

Reassertion of past visions: 'narrative elasticity' and historical change.

A seminar with

Dr. Oriana Bernasconi

(Faculty of Social Science and the Humanities,
Diego Portales University, Santiago, Chile).

If the self is not conceived of as an immutable substance, with the passing of historical time we might ask:

How do older people react when the apparatus and resources used to produced their bodies, minds and souls, to make themselves subjects of a certain sort, begins to clash with present ways of living?

If older generations need to reassess their moral outlook, what forces drive them to this search? To what extent can older generations review their customised humanity?

For want of a better label, I call this a study on 'narrative elasticity'. In the exercise of self-interpretation, this refers to the capacity of narratives to stretch the boundaries of the self, "going beyond the normal order of significance" (Pickering 2004). Narrative elasticity refers to the re-assessment of the standards that are deemed worth endorsing or opposing so as to make one's trajectory cohere with the flow of change; a moral renewal that is sometimes accompanied by the incorporation of new practices of the self. But as the term suggests, narrative elasticity also tries to capture the limits of the possibilities of change. Elasticity is about boundaries too. It includes that which renders the self resistant to change and all that is inadmissible, when the coordinates that frame the good life have been modified over time.

These propositions are examined in empirical research with the biographical stories of three successive generations of Chilean families. Biographical accounts bring to the surface intergenerational controversies over the nature of the self as these are embedded in kinship relationships.

When

Tues 10th Feb,
2009

Time: 5:30 - 6:30pm

Where

Rm 16:15 Level 16
Victoria University
City Campus
Flinders St.
Melbourne.

Cost

Free

And followed by

Drinks and
nibbles

at

The Rendevous
Hotel
(next door)

**PRIOR
REGISTRATION
is require.**

Contact: Ruth Ballardie.

Contacts: Professor Elaine Martin
Elaine.Martin@vu.edu.au

Ruth Ballardie
Ruth.Ballardie@med.monash.edu.au