungen*. The new edition, *Gedichte und Sprüche*, has been expanded by the inclusion of 30 poems which, although published before, had been scattered among different newspapers or books. The foreign-language poems (English and French) are translated for the first time into German. The lyrical *oeuvre* shows us the great range of Norbert Elias. And it gives us a hint how much his biography was interwoven to his life, his *magnum opus* and his virtues. Elias was somehow fearful to specify the dates of origin of his poetry. Pursuing the 'when' question nevertheless, further research has been able to throw interesting light on Elias's working process. An example: The poem 'Vom Sehen über die Natur' had been published for the first time 1921 in the *Blau-Weißen-Blättern*. The specialness of this specific poem is seen through the context of the publishing status: It is a kind of introduction to the essay 'Über die Natur' in itself. Interestingly, there exists a didactic poem written by Parmenides (540–480 BC) that bears the title 'Über die Natur'. This connection is not a coincidence. Poetry draws its life from many different forms and aspects of the world, in measures, rhythm or even role models of certain topics like 'nature'. It seems that Elias had had many more role models for his topics in poetry and his prosaic academic work than he commonly admitted. Nevertheless, the poetry of Elias shows us a specific quality of language that is evident in his scientific essays as well: 'Die schöne deutsche Sprache, hat vielerlei Musik ...' [the beautiful German language has a lot of different melodies ...]

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■ SEMINAR IN AMSTERDAM

PhD students of the Amsterdam School of Social Research have taken the initiative in organising a three-day seminar on figurational sociology from 21-23 December. During this short intensive course for PhD students developments in figurational sociology and its applications will be discussed, as well as critique on figurational sociology, and its future in Amsterdam.

For more information contact Ward Berenschot, e-mail
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■ RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Steven Loyal and Stephen Quilley, eds, *The Sociology of Norbert Elias*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. x + 289 pp. ISBN: 0-521-82786-8 (hardback); 0-521-53509-3 (paperback).

The purpose of this book is to summarise the 'Eliasian' point of departure and to extend the reach of the figurational perspective. The first part of the book, 'Sociology as a human science: Norbert Elias and the sociology of knowledge', has contributions by Kilminster, Quilley and Barnes. Kilminster explains Elias's writings on involvement and detachment and gives some comments. One of his concluding remarks really surprised me. That is his suggestion of the emergence of a kind of 'controlled decontrolling of social controls' (R.S.) in the standards of detachment of younger sociologists, that would disconcert older sociologists, who cling more inflexible to standards of detachment. In my experience most young sociologists cling more firmly to standards of detachment than ever. That is the reason they turn away from qualitative studies of long-term processes and prefer the strict measurement of variables connected with ahistorically formulated problems, often phrased in terms of rational action theory. In Quilley's discussion of biology and sociology in Elias's works, it is interesting to read that for Quilley, it is not Elias's *The Civilising Process* but his book on involvement and detachment that is his major source of inspiration. However, I would say that he takes Elias's main point in that book a few steps too far. Elias's idea is that the abil-

ity to control natural phenomena and the detachment to observe and explain these phenomena developed together in a virtuous spiral. Quilley now states that humans have reached such a level of understanding and control of nature that the anthroposphere has come to contain the biosphere, that ecological and evolutionary biological processes increasingly take place within the constraints established by human development and social processes. The word 'hubris' came to my mind after I read that statement. Even the experience of daily weather changes should be enough to stop thinking this way, not to speak of earthquakes, typhoons and volcanic eruptions. Barnes discusses Elias's work on time. This is a fascinating but difficult subject, yet, as far as I can judge, Barnes puts the problems involved in Elias view on time as an institutionalised social construction well. How is this construction related to more intuitive senses of sequence, duration and speed and how does his view relate to the four-dimensional space/time continuum of the natural scientists?

The second part of the book deals with 'Processes of stratification: figurations of race, class and gender', with contributions by Dunning, Wacquant, Loyal and Brinkgreve; the third part, 'The formation of individuals and states' has contributions from Mennell, Kapteyn, Wouters, Pratt and Scheff. Most of these contributions concern long-term developments of various kinds: class (Loyal), gender (Brinkgreve), state-formation in America (Mennell), state co-operation (Kapteyn), informalisation (Wouters) and penal development

(Pratt). All these contributions have one weakness in common, that is that they do not refer at all, or only superficially, to the established state of knowledge on its subject in the social sciences. Because they do not stipulate the weak points, unsolved problems or false views in the existing knowledge, it is hard to judge in what sense they do contribute to our knowledge. One can read these chapters and like or dislike them, but it is not possible to judge in what sense they extend the reach of the figurational perspective or in what sense an extension enlarges our knowledge. On this point Dunning's chapter on race-relations in America is an exception. However this is, as he acknowledges himself, a rather outdated article. I don't understand why he did not contribute an article on sport. In view of his and Elias's contributions to the sociology of sport, the absence of this subject in the book is an omission. Wacquant, in his critique on the concept of 'under-



Loïc Wacquant brandishes a copy of the new book

class', as an ideological idea that functions to accentuate the otherness of the black ghetto sub-proletariat, does relate his viewpoint to that of other scholars, although not very convincingly. Especially after having read *Random Family* (Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, Scribner 2003), one understands that growing up in the ghetto situation leads to specific personality structures that are different from those of people who have been socialised in more stable circumstances. One would not expect otherwise if one takes Elias's ideas on the relations between socio- and psychogenesis seriously. Wacquant seems to deny this relation between social and personality structures. What I liked in Scheff's article on shame as the master emotion in the works of Elias, Freud and Goffman was that he presents this as a discovery. For those who have known Elias's work since the 1970s, this is not a big surprise. However, Scheff's enthusiasm demonstrates how far conventional and figurational sociologists are separated.

The last part of the book, 'Religion and civilising processes: Weber and Elias compared' has contributions by Bryan S. Turner and Johan Goudsblom. As far as I understand Turner, he treats religion as an autonomous force that enabled warriors (knights, Cheyenne Indians) to perform charismatic actions. According to Turner, Elias did not recognise this enabling power of religion. The book closes with a remarkable article from Goudsblom. Remarkable, because he qualifies Elias's well-known statement about the absence of civilising effects of religion: 'There can be no doubt that what we now classify as religious forces have at times exerted a strong pressure towards socially induced self-restraint.' However, I don't think this brings him into agreement with Turner. For Turner the sacred seems to have an existence of its own, independent of society.

It was a pleasure to read this book. However to prove their worth, figurational sociologists should identify more precisely the weak points of other approaches, and point out how they themselves can do better.

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Sjo Soeters, *Geweld en conflict: Het ontstaan en verloop van burgeroorlogen, etnische strid en terrorisme*. [The Origin and Dynamics of Civil Wars, Ethnic Contention and Terrorism] Amsterdam: Boom, 2004. 143 pp. ISBN: 90-5352-987-X.

Joseph Soeters teaches at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy at Breda and at the University of Tilburg. In his concise and highly focused book, he aims to understand the origin and dynamics of so-called intra-national conflicts, such as Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Corsica, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and many other countries throughout the world. (The cover photograph is from Liberia, of a patrol of young *women* carrying assault rifles – I did a double take when I first saw it, because the guns trigger the unconscious expectation that they will be carried by young *men*.) Soeters also tries to decipher the backgrounds of recent terrorist attacks such as 9/11, and those in Moscow, Bali, Casablanca and Istanbul (he was writing before the Madrid bombs).

The book is divided into two parts, dealing with long-term 'macro' processes and short-term 'micro' processes. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, each of nine chapters deals with a process discussed by social scientists. Chapter 4, on 'Violence as lack of emotional control', or 'violence and decivilisation', is obviously rather Eliasian; but several of the other chapters are figurational in spirit, dealing with group boundaries, group identities and stereotyping, failing states, and the rational and irrational elements in the organisation of violence.

SJM

Newton Tim, 'Credit networks and civilisation': *British Journal of Sociology* 54(3) 2003: 347–72.

This paper analyses financial credit in order to re-examine the work of Norbert Elias, particularly his association of interdependency complexity with social discipline, and his approach to contradiction. Following a discussion of these issues, the paper examines Eli-

as's writing on money and explores the emergence of financial credit networks in early modern England. Attention is paid to credit networks and social discipline, to credit and the state, and to the contradictory images associated with the transition to modern cash economies. From one perspective, early modern credit networks might be read as a confirmation of Elias, particularly his argument that interdependency complexity, changing power balances and self-restraint are interwoven. Yet the development of modern cash money raises questions, not just in relation to Elias's treatment of money, but also with regard to his assumptions about social discipline and his approach to ambivalence and contradiction. Drawing on the foregoing discussion, the paper argues that the relation between interdependency complexity and social discipline is contingent and variable, and that interdependency complexity may *simultaneously* encourage contradictory processes, such as those of civilising and barbarity.

Tim Newton, 'Creating the New Ecological Order? Elias and Actor-Network Theory', *Academy of Management Review* 27 (4): 523–40.

This article provides a critique of current work on the 'greening' of organisations especially work based on 'ecocentric' argument. I question the meaning of 'nature' and use studies of the sociology of order and networks to debate the assumptions of current 'green' discourse and its normative rationales. I advance an interdependency network perspective, applying it to the greening of organisations, green technologies, and issues of globalisation, and I argue that this perspective offers an alternative theoretical rationale and a potential basis for future research.

Tim Newton, 'Crossing the Great Divide: Time, Nature and the Social'. *Sociology*, 37 (3), 2003: 433–57

Abstract: This article addresses perceived difference in temporal pace within nature and considers how epistemological debate is conditioned by such difference, drawing on the work of Norbert Elias. The first part of the article debates the equivalence of 'natu-

ral time' and 'social time'. The acceleration of human social pace is also explored, along with the human capacity for plasticity and change, and the contrast which such plasticity presents in relation to the seeming longevity of many natural processes. The epistemological implications of these arguments are considered in the second part of the article, focusing on the difficulties which human plasticity creates for current social theory (with particular attention to *critical realism*). In the final part of the article, the foregoing discussion is used to re-evaluate sociologies of nature through reference to the sociology of the body.

Earl Hopper, *Traumatic Experience in the Unconscious Life of Groups - The Fourth Basic Assumption: Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification or (ba) I: A/M*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003. 240 pp. ISBN: 1-84310-087-8.

Earl Hopper, *The Social Unconscious: Selected Papers*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003. 223 pp. ISBN: 1-84310-088-6.

Earl Hopper has not just been a practitioner of group analysis in the Foulkesian (and Eliasian) tradition. He has also worked as a sociologist in the company of Elias and Giddens at Leicester. Despite the odd reference to Elias, one would not suspect such connections from a reading of these two volumes.

In the first volume under review, Hopper seeks to extend Bion's three basic assumptions of group life (Bion, 1961). All work groups, i.e. groups that are organised rationally around the completion of certain concrete tasks, are also subject, especially under regression, to the operation of a number of basic irrational forces: dependency, flight/fight and pairing. These are Bion's 'basic assumptions' (*ba* 1-3). Hopper claims to have come up with a fourth basic assumption: *Incohesion*. Whereas the first three basic assumptions may be construed as forces of integration, albeit pathological, the fourth *ba* is about what happens when these strategies fail. What happens when a group is threatened with annihilation? Thus is Hopper's *ba* 'Incohesion' interpolated. All processes of societal regression, including Elias's famous decivilisation, are included by Hopper.

A work group devoid of basic assumptions represents optimal cohesion or heterogeneity characterised by role differentiation based on mutual interdependence between group members. The emergence of any of the basic assumption means that a group has regressed, and that its work group is under threat. However, the emergence of *Incohesion* indicates that the survival of the group itself is seen to be threatened. The main defence against annihilation is encapsulation, i.e. the loss of a capacity for genuine contact and intercourse with other human beings. This has certain consequences.

Under *Incohesion* a group will oscillate between the two polar states of Aggregation and Massification, hence '(ba) I: A/M'. An aggregate is characterised by a minimal level of mutual involvement and attraction between members of a group. Appropriate metaphors would be: a pile of sand or gravel, a set of billiard balls, and so on. A mass involves the illusion of a maximum of mutual involvement and attraction i.e. a false and chimerical solidarity. Metaphors would be a lump of dough or a bundle of burning candles bound together by the mass of melted hot wax that settles and congeals between them.

An aggregate is obviously highly incohesive. Despite appearances so too is the mass. In fact a mass is like an aggregate masquerading as a group. Both states are highly unstable. For instance, in order to protect against the difficulties and anxieties involved in massification, a social system will shift back towards aggregation. When attained the difficulties and anxieties associated with this state will emerge thus inaugurating a drift back towards massification, and so on.

Incohesion is manifested in patterns of interaction, normation and communication, as well as in styles of thinking and feeling and in styles of leadership and followership. The author discusses at length how individual groups members enact and deal with processes of *Incohesion*, firstly through his theory of *personification* and then through detailed case studies. Groups under the sway of *Incohesion* are populated by contact-shunning *crustacean* and

merger-hungry *amoeboid* characters incapable of normal human contact and interaction. Both types are elaborated upon and illustrated in some detail. The oscillatory pattern at the heart of *Incohesion* is also illustrated in some depth by a clinical vignette drawn from Hopper's work with a group of childhood survivors of the Shoah.

It is difficult for a non-expert such as myself to evaluate Hopper's claim to have made an addition to Bion's set of basic assumptions. To this end the author has usefully included reviews and commentaries from a number of eminent peers and colleagues. It would seem that there may be something in what Hopper proposes after all, although some clarification of its relation to Nitsun's idea of the 'anti-group' would be welcome (Nitsun, 1996).

As Richard Billow remarks, the fourth *ba* is no small clinical utility. But what of its sociological import? According to Malcolm Pines the sociological vector is given already in the fourth *ba*. Well yes and no. Treatments in his *Selected Papers* include psychodynamic aspects of supervisory style in industrial settings, the sociodynamics of large group formations, the role of social and political context in therapeutic groups as well as reflections of a professional and personal nature. All useful and interesting stuff. Unfortunately, Hopper's experience with the fourth *ba* never gets much beyond the confines of the consulting room, except for the odd bout of industrial consulting.

The theory of '(ba) I:A/M' is highly redolent of Scheff's social bond thinking (Scheff, 1990, 1997) that one is immediately alerted to synergistic possibilities. Compared with experience among traumatised groups on the part of practitioners like Volkan or even the IIPSS team in Ireland, however, Hopper's sociological ground is very thin indeed. This is evident in the papers represented in the second volume. Hopper never really gets beyond the restrictions of the clinical vignette.

Having said that, Hopper must be credited for his work with Shoah survivors and for bringing the survivor syndrome to the light of day. Similarly, his parting

warning of an encroaching ‘oversocialised’ approach to the group is timely. Despite its limitations an enduring feature of Hopper’s whole style and approach is how he has steered between the Scylla of the individual focus, and the Charybdis of the group, however unsatisfactory this has been judged by later writers. At least he still saw the value of the individual in the context of the matrix, as Foulkes did, and did not throw the baby out with the bathwater (Dalal, 1998).

The psycho-social study of traumatised large groups has taken giant strides beyond Hopper’s genteel middle-class English settlements – deepened by contact with real struggle (Stokes, Elliott and Bishop, 2004; Volkan, 2004) and broadened by engagement with the latest cross-disciplinary contributions to theory and research (Mennell *et al.*, [forthcoming]). Hopper’s work is redolent of a past age and already much of it has a rather dated feel about it. The cloistered environment of British psychoanalysis has taken its toll. We live in a new world now. As they say in Hopper’s own home country, these people ought to get out more.

Paul Stokes
University College Dublin

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Joseph Maguire, ‘Globalisation and the Making of Modern Sport’, *Sportwissenschaft: The German Journal of Sports Science* 34 (1) 2004: 7–20.

Joe Maguire concludes his essay as follows: ‘It is possible to overstate the extent to which the west has triumphed in terms of global sports structures, organisations, ideologies and performances. Non-western cultures resist and reinterpret western sports and maintain, foster and promote, on a global scale, their own indigenous recreational pursuits. While the speed, scale and volume of sports development is interwoven with the broader global flows of people, technology, finance, images and ideologies that are controlled by the west, in the longer term it is possible to detect signs that this is also leading to the decentring of the west in a variety of contexts. Sports may be no exception. By adopting a multi-causal, multi-directional analysis that examines both homogeneity and heterogeneity, researchers will be better placed to examine the global cultural commingling that is taking place. The meaning, control and organisation of sports has become increasingly contested, with different civilisational blocs challenging both nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions regarding the content, meaning, control, organisation and ideology of sport. The study of sport allows us to highlight some important aspects of this global human condition.’

Daniel Bloyce, ‘The Globalisation of Baseball: A Figurational Analysis’. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2004.

Abstract: This thesis examines the extent of the diffusion of baseball across the world. Tracing the diffusion of baseball, and the diverse receptions the game has encountered on foreign

soils, it holds out the prospect of offering many insights into the global spread of sport and our understanding of the processes of globalisation in general. By examining different responses to baseball, and developing our empirical knowledge on the extent of its diffusion, we will be in a position to draw more reliable and valid conclusions than have, thus far, been offered in relation to the global diffusion of baseball specifically, and globalisation processes more generally. The thesis endeavours to determine the extent to which baseball can be regarded as a global sport. This objective will involve charting the development of baseball in America, its diffusion to other countries and the different receptions the game has received on foreign soil, *via* a series of national case studies.

Given the magnitude of global diffusion processes, it is hardly surprising that its study has attracted the attention of academics from a number of disciplines and orientations. This particular thesis tests the figurational approach, assessing the adequacy of this approach in being able to make sense of the global baseball figuration. It does this by first providing an outline for the incipient modernisation, and subsequent sportisation, of baseball in America. Then a cross-sectional analysis of the diffusion and development of baseball in various countries throughout the world is presented, for the most part *via* a critical analysis of secondary source material. In order to supplement the secondary source material, questionnaires were sent to all national governing bodies for baseball across the world (109 in total). The principal focus of the empirical aspects of this thesis is on the development of baseball in England. Extensive documentary analysis of archival newspaper sources was carried out in the National Newspaper Library, Colindale, London. Alongside this, several oral history interviews were conducted with baseball players who had played in this country before the 1950s. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with administrators involved in the running and promotion of the game in this country. Analysing the diffusion of baseball around the world, and the different responses to attempts to develop the game, and subsequently analysing

in much greater depth the developments and responses to baseball in England, enables us to engage in more informed comparative analysis.

On the basis of this thesis it is concluded that the argument that baseball is a 'global sport', is a highly exaggerated view of baseball's global profile. The fact of the matter is baseball has only enjoyed sustained periods of success in a handful of countries in Asia and Latin America. Furthermore, it is argued that the theoretical premises of figurational sociology are both sensitising and illuminating; and provide a more object-adequate analysis of the global baseball figuration than other theoretical approaches allow. In this respect, the central figurational concept of dynamic and differential power relationships is key to developing our understanding of the global baseball figuration, and globalisation more generally. The concept of lengthening chains of interdependency is a far more illuminating, and therefore more useful, way of conceptualising the process by which baseball has undergone diffusion, than concepts such as Americanisation, American cultural hegemony, imperialism – or, indeed, globalisation.

Margaret Marie O'Neill (Marjorie Fitzpatrick) 'Music and Power in Eighteenth-century Court Society'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 2004.

Abstract: This thesis examines music and power in eighteenth-century court society. It focuses on the Protestant Ascendancy society in Ireland in the early eighteenth century. Its aims are to find out if music reflects cultural changes and whether music is an indicator of power positions within court society. In order to achieve this, the sociology of Norbert Elias is incorporated as a theoretical framework. Thus this investigation of music within eighteenth-century court society becomes part of the web of interdependent relationships. The balance of power is at the core underlining these relationships. If music is seen as an intellectual construct, then it is possible to examine music as an indicator of power positions within the court society.

Empirical evidence was gathered in the form of letters written by Mary Delany (1700–88) who although English was a member of the Protestant Ascendancy society in Ireland for over half of her life. She was a friend and patron of the musician G. F. Handel. It is through Handel's music and specifically, the music and libretto of his oratorio *Messiah* that evidence is provided to demonstrate that music is indeed a reflection of cultural changes and indicator of power positions within the court society in a social, political, emotional, moral, allegorical, religious and monarchical way.

The major cultural change taking place was the 'absolutist' rule of the monarch to a more enlightened 'constitutional' role. By using the libretto of *Messiah* one can say that it accurately reflects the changing power structure of the monarch within the court society.

A sociological rather than an historical study of the court society reveals the dynamics of structured processes of change in the patterns of social interdependence and competition between the major interests in society, enabling one to see how personality and standards of behaviour are linked to the broader structure of society. Power has often been positioned as an individual attribute. This thesis exposes power instead as constituting a relationship. Music is one example of how this is so.

[Note: The thesis was submitted under Margaret Marie O'Neill's maiden name, but she is more generally known by her married name, Marjorie Fitzpatrick – Marjorie being an old familiar variant on Margaret.]

David M. Masinthe, 'Masculinities in an African Context: A Case of Mozambique', Unpublished MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2004.

By paying little attention to the historical material conditions which constrain, shape and engender social construction of reality, the theory of gender as socially constructed often portrays an image of gender as created *ex nihilo* and consequently static. I critiqued this approach in light of Elias's figurational sociology wherein the social construction of gender mirrors, if not part of,

the nexus of flowing social figurations. I examined the changing material conditions since the forces of modernity intensified in southern Africa in the nineteenth century, including the underlying psychic changes – both at the collective and individual levels – from pre-colonial to colonial to transitional to postcolonial, thus giving way to corresponding configurations of gender. An analysis of life histories of three generations of Mozambican men, oral literature and secondary data reveals that the ongoing shifting and reshuffling of social structures socialises and attunes men to changing social environments, whereby habits, tastes and lifestyles are reconstituted, thus setting in motion an ongoing flow of shifting constructions of manhood. A) The older men's construction of manhood – the colonial version of masculinity – was shaped jointly by traditional and colonial practices. These men showed lack of usable capital, particularly formal education, thus resulting in their inability to navigate the bureaucratised world of education and legal systems. B) The disintegration of the Portuguese colonial empire and the formation of postcolonial state configured the middle-aged men's understanding of themselves, thus producing a transitional version of masculinity. However, having exhausted their last reserve of energy in trying to keep up or catch up with the dazzling postcolonial figurational flow, these men were overtaken by changes, and they have since retreated from the race. C) Born and socialised in the environment of political, social and economic chaos and unpredictability, the younger men embody a version of masculinity that is a production of this postcolonial condition. This version of masculinity is characterised by highly rationalised lifestyles, increased hindsight and foresight.

■ FROM THE AUTHOR

Pieter Spierenburg, *Written in Blood: Fatal Attraction in Enlightenment Amsterdam*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004, xix + 230 pp.

My recent book belongs to the genre of micro-history, but it also links up with a major issue in figurational sociology. The preface says the following about it:

The concept of ‘room for manoeuvring’ forms a bridge, moreover, between micro-history and the epistemological work of the sociologist Norbert Elias. One of Elias’s main goals was to do away with discussing the behaviour of historical actors in terms of dichotomies such as structure vs. agency or voluntarism vs. determinism. As he put it, society is just the name we give to the network of individuals who constitute it. Social processes, and specific social situations within them, result from the interactions of millions of men and women, but simultaneously these processes and situations become relatively autonomous from the wishes and efforts of individual men and women. The network which we all form together, in its turn constrains us and limits our options. People can make choices, but at a certain risk. A French aristocrat at Louis XIV’s court, for example, might choose to retire and forget about the rules of etiquette. However, if he did so, he put his social existence at stake, risking the loss of everything that gave life meaning according to his worldview. It is understandable, therefore, that only a few nobles chose to avoid the court.

Similarly, a jack-of-all-trades in eighteenth-century Amsterdam, fancying a prostitute, might choose to marry her, but with serious consequences for his honour in the eyes of others, who would treat him accordingly. And a married man in love with another woman might prefer her permanent company over keeping her as a courtesan, but at the cost of becoming a fugitive libertine, condemned and shunned by respectable people. Thus, the exceptional choices made by a few individuals make it understandable why the majority opted for more predictable life courses.

From the publisher’s catalogue:

Pieter Spierenburg narrates two sensational murder cases among intimates in eighteenth-century Amsterdam. These cases recounted here both resulted from fatal attraction. They represented the darker side of the eighteenth-century revolution in love. This period witnessed great cultural changes affecting personal relationships and emotions. The new ideal of love demanded that couples spend much of their time

together and explore each other’s feelings. But this new ideal was meant for married and engaged couples only; for others it meant disaster. Love gone wrong was the theme of the sentimental novels of the age, but it also happened to real people, with fatal consequences.

Written in Blood traces the lives and ultimate fates of Nathaniel Donker, who, together with the help of his mistress, brutally murders and dismembers the wife. The second tale focuses on J. B. F. van Gogh, who falls in love with a prostitute; she later rejects him and, when a letter written with his own blood fails to change her mind, he stabs her to death in a fit of passionate rage.

In *Written in Blood*, the reader gets two stories for the price of one. And, whereas earlier microhistories have been situated in a village or a small town, the scene here is Amsterdam and its canals. Spierenburg reveals in detail what concepts like honour and gender roles came down to in individual lives. He also shows that these murders produced a strange mixture of modern romantic feelings and traditional notions of honour and shame.

Jacques Le Bohec, *L’implication des journalistes dans le phénomène Le Pen*, vol. 1. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004. 320 pp. ISBN: 2-7475-7020-7

Jacques Le Bohec, *Les interactions entre les journalistes et J.-M. Le Pen*, vol. 2. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004. 350 pp. ISBN: 2-7475-7021-7

These books make an innovative contribution to explaining the Le Pen phenomenon, concentrating on how a part is played by some journalists’ weak level of detachment from the game figuration in which they are implicated with Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the *Front national* in France. The author shows how the structures of interdependence between the protagonists have led to continuing dealings in spite of a mutual aversion and frequent conflicts. Besides Elias, he draws upon Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Patrick Champagne, Daniel Gaxie, Bernard Lacroix, Michel Dobry and Erik Neveu, among others.

The first volume is the outcome of empirical research based on interviews, observation and content analysis. It demonstrates that certain journalists are implicated in the Le Pen phenomenon, which contradicts one of their professional myths: that they stand outside and detached from the reality they are ‘reporting’. Evidence demonstrates their involuntary contribution to the electoral success of the *Front national*, the counterproductive effect of actions intended to remarginalise the movement. These journalists are not, however, the only apparently external social actors to have contributed to the socio-genesis of the Le Pen phenomenon – politicians and political scientists have also unwittingly assisted. In this first volume, the author recounts the various obstacles that had to be surmounted in undertaking research on a topic so sulphurous that it seems impossible to shift the debate to an academic plane, to contribute to explanation and understanding at both a micro-sociological and a macro-sociological level.

The second volume is concerned with interaction between journalists and Jean-Marie Le Pen, which are often conflict-ridden. That observation is backed up by numerous spectacular exchanges in the broadcast media, but also by the moral denunciations, political attacks, sensational reporting revealing the hidden faces of the *Front national*, portrayals of the leader as repulsive and objectionable, journalists being insulted and attacked, and so on. But, bizarrely, it can even so be seen that the encounters continue, and that they reveal a strong mutual need. This volume brings to light the (social and mental) structures of this interdependence between protagonists. Based on numerous observations, examples and anecdotes, the analysis sets out to expose the constraints that compel journalists and *Front national* to collaborate, in spite of everything.

Jacques Le Bohec is Maître de conférences at the Université Lumière–Lyons 2.

Trans. SJM

■ BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT

Mart Bax, 'Warlords, priests and the politics of ethnic cleansing – a case-study from rural Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23 (1) 2000, 16–36.

There is a tendency among social scientists and others to interpret the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina as the result of a political policy carefully orchestrated from above and systematically carried out. Whatever eruptions of war violence might deviate from this interpretation are generally viewed as primitive Balkanism, pointless acts, banditry or mental aberrations. Terms of this kind reflect an uncritical acceptance of a central or national leader perspective, dismissing as deviant everything that fails to go according to plan, and denying the significance of specific local and regional circumstances or failing at any rate to problematise and examine them. This article describes a process the final result of which can be seen as the ethnic homogenisation of a region, but only part of its dynamic can be attributed to a policy implemented from above. Rather, its course can largely be traced back to local vendettas and a long-standing conflict between Franciscan friars and diocesan priests. The case illustrates that a systematic study 'from below' is crucial to a better understanding of the dynamics and the developmental logic of the processes of ethnic cleansing. The article concludes with some theoretical thoughts which fit into the current debate on civilising and decivilising processes.

Some books never reviewed in *Figurations*

The following is a list of books of likely interest to readers, gleaned from the bibliographies of various recent books and articles, that have not been previously noted in *Figurations*.

Ad van Iterson, Willem Mastenbroek, Tim Newton and Dennis Smith, eds, *The Civilised Organisation: Norbert Elias and the Future of Organisation Studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003. 251 pp. ISBN: 1-58811-277-2 (hb); 1-58811-278-0 (pb). [Book version of special

issue of *Organisation* 8 (1) 2001 on 'Elias and Organisations' – which was mentioned in *Figurations* 13.]

Harald Leipertz, *Eliten: Ein Vergleich der Spezifischen Forschung bei C. Wright Mills und Norbert Elias*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1999. 115BN: 3-631340-687-5.

Georg W. Oesterdiekhoff, *Zivilisation und Strukturgenese: Norbert Elias und Jean Piaget im Vergleich*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000. 406 pp. ISBN: 3-518-29061-4.

Lutz Vordermayer, *Geschichte und Gesetzmässigkeiten: Hypothesenbildung und Abstraktion in der Geschichtswissenschaften unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Vilfredo Pareto und Norbert Elias*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1986. 583 pp. ISBN: 3-8204-8282-2

Nicola Ebers, *Individualisierung: Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, Ulrich Beck*. Berlin: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995. 400 pp. ISBN: 3-8260-1029-9

Ralf Baumgart, *Norbert Elias zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius, 1991. 186 pp. ISBN: 3-8850-6862-1.

Eun-Young Kim, *Norbert Elias im Diskurs von Moderne und Postmoderne: ein Rekonstruktionsversuch der Eliasschen Theorie im Licht der Diskussion von Foucault und Habermas*. Marburg: Tectum, 1995. 237 pp. ISBN: 3-8960-8909-9.

Jeroen Staring, *F.M. Alexander und N. Elias: over civilisatie, zelfsturing en zelfcontrole*. Nijmegen: Integraal, n.d. ISBN: 9-05092-013-6.

Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.) *Anger's Past: The Social Use of Emotion in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998. x + 256 pp. ISBN: 0-8014-8343-3

Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals and Class in England, 1774–1858*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1993. x + 196 pp. ISBN: 0-312-10584-3

Reinhard Blomert, *Psyche und Zivilisation: zur theoretischen Konstruktion bei*

Norbert Elias. Hamburg: Lit, 1989. 149 pp. ISBN: 3-8866-0431-4. [This book was widely read among figurationists at the time of publication, but *Figurations* commenced publication only in 1994, so we are including it here for the benefit of readers who may be unaware of it.]

Books Received

We intend to publish reviews, when received, of the following books:

Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press 2003.

Farhad Dalal, *Race, Colour and the Process of Racialisation: New Perspectives from Group Analysis, Psychoanalysis and Sociology*. Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2002. xi + 251 pp. ISBN: 1-58391-291-6 (hb); 1-58391-292-4 (pb).

John Carter Wood, *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth-Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement*. London: Routledge, 2004. (Routledge Studies in Modern British History). xii + 204 pp. ISBN 0-415-32905-1.

■ RECENT CONFERENCES

Dunning's Second Inaugural

On 28 October 2004, Eric Dunning gave an Inaugural Lecture as Visiting Professor in the Chester Centre for Research in Sport and Society at University College Chester. His title was 'Figuring modern sport: autobiographical and historical reflections on sport, violence and civilisation'. He was intro-



duced by Stephen Menell, and afterwards Joe Maguire paid tribute to Eric, reflecting on the latest developments in research on the sociology of sport. The occasion, organised by Ken Green, Katie Liston, Daniel Bloyce and Andy Smith, also marked the formal launch of the CCRSS. Other figurationists who attended included Joop Goudsblom, Richard Kilminster, Pat Murphy, Ken Sheard, Ivan Waddington, and Dominic Malcolm. The following morning Richard, Stephen and Joop took part in an informal question and answer session with Chester Masters students, and Joe delivered a more formal guest lecture.

■ FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The 37th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology

Stockholm, Sweden
5–9 July, 2005
<http://www.scass.uu.se/iis2005>

A session entitled ‘New Directions in Figurational Sociology’ has been approved by the programme organisers at the IIS conference in Stockholm in July 2005.

Barbara Evers, of the University of Western Australia at Perth, has offered to undertake the organisation of the session, in collaboration with Stephen Menell. The brief call for papers reads:

‘Figurational Sociology’ is the term that has come to be applied to the research tradition stemming from the work of Norbert Elias (1897–1990), especially his concern with civilising and decivilising processes, state formation, and long-term processes in general. In recent years, ‘new directions’ have included the application of figurational ideas in criminology and the study of violence, to organisations and financial institutions, and to the broader world order, including the American empire and the ‘war on terror’. But the session organisers will be pleased to receive proposals on a wide range of other topics.

The official deadline for submission of paper abstracts is 30 November 2004.

So, if you wish to present a paper in the session ‘New Directions in Figurational Sociology’, please send an abstract of no more than one page to Barbara Evers at figurations@globaldial.com as soon as possible after reading this announcement.

■ OBITUARY

Bryan Wilson, 25 June
1926 – 9 October 2004



Bryan Wilson, who died on October 9, 2004, was probably the most discreet person I have known among my close acquaintances. (Although I felt great affection for Bryan, I somehow hesitate to use the word friend, because of the distance that he always kept and that I respected.) I first met him at the Salzburg Seminar for American Studies in July 1956, at a session on American society taught by Talcott Parsons and some of his colleagues. He told me he had studied sociology at what was then University College, Leicester, but he did not add that one of his favourite teachers had been Norbert Elias. Later in the summer of 1956, Bryan and I met again at the Third International Congress of Sociology in Amsterdam. I had seen the name of ‘N. Elias, Leicester’ on the programme, and asked Bryan about Elias. After some misunderstandings caused by my pronunciation, Bryan realised I meant Norbert, and introduced me to him – one of the most important moments in my intellectual career.

At the time of our first meeting, Bryan was attached to the Sociology Department at Leeds, his native city. He was appointed Reader in Sociology at Oxford in 1962, and became a Fellow of All Souls College in 1963 – a position which he kept till his retirement in 1993. During all his years in Oxford, he organised a celebrated weekly seminar on the sociology of religion, where he received many international guests. He himself travelled and lectured widely, wrote many books, and established his name as a leading expert in the sociology of religious sects.

As far as I know, Bryan rarely if ever mentioned Norbert Elias in his own work, nor did he use such terms as interdependence or figuration as signals of Norbert’s influence. Yet he was ready to acknowledge that this influence was sometimes strongly present – as it also was in some of the work of the late Keith Hopkins, whose obituary appeared in the last issue of *Figurations*. In the 1960s, Bryan acted as adviser to the publisher Basil Blackwell at Oxford. He recommended that *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* be translated into English, and arranged that the American sociologist, Philip Rieff, would be the translator. Eventually nothing came of this plan, but it shows Bryan’s high appreciation of Norbert’s work. He also spent four months at the University of Ghana in Accra in 1964, toward the end of Norbert’s stay there, and after his return to Oxford exchanged some lengthy letters with him. (See below for two letters.)

In 1987, Elias’s ninetieth birthday was celebrated with an international conference in Apeldoorn and a festive ceremony at the University of Amsterdam. Bryan gave a paper on sects at the conference and a speech at the ceremonial meeting. The paper was solidly empirical, staying aloof from Elias’s theoretical models. The speech, by contrast, was very personal, filled with reminiscences from his student days at Leicester and his visits to Norbert in Ghana. Bryan told us how, as a young soldier in the British army, he had grown accustomed to the rough military life and how Norbert Elias as a lecturer not only taught him about sociology and social psychology but also presented a living model of civilian gentility. Bryan

himself developed into one of the gentlest persons I have known.

Joop Goudsblom
University of Amsterdam

Letters exchanged in 1952 between Bryan Wilson, then a student at Leicester, and Norbert Elias, then a part-time lecturer still resident in London.

University College, Leicester

30th May, 1952

Dear Dr. Elias,

Our course in Social Psychology ended so suddenly this last week that neither my colleagues nor I quite realised that we should not be seeing you again prior to our examinations. It was a cause of genuine regret to all of us that we had not taken the opportunity of thanking you after that – unexpectedly – final lecture. I trust that you will forgive us for that omission.

My fellow students have asked me to express to you the appreciation of all six of us for the course you have given, and the care and trouble to which you gone for all of us. We should like to thank you most sincerely for all your kindness. We are all of us aware that you have had to make the long and fatiguing journey up to Leicester and back again on each occasion that you have lectured to us, and we are all of us happy to infer, from the great care you have taken for our good instruction, that we have had as our tutor someone who considered us worth all that trouble.

Whatever may be our respective fortunes in finals a great deal of the credit for any success we may attain – not merely in Psychology, but in all branches of our studies – will be yours. But more important than this, and quite apart from the immediate prospect of examinations, all of us have found a great deal in your lectures which is already of use to us – and will I trust become increasingly so – in our everyday lives.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Wilson.

11 Primrose Gardens
Apt. 3

7 June 1952

Dear Mr Wilson

Thank you very much for your letter. I am very pleased to think that I was able to help you and your fellow students a little, and it was of course very good of you to tell me so.

I on my part enjoyed my work among you particularly because you made me feel that I could tell you more than one can find in textbooks, more even than was strictly necessary for the examination. In my experience a growing number of university students learn their stuff a little mechanically, exclusively with an eye to the examination. And although I never lost sight of the immediate purpose, I was very pleasantly surprised when I found that you were really interested in wider and more fundamental issues and that I could talk to you about more than a series of unconnected social and psychological data.

You see, in the course of one's life, if one thinks at all, one gets insight in a good many things which one never has the time to put down in writing, which one can only hand on by word of mouth to younger men and women understanding and able enough to take it up and to use it in their own way. That you allowed me to do a little of this handing on made me very happy.

I wish you personally and your fellow students the very best success in the examination and after.

Sincerely, yours

Norbert Elias

■ CONTRIBUTIONS TO FIGURATIONS

The next issue of *Figurations* will be mailed in May 2005. News and notes should be sent to the Editors by 1 April 2005.

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Contributions should preferably be e-mailed to the Editor, or sent on a disk (formatted for PC-DOS, not Apple Mackintosh), Microsoft Word, Rich Text and plain text files can all be handled. Do not use embedded footnotes. Hard copy is accepted reluctantly.

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Graphic Design and Desktop Publishing: Annette van de Sluis.
Printed by MultiCopy, Weesperstraat 65, Amsterdam.

Researchers, institutes or libraries who would like to receive this newsletter should write to Saskia Visser, Secretary, Norbert Elias Foundation, J.J. Viottastraat 13, 1071 JM Amsterdam, The Netherlands. *Figurations* will be sent to them free of charge.