

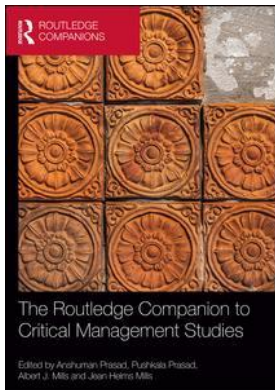
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Anshuman Prasad, Pushkala Prasad, Albert J. Mills, Jean Helms Mills

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Steve McKenna, Amanda Peticca-Harris

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Deconstructive criticism and Critical Management Studies

Steve McKenna and Amanda Peticca-Harris

The Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden wrote that poetry makes nothing happen. In some sense, substituting Critical Management Studies (CMS) for poetry, this statement might be relevant to the work of critical scholars or at least be posed as a question – does CMS make anything happen? This, of course, is a difficult if not impossible question to answer. Perhaps all we can do as critical scholars is challenge and deconstruct the world as it is, not always with an alternative in mind but guided by the possibility that there are alternatives: alternative societies, alternative ways of organizing, alternative ways of managing, alternative ways of working. Perhaps critical research, working at many levels in many areas, with the lived experiences of people (and in other ways), might at least find some way of influencing the structures, ideas and thoughts of society, organizations and people in ways where alternatives might be considered and where a difference can be made. This is the hope of this chapter: that deconstructive criticism might enable an appreciation of what is excluded from consideration in the world(s) and begin to identify other possibilities and forms of resistance to the ‘normal’ that enable alternative conversations with those engaged in those world(s).

Any attempt to discuss ‘deconstruction’ is instantly implicated in a conversation with Jacques Derrida (1976, 1978). While acknowledging a debt to Derrida, this chapter does not attempt another discussion of ‘who’ or ‘what’ is Derrida, or indeed, ‘what’ is ‘deconstruction’. However, what is important for our way of thinking about *deconstructive criticism* (Culler, 1982) is Derrida’s thought that deconstruction “is not a discursive or theoretical matter, but rather a politico-political one, and one that always occurs in what are called in rather hasty and summary fashion, institutional structures” (Derrida, quoted in Hill: 26). Within the space of Critical Management Studies, this particular idea of deconstruction seems to us to be important. How can deconstructive criticism have a practical and political agenda? What can it say about the heterogeneity of the social and organizational world? What can it say about marginalized voices, not only of the oppressed, but hidden voices as they appear in many places and particularly in the organizational world? How can we use an understanding of these voices within the broader project that seeks alternatives to conventional managerialism? In the following, we hope to answer some of these questions, but first, how do we intend to use deconstructive criticism?

Deconstructive criticism, as we intend to use it, is informed by the ideas of Derrida (1976, 1978), particularly logocentrism, problematization, the idea of the Other and close reading, as far

as we understand them and can experiment with them. Primarily in this chapter, however, we consider and apply the ideas of the Russian philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1995) in order to illuminate how deconstructive criticism can contribute to a practico-political agenda by investigating the voices of managers and managerialism in the 21st century. We illustrate this through a deconstruction and interrogation of aspects of three narratives written by managers. Aspects of these narratives have previously been analyzed (McKenna, 2010), but we use them again here to highlight how hidden voices in managerial narratives represent alternatives to the dominant discourse of contemporary management and also, perhaps, to the actual practice of management.

Bakhtin's dialogical approach

We assume a dialogical approach to be a form of deconstruction. While there has been some work in management and organizational studies which has engaged Bakhtin, the more radical aspect of his ideas have largely been ignored and marginalized in favor of his ideas relating to polyphony or multi-voicedness per se (Belova, King & Sliwa, 2008; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008). In applying Bakhtin, we focus particularly on the differentiation between two functions of a narrative: the *representational function*, the simple story an author is telling, and the *interactional functioning*, how the narrative is positioned in the wider material world and the other voices in that world. So, when writing a narrative, not only does a manager describe and represent the world, but the words position the author, position others in the narrative and position the events reported in a wider material and discursive context. A text therefore does not exist as a stand-alone but fits inside of, reacts to and potentially disrupts a larger discursive context of which it is a part. Equally important, however, is that it says something about material reality, about life and lived experience and action.

The way a manager positions him-/herself interactionally in a narrative is related to what is available to the manager to describe and represent his/her experiences. In other words, how does a manager think about the experiences in the context in which he/she has to think and which largely shapes how he/she can think? Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1995) explains this by noting that to understand an 'utterance' it "is necessary to understand the meaning of the utterance, the content of the act, and its historical reality" (Bakhtin & Medvedev, 1995: 149). In our examples, a manager is connecting diverse experiences together through a dialogue within the narrative. In analyzing such texts, we can investigate and deconstruct how managers position themselves in specific ways relative to others, society and history (Wortham, 2001).

In order to investigate the interactional positioning and identification a manager might take in a narrative, it is necessary to know something of the time and place within which the text was constructed (Holquist, 2004). A narrative is written within a specific location at a particular time within a prevailing regime of truth (Foucault, 1995). This regime of truth, perhaps also an ideology, shapes how a manager should 'think' and 'be' at that time in that place (Sarup, 1996). Deconstructing a written narrative dialogically requires some assessment of the relationship between text and context. For a critical scholar, this means infusing the interpretation of a managerial narrative with an explicitly political agenda. At the most simplistic level, it means asking, as we read managerial narratives, what else is going on in this narrative besides what might appear obvious? For example, a manager might write or say, "During the change, it was necessary to downsize the business by 300 staff". A monologic interpretation (Holquist, 2004) of this statement would accept the content as is, assuming that it was 'necessary' to fire 300 staff without any consideration of the implications of such an act or whether there was an alternative. Such an interpretation simply *represents* the narrator's position without relation to the broader context or

about the broader context. The statement – “During the change, it was necessary to downsize the business by 300 staff” – is treated as if it is separate from the world beyond the narrative/text itself. A dialogical approach would deconstruct and disrupt this statement in various ways by posing questions that position the author of the text in a broader context in order to open up space for alternative voices to be heard. For example, how is the text written? Does the author imply that ‘downsizing’ is natural, normal, acceptable? Does the author position him-/herself against others who oppose downsizing, such as trade unions, communities?

When writing or speaking about events in his/her life, a manager immediately opens a space or a dialogue within which the manager is an active participant. In this sense, “nothing is ever one, it is always at least two” (Hill, 2007: 25). In writing or speaking about events, managers shape and position themselves practically. They portray their identities, the identities of others and a view of the social, economic and organizational world. They engage with wider discourses and place themselves within these discourses and the material world beyond. This is all specific to a particular time and place. When a manager says or writes something, there is always a trace and a glimpse of something else, the ‘other’, within the narrative constructed by the narrator and outside it. A narrator is always constructing something with a sideward glance at the world outside the words/text. This world and the manager’s view of it are the basis for a manager’s action within it.

Managers write or talk about events in their organizational and professional lives within an existing grand discourse and social, political and economic context (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). These contexts and discourses shape the way managers (re)present their organizational and professional world and where and how they position themselves within it. In a very practical sense, their stories contribute to, perpetuate, perhaps sometimes challenge the dominant discourse and material reality of the world in which they exist. A challenge for deconstructive criticism is to work out how we might unpick the way managers’ position themselves in the world, how they position others and how they ignore or reject the possibility of alternatives to a particular dominant way of thinking. Furthermore, how can we, as critical scholars, influence the way managers think about managing in a way that raises the possibility of alternatives?

Bakhtinian tools for analysis

To “make linkages between history, structures, and individual lives in the service of an intellectual and political purpose” as a researcher (Mir & Mir, 2002: 121), it is important to enter the lived world and experiences of managers. Critical unpicking of the language and lives of managers requires appropriate politically informed tools of interpretation. Wortham (2001) developed such tools and concepts from his use of Bakhtin’s ideas: *mediation*, *voicing* and *ventriloquation*. These concepts/tools lend themselves to application from a critical perspective.

The concept of *mediation* indicates how a text and its context should be construed. This construal is related to how we as researcher/readers and the narrator are addressed by the world itself. Critically motivated researchers would see the world in a political and ideological way and look to construe a narrative in a particular way and to search for alternatives within the lives of managers themselves as they represent them. Initially, however, we are looking for the elements of a narrative that indicate how managers see the organizational and managerial world in which they operate.

Bakhtin (1995), in his consideration of the novel, argued that novels contain a multiplicity of *voices* and socio-ideological belief systems that are voiced by the narrator. A manager will embody, in their narrative, points of view about themselves and the world, but these points of view are shaped within the ways managers are ‘supposed’ to think in the socio-ideological belief systems

which prevail. They inhabit what they speak and write about, and it will have practical outcomes in their thoughts and actions (Daskalaki, 2012). For Althusser (2001: 115), “*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects* by the functioning of the category of the subject” (original italics). The manager is called, or hailed, to be a particular kind of subject, to be a particular kind of managerial person who is relevant to the needs of capitalism in a specific time and place. The managerial ‘being’ is subjectively fixed and normalized (Clegg, 1998; Foucault, 1995). Managerial narratives represent how managers are ‘hailed’, but they also contain the threat or the promise of something else (Derrida, 1982): other voices that they marginalize and peripheralize. The manager is in a dialogue with the other voices reflected in other characters, institutions and interests which are recognizable in the narrative. They often reflect what is different, what is an alternative, but which is ignored. For example, managers might privilege the idea and the identity of managers as being ‘for change’, being ‘flexible’, ‘enterprising’, ‘taking responsibility’ and might marginalize the idea that management is about building loyalty, community and a respect for the past.

A concept related to voicing is *ventriloquation*. Managers not only articulate their own voice(s) in their narratives, they also articulate alternative voices for themselves, give voices to other characters and to organizations and society. In this sense, managers may articulate many identities or ‘ways of being’ for themselves, for example as a moral self, conforming self or rebellious self (Collinson, 2003; Tappan, 1999). However, they will also organize and ventriloquate the voice(s) of other characters, and by characters we mean more than simply an individual character in the narrative. Characters can be, for example, society, an organization, a political and/or ideological position.

Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1995) ideas and concepts offer one way for the critical deconstruction of narratives. In the following sections, we apply these ideas and concepts to written managerial narratives. We suggest that using these ideas we can deconstruct narratives to show central features of ideological, societal, organizational and managerial discourses that dominate the way managers think and act. If managers are hailed in a particular way, they will practice management in that way. This practice, as identifiable in their stories, reflects a political and ideological position that hides and also reveals alternatives within the narratives themselves. In a small way, the content of the alternatives might act as a way of engaging managers with the many voices of organizational life and indeed enable them to reflect on their own voice.

Managerial text 1: Maureen

Maureen’s narrative is set in a small health care clinic in New Zealand, in which she is the clinic manager, in a broad context of changing management in the public sector related to the idea of new public management (NPM) (i.e., the infiltration of corporate style management into the public sector). The clinic was established by a group of women doctors who were frustrated by having to work in male-dominated organizations. In particular, they were frustrated by the lack of power to change the dominant culture and structures of these organizations. They were motivated to create an alternative organization based on a greater balance among work, family and other activities and commitments in their lives in order to lead a more fulfilling life. In describing the establishment of the clinic, Maureen gives voice to the doctors and the wider context in which their initiative takes place. She has not yet entered the narrative with her own voice. She describes a group of ‘feminist’ doctors who are of the view that health care is male dominated with a certain culture and structures. This male-dominated world excludes women from power and involvement and the opportunity to change the way this world operates. Maureen does not

indicate that she accepts this view of the world in health care; she is simply ventriloquating/speaking for the doctors.

Maureen writes herself into her narrative when she becomes practice manager at the clinic. She notes how the clinic “changed the order of things” in the medical community in Smalltown.¹ It was a feminist organization seeking to establish an alternative idea of a clinic. The vision of the clinic was reflected in its *Ground Rules*, a set of guidelines specifying how conflict would be resolved, decisions would be made and how the organization would be managed. Its overall emphasis was on collective decision-making. The *Ground Rules* represented a statement of principles. As the practice manager, Maureen positions herself relative to the *Ground Rules*.

The *Ground Rules* still exist in their original format six years after the opening of the business, and have not yet been revisited. Nor has the Mission Statement. No change has been made to the original business plan which was put together to apply for funding. All of these were put together to guide a young business still coming to terms with its environment. Now that they are established, they need to look at these things and assess whether they are still relevant.

What is of interest here is how Maureen accepts and perpetuates a discourse of change. The *Ground Rules*, a statement of the clinic’s fundamental purpose, is negotiable for Maureen. It cannot be a constant organizing principle in a changing environment. Principles should be disposable if circumstances change. A commitment to operating a business as a collectivity should be jettisoned if the business environment requires something different of a business.

Maureen’s self and interactional position in the narrative

As Maureen’s narrative progresses, her own voice becomes increasingly prominent and also juxtaposed with other voices in the narrative. This is a development of her earlier voicing of the organization as ‘feminist’ and being outmoded. She begins to associate the feminist aspect of the organization to ineffectiveness and positions her ‘self’ in this setting.

The practice needed to recruit an accountant. . . . [I]t was a long drawn out affair in which the better qualified male was overlooked in favor of a less able female because of the strong promotion by the lesbian partner. I believe that at this point we must stop using the term ‘team’ in conjunction with the organization. From my perception of what happened, a division occurred because those who had not been able to promote their chosen candidate felt manipulated, and power politics began to take over as the dominant frame of the organization. However, the perpetuation of the myth of the ‘feminist’ organization was tacitly acknowledged as more important. Because the feminist culture implied that ‘women working together should be able to resolve these differences’, the issue became a taboo subject and the feminist culture started to become a prison.

At a monological level, this is simply a story of a manager seeking to implement organizational change. However, when read dialogically, Maureen is positioning herself against alternative forms of organizing. For example, the ‘feminist culture’ became a ‘prison’; it was becoming a site of manipulation, power and politics; it was unable to make effective change. In all of these ways, Maureen promotes what she feels is a rational, meritocratic approach to organizational management and rejects the possibility of alternatives. Her self and interactional positioning is

further emphasized in the following passage describing the effects of change initiatives taken by Maureen.

I was not deliberately initiating change to change the balance of power, I felt genuinely unable to operate in such an unstructured way, when the processes required were very structured. . . . I think I was imposing a mechanistic order on a politicized situation. . . . The order and structure was needed because the dominant culture had changed from being one of synergy, excitement and teamwork, to being one of power and domination within the organization. Their desire to see themselves as a feminist organization had become more important than the need to recognize that they were no longer working as a team. They were trapped in a prison perpetuating the myth of a feminist organization. They and the organization had become rigid and inflexible.

We are not here concerned with the veracity of Maureen's monological account but with her dialogical positioning of voices. Maureen's voice is that of the professional manager, adopting one particular view of the organizational world. She believes that structure, order, logic and rationality are necessary in the clinic, thus invoking "positions and ideologies from the larger social world" (Wortham, 2001: 40). This view is juxtaposed with that of the 'feminist' alternative, which is inflexible and rigid and dominated by individuals whose primary concern is power and domination.

The simple 'story' (monology) of Maureen's narrative is of a practice manager in a clinic attempting to effect change. However, when we search for other voices in the narrative through a dialogical approach, we can see the dialogue of voices. Maureen represents one way of managing and organizing, which she pursues in practice against recognizable other ways.

Managerial text 2: Colin

Colin is a manager in a small engineering firm. At the beginning of his narrative, he describes the changing environment within which his company, Engco,² operates and which is characterized by increasing global competition in a deregulated market for steel products. The senior management of the company, the level above Colin, had restructured in the face of new competition; however, Colin suggests that this has had no impact. He goes on to voice senior management as ineffective.

I felt that senior management, many of whom had been at Engco for many years, had little idea as to how to change the business in any real way. They played with structures but were afraid to take any of the hard and necessary decisions that were required. They could not get past the kind of view of the business as a family club. Senior management treated staff as their children, many had worked at Engco for years, but this was not good for performance. Workers were sheltered from the realities of the marketplace by senior management who wanted to play 'happy families'.

Colin voices his view of what is required to change Engco against the current situation, which he voices as paternalistic and family orientated. He implies that such an approach to managing Engco is unlikely to help it succeed in a new competitive environment. It is outdated and shelters workers from 'realities'. Colin is narratively situating his position against that of an alternative mode of organizing, which he rejects.

Like Maureen, as Colin's story progresses, he places himself in it more centrally, and, also like Maureen, he voices himself as something of a savior, full of modern, more relevant ideas about how to manage.

I was approached by the Managing Director and asked if I would like to take a more active role by becoming production manager. Instead I insisted that I become General Manager of the whole division under the condition that some long serving staff must leave, as they didn't fit into my plans for the new Engco Sheet metal Division.

Colin voices himself as the 'can-do', heroic, enterprising figure. His view of the organizational world has no place for loyalty and paternalism. Some workers who have spent much of their working lives at Engco are disposable and need to leave the business. The business, he argues, needs "rapid transformation"; it "had a problem with too much loyalty and commitment". The business "needed new and flexible ways because the old ways don't work, and they needed new and flexible people". Moreover, rigid "outdated thinking is holding the company back. Senior management had traditional thinking". Colin's narrative clearly voices alternative approaches to organizing and managing: rigidity (in Colin's view) against flexibility; loyalty and commitment against a more transactional, efficiency-oriented approach to relationships; paternalism against individualism. Colin represents two opposing belief systems in his narrative: the new, more enterprising way or the old, more family-oriented way.

Sennett (2007) has identified how there is a social deficit of institutional loyalty in the world today: "loyalty is dead, and each vigorous employee ought to behave like an entrepreneur" (Sennett, 2007: 65). Colin is such an enterprising self (du Gay, 1994, 2004). He articulates this 'type' precisely; he is it, and in being so, the alternative is voiced as archaic. Yet it is dialogically present in Colin's narrative, and as such he gives voice to its existence.

Managerial text 3: Cameron

City management is under pressure. Fiefdoms prevail, protecting inefficiency and duplication. There is pressure from government to save money and to do more things with less. Change is inevitable and my role was to be a champion of change.

And so starts Cameron's narrative. He already identifies himself as a champion of change against the other voices he introduces – those protecting fiefdoms and therefore inefficiency. Cameron positions himself in his narrative very early and in a more self-interested way. He serves his own interest and in doing so is serving the interests of city management and government. In particular he rails against those who have developed 'cults' within city management and who work only to maintain their power.

I was at war with losers and clueless technocrats. The battle with these people was to be in the ascendancy in your department and in the organization. I would fight them in a different fashion. The environment would not have seen the battle fought that way before and therefore had no strategy to combat my tactics. Those who would resist would be put to the sword. It was a case of the past or the future.

As with Maureen and Colin, Cameron voices a battle between modern and non-modern ways of organizing. Indeed, even his language of 'cults' and 'fiefdoms' reflects this juxtaposition. In the

lengthy passage which follows we get a clear sense of Cameron's interactional positioning in his narrative and how he voices the context within which he is operating.

My first day my new manager, T, had a uniform ready for me to wear. I politely refused and we reviewed the reasons I was appointed. It was obvious that the decision to establish the role was not one that T wanted. Indeed the role she had in mind was one of operations management. To my horror I found myself thrust into managing parking operations for the city. Psychological contracts my arse! This was a pathological manager ensuring immediate dominance over me and distancing herself from the chaos I was about to find. That chaos had a name. It was parking. This was the leper of the organization. No one likes a parking officer.

But I befriended parking officers. I was one of them, an untouchable to members of the public. With the management team I used facts, refused to listen to emotion, delivered on time and under budget. I actioned the requests of my staff quicker than God.

Six months into my role at parking things changed. I discovered my boss, T, was sleeping with my Head of Department. They were lovers. She was divorced and he married. It was the unspoken scandal. I finally had a way to win. T was promoted into obscurity, but just when I thought I had won I found out I had lost. I became her replacement. Then four months later the organization decided to restructure.

Cameron goes on to narrate the roles he was performing at this point: parking operations manager; acting parking services divisional manager; manager of business development; human resources manager, traffic and parking services; acting group manager, traffic and roading services. He was in so many management meetings across the organization that he was hearing the same message given a completely different spin depending on which management group was meeting: "I was so busy at no stage did it ever occur to me neither to ask for help nor to seek any. None was ever offered. Finally it was Christmas".

In this segment of the narrative, Cameron is indicating the complexity and pressure of his role(s) in a volatile and political context. However, beyond this, he is placing himself interactionally with respect to others. He is also positioning himself in a politically charged context giving a flavor of a different 'reality' of organizational life. Increasingly, Cameron moves from the 'heroic figure' he portrays himself at the beginning of his narrative to a person who is increasingly sucked into a chaotic, irrational and dysfunctional situation. He arranges the voices in different ways such that we see beneath the surface of city government by means of Cameron's interpretation of it. In particular, his own voice changes as the narrative progresses; initially he voiced himself in a hero's narrative, ready to fight whatever battles needed to be fought in order to win. Later he becomes a disillusioned and stressed manager, beaten down by the weight of the organization he sought to confront. Finally, he physically and mentally collapses.

On December 26 whilst sitting in the sun on our lawn I felt sharp pains from within my gut. Within three days I had been rushed to hospital suffering from severe dehydration and loss of blood. My immune system had stopped functioning and I was seriously ill. Within the week my body weight had dropped from 98 kgs. to 85. The only relief was morphine for the pain. I realized that the nonsense was crazy. I wanted to be the last man standing, but in the end realized that this was a lonely and worthless place to be.

Discussion

In this chapter we have offered one way of undertaking *deconstructive criticism* using ideas from the Russian literary theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1995). In our discussion section, we attempt to connect this approach to some important features of Derridean deconstruction as a way of indicating the ‘diversity’ of this idea. Hill (2007: 117) has noted that:

If it (deconstruction) could be characterized or defined at all, it was not as a single, repeatable, applicable method or methodology. Some programmatic strategy dominated by a final goal already visible on the horizon. Deconstruction more closely resembled a style, a way of reading and writing texts, addressing them with finesse, nuance, and all available sophistication, and with a different pen held, so to speak, in either hand.

In addition, we want to say some more about the practico-political aspects of this type of deconstructive criticism – of what use is it in challenging dominant thinking about management?

To deconstruct texts in this way is to recognize the importance of the process of construction as well as the idea that they can be deconstructed. What is in the narratives of Maureen, Colin and Cameron is important because of what is included and how they include it. It is also a reflection of the way perhaps that they are shaped to think about their professional lives and management in particular: what is available to them as a discourse to explain their managerial lives? In deconstruction, however, we are also interested in what might be concealed or excluded, not as the ‘real truth’ that is discovered underneath the surface, but as a way of opening space for further exploration, to push another agenda, to raise alternatives. It is in this sense that Bakhtin’s ideas connect to key Derridean ideas, four of which seem to us of particular importance in appreciating the value of deconstructive criticism in general and in a practico-political sense: logocentrism, problematization, the Other and close reading of the text.

The notion of logocentrism, as we understand it, is to center things as a coherent whole (Derrida, 1976). All concepts in this way of thinking have a kind of self-evident aspect to them – e.g. ‘truth’, ‘value’, ‘ethics’ – as well as to concepts such as ‘management’ or ‘change’. In conventional management and organization studies, many concepts operate logocentrically therefore marginalizing alternatives. In the texts produced in the managerial narratives of Maureen, Colin and Cameron, what it means to be a manager and how the manager should act or not act are part of managerial and organizational logocentrism, as is the perception that managers should be ‘enterprising’, ‘for change’, competitive and so on. As a way of thinking, logocentrism offers a sense of stability and order at any given time; the world can be divided between the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, between the ‘way’ and the ‘other way(s)’. In the case of our three narratives, there are signs that they accept a ‘way’ something is or should be, both as a process and as a ‘presence’ (Derrida, 1976). In undertaking a *deconstructive criticism* of the texts, the purpose is not to offer another ‘center’ but to open the space to problematizing the text and its content and also therefore the nature of the managerial world.

In some ways, all texts are ‘obvious’. To use Bakhtin’s (1995) terms, there is a monologic element to all narratives. However, to deconstruct texts is not to find ‘solutions’ to the meaning of the text; it is to disrupt its apparent obviousness, and this is done by raising contradictions that may exist within the text, partly through placing it in a ‘bigger’ context. In this sense, all texts are carnivalesque; they are a pageant of color, activity and playfulness. There are within them complexity, ambiguity and discontinuity that should be surfaced in order that they might be problematized in all sorts of ways, including discursively and ideologically. Our texts have much that is not ‘obvious’. A Bakhtinian dialogical approach helps to bring out that which is not

obvious for further deconstruction, not closure, as we have attempted to do in this chapter. By deconstructing managerial narratives, we can not only problematize them but highlight their ideological and multi-voiced nature. Managerial narratives contain within them the submerged alternative discourses of the organizational and managerial world. There is in them the possibility of alternatives even though our managerial narrators may reject them: the feminist organization based on principles of a better whole-life balance; the family-oriented organization based on loyalty and commitment to employees; the manager who ultimately dis-identifies with the 'rat race'.

Related to logocentrism and problematization of the text is the Derridean idea of the Other who appears in many voices in texts. Polyphony, the notion of multivoicedness, is a central element of Bakhtinian (Bakhtin, 1995) thought, whereby 'other' voices are marginalized, trivialized or silenced. It seems to us that, for Derrida, silencing 'otherness' is an attempt to prevent opposition or contradiction and alternatives (Derrida, 1976). It is important to be committed to raising all of these contradictions in texts, to find other suppressed voices, alternatives and things silenced. In the written narratives of Maureen, Colin and Cameron, it seems to us that that a dialogical reading can surface other voices and give space to and for them. Part of this deconstructive process is recognizing that any concept contains both itself and its opposite. To recognize the existence of others, it is important to 'look' for what a text excludes as well as includes. The dialogical approach of Bakhtin (Holquist, 2004) facilitates this process of looking. It enables a way of seeing beyond logocentrism and beyond the obvious and the center, which is what a monologic approach implies. To do this disrupts the text and surfaces alternative possibilities about the text in its relationship with context. It also raises the possibility of material and discursive alternatives. For example, in all of the narratives reported in this chapter, there are ideas and notions that present the possibility of other ways of doing things, of managing, of organizing, which might be practically and politically more socially responsible. While narrators themselves may denigrate alternatives, they give presence to their existence.

Close reading involves a very specific and detailed consideration of a text. There is much to be 'found' in very short pieces of text through close reading. Close reading can be undertaken of anything that can be considered a text; for example a sound or an image could be a text that is subject to close reading. In a close reading, a text is dissected thoroughly in terms of its narrative, metaphors, structure, syntax and other critical aspects of literary analysis. For Derrida (1978), to deconstruct is to first show a deep commitment to the original work. The texts constructed by our three managers are powerful because they are *their* stories, *their* recollections. To show respect for the way they describe and interpret aspects of their professional lives is a precursor to draw out complexities, discontinuities and doubts. Identifying the otherness of a text requires a recognition of what is in the original and why it is there. In this chapter, our reading of Maureen, Colin and Cameron has not been 'close enough', but what we have attempted to do in using Bakhtin's (1981, 1984a, 1984b, 1986, 1995) ideas is to show that texts hide themselves within texts and to draw out the dialogical enables us to see that all is not obvious. In a Derridean sense, we have tried to open a text rather than simply interpret it in another way. In practical terms, can we use this *opening* to enhance a critical agenda? Can it, to repeat our opening question, make anything happen?

There is no easy answer to this question, but perhaps an early move might be related to the teaching of management in business schools. Does the teaching of management and managing in business schools currently reflect the many possible ways of managing, or are they themselves the one-dimensional perpetrators of a dominant managerial discourse and 'reality'? And to what extent are we, critical scholars, complicit in this situation? Similarly, with alternative forms of organizing, are these reflected in business school programs? Wouldn't it be helpful to consider what a 'feminist organization' or 'feminist organizing' looks like? How can loyalty and

commitment be taught in a socially responsible and politically subversive way rather than as throwaway words used by mealy-mouthed managers to manipulate the workforce? What if organizations were thought of as communities of people rather than profit-motivated mechanisms, how might this impact modes of management? In the business school context, it is likely that critical scholars can offer only small resistance to the tidal wave of managerialism through their teaching. Whether this can make things happen or not is another matter, but at least we can say we tried – hard.

Notes

- 1 A pseudonym.
- 2 A pseudonym.

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