

## **PART III CREATING AND MANAGING FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION**

### **Chapter 11**

#### **Postmodern Theatrics and Festival**

This chapter applies pragmatic and postmodern theatric theory to organization spectacle. We start by exploring how an organization-as-theater metaphor has been applied in two qualitative studies: one by Barbara Czarniawska (1997) in a pragmatist (and social constructionist) interpretation of Swedish public administration, and the other a postmodern (and deconstructionist) reading of Walt Disney Enterprises (Boje, 1995). After reviewing modern and postmodern organization-as-theatrics studies we look at several recent books that take a postmodern approach to theater that I will apply to organization theatrics (See Table One). There are similarities and differences in the pragmatist and postmodernist approaches to organization-as-theater analysis. I know that Czarniawska (1997, 1998) and I apply theatrical theory differently. We both explore how “postmodern identities are constituted theatrically through role-playing and image construction” (Czarniawska, 1997: 185). We are both interested in organization theory that is a dramatic “ecological conversion” of corporate change, ecological narrative, and sustainable business education (Czarniawska, 1997: 184).

Postmodern Organization Theater is defined as a perspective that deconstructs the theatric-metaphors or semiotic sign systems that fashionably construct the authenticity of modern organization. Postmodern Organization Theater reestablishes direct communication between passive spectator and spectacle in ways that are anti-spectacle. It could allow festival to happen. In modern organization-as-theater, the focus is on interpreting various semiotic sign system models in which there is a fixed and objective relation between signs (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) and what they signify and represent to the play’s author and to its spectators (Whitmore, 1994).

**Table One: Part 5 - Postmodern Spectacle Worldview**

<p><b>5. Postmodern and Pragmatic Theatrics Worldviews</b></p> <p>Postmodern theatrics takes a critical look at the relation of theatric discourse to power/knowledge and the political economy.</p> <p>Pragmatic (modern) theatrics looks at semiotic sign systems and how meaning is socially constructed in those systems as acts, agents, scenes, agencies, and purposes.</p> <p>Studies with a “+” looks at theater (and film) performances that are modern and or postmodern presentations we can relate to spectacle. Those with “#” look at modern and postmodern narratives, and are more the topic of the next chapter.</p>	<p><b>Postmodern Theatrics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ +Simard (1984) Postmodern Drama</li> <li>✓ +Geis (1993) Postmodern Theatric[K]s</li> <li>✓ +Boje (1995) Disney as Tamara theater</li> <li>✓ +Watt (1998) Postmodern Drama</li> <li>✓ +Dixon (1998) The Transparency of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image</li> <li>✓ Firat &amp; Dholakia, 1998 consuming People: From Political Economy to Theaters of Consumption.</li> <li>✓ #Francesce (1997) narrating Postmodern Time and Space</li> <li>✓ #Lyotard (1997) Postmodern Fables</li> <li>✓ #Currie (1998) Postmodern Narrative Theory</li> </ul> <p><b>Pragmatic Theatrics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ +Whitmore (1994) Directing Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance</li> <li>✓ +Czarniawska (1997) narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity</li> <li>✓ +Demaray (1998) Shakespeare and the Spectacles of the Strangeness: The Tempest and the Transformation of Renaissance Theatrical Forms</li> </ul>
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I will briefly introduce how Czarniawska (1997: 32) builds on Burke’s (1945/1969) interpretation of objective “scene-act ratios of act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose. Ratios come into analytic focus as one or two of these five elements become plotted into a play and fused into character roles, while backgrounding several others. Here is a modern and pragmatic theatrical program applying the semiotics of scene-act ratios to management, organization, and change theory. <sup>1</sup>

1. **Act** (action)-focused plots = realism
  - ✓ Incessant action (movement) effect or constant talk and high mobility define community.
  - ✓ In contextualism, the context of action is an unfolding web of act to other act relationships without teleology.
  - ✓ Novelty and random events happy and account for change.
2. **Agent** (actor)-focused plots = idealism
  - ✓ I act in the interests of others, not my own or as my own agent.
  - ✓ Modern leadership theory assumes leaders (and entrepreneurs) act as their own agent, while managers act as the agent of their firm.

<sup>1</sup> What follows is my integrative reading of Burke’s (1945/1969) scene-ratio, Henderson’s (1988) plots applied to Burke, and Czarniawska’s (1997) application to organization studies.

- ✓ Leaders are the change agents.
- 3. **Scene**-focused plots = materialism
  - ✓ Static role structure (good guys/bad guys; progressives/conservatives) or changing alliances.
  - ✓ Modern organization assumes determinism of environmental factors (resources, technology, change, and competition).
  - ✓ The environment (i.e. place) determines change.
- 4. **Agency**-focused plots = pragmatism
  - ✓ Follow unwritten rules, repeat successful tricks or constantly improvise and muddle along.
  - ✓ Modern leader theory assumes managers are agents of a “super person” corporation, a legal person (or agent of anthropomorphic corporate-is-person).
  - ✓ Change is the result of the system of capitalism self-steering its invisible hand in the market (that is without place).
- 5. **Purpose**-oriented plots = mysticism.
  - ✓ Simple, coherent, constant motives or more highly complex coping situations of enlightened or dark spirituality.
  - ✓ Modern management theory assumes people are purpose seeking, acting consistent with their motivations and values.
  - ✓ Change is a spiritual, visionary, and even charismatic event.

Postmodern theater defuses the relation between characters (defined in Burkean terms as scene-act combinations) and their theatrical roles (in scenes) by radically disrupting and violating spectator expectations of how scene-act ratios (e.g. theatric dramas) are to be read and applied. This playing with theatric expectations provokes spectators to explore the existential crisis of a deconstructed spectacle-mask, and this may provoke spectator self-reflection on parodies of spectacle-acts constructing fetish-as-realism and exaggerated-scenes of materiality equated as happiness.

In modern organization-as-theater, managers are expected to integrate their character and role in terms of agency and purpose, and not to act as their own self-promoting agent. Leaders of modern organization-as-theater are expected to play the good guy in progressive (myth) scenes of material accumulation, achieving purpose in highly complex spectacles of production and consumption. The modern stage is set as progress or decline and the leader is expected to just play the prescribed role with “the consistency required between the stage, the actor, and the act” (Czarniawska, 1997: 35). Here we explore,

what a postmodern organization-as-theater would look like. How does it provoke self-reflection on spectacle? How are festive choices returned to the spectator? A short answer is in postmodern theater the line between spectator and agent vanishes, the distinction between spectacle and spectator is blurred, as all the ratios implode to render a festive happening.

For me, spectacle-as-organization-theater: (1) converts spectators into materialism-suppliants; (2) doing its theatrics to mask the relation of Spectacle in romantic, Heroic Theater to mask a tragic, absurd material condition of spectacle cruelty and; (3) this while performing its romantic manager-as-hero, discourse as more authentic and "real" than the material condition its actors and spectators tragically-produce and consume. The value of Czarniawska's (1997) approach to theater is an efficient way to read spectacle scene-act ratios, and coupled with a more postmodern-theater reading of spectacle, we can now parody that theatrics and possibly provoke a situation of festival.

My contribution is to argue that postmodern theater combined with an analysis of the pragmatics of spectacle gives a powerful interdisciplinary critique. We can see that a post-spectacle blurs deadening boundaries between role performer and sentient being, between spectator and spectacle, and between living actor and living spectator that are preserved in modern-organization-theater. In postmodern Organization Theater, the spectator becomes the center of spectacle, instead of a detached, passive and distant spectator, estranged from the theater of cruelty of late capitalism. Blurring the line between audience and actor places spectator more directly into a self-reflective gaze at production and consumption to observe the violence to self and others, and to make emancipatory choices. Postmodern Organization Theater transforms the act, agency, scene, agency, and purpose of organization-as-theater into festive improvisations that disrupt the coherent theatrics of modern organizations.

We begin by reviewing a pragmatist and postmodern study of organizations-as-theater (Table One). Both theatrics studies are working with the narrative turn (Bruner, 1986; Lyotard, 1984; Boje & Luhman, 1999) to afford narrative modes of knowing parity with physical science modes of knowing. In

organization studies, there is growing interest in establishing discursive metaphors of organization, such as Ricoeur (1984), Fisher (1984), and Barthes' (1966/1977) "narrative," Lyotard's (1984) "conversation," Bakhtin's (1981) "novel," Thatchenkery's (1992) "text," Goffman's (1974) "theater frameworks" Czarniawska's (1997) "drama," "play" (Boje, 1995), and (Boje, 1991, 1995; Kaye, 1996; Boyce, 1997) "storytelling organization." We begin with a pragmatist approach to Swedish administrative theatrics, proceed to Disney Theater, and turn to postmodern theater work.

**Swedish Administrative Theatrics** The pragmatist approach focuses on the semiotic sign system. Czarniawska's (1997) exemplary study of the theater metaphors (or dramatics as she terms it) is highly complex. She relies upon combining the work of pragmatism (e.g. Rorty, Habermas, and Peirce) with social constructionism and the dramaturgical approach of Roland Barthes (1966/1977) and Burke (1945/1969).<sup>2</sup> Her social construction approach builds upon Gergen (1991) and Schutz (1953/1973). She argues that social constructionist studies "represent an approach in the social sciences that comes closest to the narrative knowledge" while what we described (see chapter 3) as the mechanists and the formalists (using formal logic syllogisms) are doing paradigmatic-science knowledge work (p. 55).<sup>3</sup> Her approach to realism is the act-to-act tracing we have reviews as Pepper's (1942) constructionism, based in pragmatism.

Some explanation of pragmatism may be useful. Charles Sanders Peirce (1940/1955) is the founder of philosophical pragmatism. Czarniawska, (1997: 57) mentions him briefly. Rorty (1989) who rejects the mirror or correspondence theory of truth, is a more featured pragmatist theorist in her work. But, Habermas who seeks pragmatic rules for effecting workable speech communities, and

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<sup>2</sup> Czarniawska (1997: 29, 30) chooses drama as her all encompassing metaphor, rather than theatrics because of theater constructing a problematic notion of "authenticity" or a "true self" and the "static" concept of a "role."

<sup>3</sup> Czarniawska (1997) places less of an emphasis on poststructuralist procedures of deconstruction. As Czarniawska (1997: 69) puts it, "instead of looking at a text under a deconstructivist (or conversation-analytical) microscope, [she] proposes treating a text as belonging to other texts, as a material trace of a conversation that was or is taking place."

influenced by the work of Peirce is also featured (1997: 23, 45). See Zanetti, (1997) for a critical review of the roots of Peirce pragmatism in Habermas' theory of communicative action and rules needed for effective speech communities. Czarniawska (1997: 57) seeks to relate social construction to several aspects of pragmatism in order to reveal the "reality" behind "appearances." As a pragmatist she looks at what works, what fits, what is aesthetic, and what keeps theory-work happening. "What is a 'reasonable interpretation' and what is an 'overinterpretation' is negotiated not so much between the text and the reader as among the readers" (Czarniawska, 1997: 201). Good theory/knowledge is what a community defines as "good." At times her worldview is that "reality is socially constructed" and "has no 'essence' to be discovered" (1997: 55). At others, the public managerialist has a grasp upon the play of appearances and the "real" (as reviewed above).

Czarniawska does look, here and there, at spectacle from her pragmatic combined with social construction approach to organization-as-theater. Her inclusion of Anderson's (1990: 5) quote makes parallels the hero-worship aspects of Debord's Society of the Spectacle (though she does not reference Debord):

An increasing theatricality of politics, in which events are scripted and stage-managed for mass consumption and in which individuals and groups struggle for starring roles (or at least bit parts in the dramas of life). This theatricality is a natural – and inevitable – feature of our time.

I will briefly summarize chapters 4 through 7, where her material on Swedish administration is analyzed using scene-act ratios we reviewed above.

Chapter four assembles stories from informants, her observations, and new reports of "selected scenes" in order to decipher the plot (realism, materialism, idealism, pragmatism, & mysticism) enacted by "local actors" in the "centrally arranged spectacle" (1997: 86-7, 97). The scene-stories and scripts are analyzed to reveal paradoxes insights into Swedish administration. For example, "In the first story, where the paradox was neatly incorporated into the design, the most likely outcome was a change that would improve the status quo" but in the

third story change was co-opted, but in the second story reveals that “those who constitute a certain order are the ones who try to change it” (p. 99).

In chapter five, “serials” becomes the analytic construct to portray cultural choice mechanism in terms of literary theory. The move to “company-ization” (i.e. privatization of public sector) has the episodes of “Get to know something about the intentions of the main actors, learning the route to the promised land passes through the sea of legalities, we can see how difficult it is to bid farewell to old friends, and finally, it is not so easy to dangle carrots if you have to keep your head down. The theme of an serial-reading of the stories, is that privatization is not a magic solution, there is a search for a new identity of Swedish public organization, and people still think privatization is a good thing. Computerization (in the transition to an information society) is also read as a serial of various episodes, that upon analysis has a level of pessimism that is “a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy” (p. 114). And “the public sector’s serials ... cleverly imitate reality by portraying women as the unintended victims of a course of events... the ‘girls’ ... who cry in ‘Company-ization’ and the less qualified women who ‘will not make it’ and ‘are afraid of technology’” (p. 121). Czarniawska (1997: 118) summarizes, serials is “an experience-material organizing device that made me choose them as an analogy ... this part of my research material.”

Chapter six invokes the metaphor of “screenplay” to analyze the budget process. Budget writers become “script writers” on the “stage-setting” of municipalities taking “stage directions” from politicians. The concept of scene-act-ratio is used: “achieving a correct scene-act ratio can ... be seen as the main task of the stage directions: the scene directions must be coherent with acting instructions” (p. 130). Actors need to be able to act on instructions, take stage directions, in order for the action to create a coherent scene. In this script, as the Swedish public employees imitate business company scripts, paradoxical effects happen: “the action not only does not fit the scene but even appears to contradict it” (p. 131). Budgeting is read as an act of “collective writing.” Finally, budgets are read as “texts” that “reproduce a certain political order, complete with its

unavoidable dramas, while organizing (controlling and coordinating) the actions of a large cast of characters” (p. 140). The value of her semiotics approach is that she is able to analyze the “romanticist and modernist rhetoric... that is so typical of contemporary life in large organizations” (p. 141).

Chapter seven looks at how Swedish public organization identity is constructed. There are several analyses. First, she introduces two articles from a Swedish daily paper and analyzes how the writers employ various rhetorical techniques showing for example how the “language of the marketplace dominates the article” (p. 147) and how the second article “establishes its legitimacy by linking into an ongoing discussion” (p. 149) but uses a more “confused rhetoric” (p. 152). Indeed both articles are to her, confused and not persuasive rhetoric, because they rely upon a “modernist, naive-realistic view that words refer directly to phenomena in the real world” (p. 152). The second analysis looks at how one organization sets itself up in the identity of a “legal person.” The “super person” of agency is the scene-act ratio she interprets. The organizations reviewed in this chapter are seen as “actors trying to construct a new stage” as a “control philosophy whereby the stage determines the actions and the actors” (p. 159). When their actions remain in tact, a new identity is hard to construct. Yet, an identity transformation is taking place onstage, in a setting in which other actors are authoring the identity-narrative. “The new identity is to be ‘written’ by somebody else, for example, the private sector” (p. 160). In the managerialism model of identity, the organization is the sole author of its identity. The chapter takes a postmodern turn, by pointing out that managers represent only one voice in a polyphony (p. 162). She concludes by reasserting “a need for normative narratives... that they fulfill their function properly if they are loosely coupled to practice; if they legitimate (provide the legitimate rules for accounting for practice) rather than trying to influence practice” (p. 164).

In sum, Czarniawska writes her narratives organized along semiotic theatrical metaphors (or ergonographic fictions as she calls them) to interpret stories authored by practitioners and consultants that construct the world of organizations-as-theater (Czarniawska, 1997: 202-204). The work balances

between pragmatic-realism (this works) and semiotic sign system. It is an insightful and rigorous critique of rhetorical moves Swedish administrators.

**Disney Enterprise Theatrics** My own stance on “spectacle” and “spectator,” is critical postmodern (Best & Kellner, 1997) rooted in Guy Debord’s (1967) *Society of the Spectacle*. The critical postmodern perspective looks at spectacle-theatrics in a context of power/knowledge and the political economy of production and consumption. The spectacle is theatrics on the global and virtual stages of late capitalism. The critical postmodern perspective is more emancipatory, how to effect change in spectacle to a more festive realization of life capitalism. The contribution of a critical postmodern theatrics is to provide a way to use parody and irony to resituate what one expects from modern organizations (e.g. consistent scene-act ratios) historically-rooted in the theater trope, in terms of the status quo role of actor, spectator, plot, and staging metaphors. Disney for example exploits the theater trope as a mechanism of control. I believe if we can apply postmodern theatrics to deconstruct such theatrics, we can see some ways to move from spectacle to and festival and even to Ahimsa ethics of non-violence to human, animal, and all biotic life.

My research sought to explore the multiplicity and contentiousness of collective storytelling-as-theater. But, not just any theater, I was interested in experimental theater fictions, such as the *nouveau roman*. *Nouveau roman* allows multiple forms of discourse. Discourse is defined as the infinite play of differences in meaning mediated through socially constructed hegemonic practices (Boje, 1995: 998). Hegemonic is the taken-for-granted ways in which one discourse has its way with another. Organizations are storytelling theaters and storytelling organization spectacles, not metaphors of sameness, but actualized in the material reality of the global stage (Boje, 1991, 1995).

Tamara is one of the more postmodern plays of experimental fiction. In Tamara, a dozen or more characters, unfold their stories before a walking, wandering, sometimes running, audience. In postmodern, Tamara Organization Theater, the meaning of the play, as well as the plot, is a negotiation and renegotiation between wandering actors and spectators invited onto the stage of

spectacle. By contrast, the modern organization play designs a stationary audience, gazing a single stage, with passive spectatorship. Postmodern audience fragments, moves, interacts with actors, and becomes the active spectator, chasing characters and scenes from one room to the next, from one floor to the next. When I went to a Tamara play, I went into bedrooms, kitchens, and other chambers to chase the co-created stories. On a dozen stages and with a dozen storytellers, the number of story lines fragmented audiences can trace as wandering discourses-12 factorial (479,001,600). I was an active spectator, deciding which character, the maid or the butler, to follow to another room in the Tamara Mansion. I experienced the play differently from other spectators who made their way to different floors and different stories than I. Two people can be in the same room, but coming by route of different rooms and character sequences – each can walk away from the same conversation with quite different stories. Tamara became my metaphor of the storytelling, or discourse organization.

Walt Disney enterprise is the spectacle of work-as-theater and consumption-as-theater par excellence. Spectacle produces use value beyond the theatric materiality (the word as real) of actors, spectators, and stage. Disney-as-theater constructs the internalized gaze of panoptic control. I seek to deconstruct Disney as modern yet postmodern, plurivocal (multi-voiced) and polysemous (multi-meanings), yet also monologic theater of dominant (official) and marginal discourses of organization. Employees of Disney theme parks and mall and airport stores are “cast members” but also “smiling robots,” to be fired if they are out of spectacle-character. One spectacle is the happy work-as-theater artfully enacted by cast members to showcase Disney film characters. And, there are less renowned theatrics that present the dark side of the Happy Kingdom, those who resist theatric control. Consumers are “guests” of the spectacle, but unless the sensibilities are raised awakened to Disney’s opening its park to gays, producing movies outside its G-rating, or making Disney garments in sweatshops, not much protest happens within the Americana Dream Machine. Amidst the romantic and tragic theatrics of spectacles of production

and consumption, the official Kingdom discourse is a happy one, and the unofficial unhappy one remains outside the gates of this kingdom.

In my analysis of Disney-as-Tamara play (an example of postmodern experimental theater), I argued that the management of writing and the writing of management is too often a choice made in favor of telling the happy “official” story, while silencing competing voices, in ways that writes a naïve, politically and economically status quo discourse. Tamara is a play with story plurivocality that gives the discourse of organization multiple interpretation potential. The discursive organization-as-theater focuses attention on how collectives “write” and “re-write” their histories.

The analysis argues that Disney can be read as a contending plurality of premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses. My study supports Jameson’s (1991: 123) observation that organizations do not follow a course of era-to-era displacement, but rather that discursive elements shift in emphasis and in priority. I theorize organizations as simultaneous discourses. To me, this allows us to look at how modern totalizing, functionalist, structuralist discourse of organization history and identity (i.e. organization as person) are permeated with postmodern fragmented, local, and resistant discourses. And within postmodern discourse, there are contending theories: from the affirmatives who posit a future beyond exploitation, a return to a spirituality that elevates ecology and democracy – to the skeptics who distrust all forms of enlightenment and progress-discourse.

My approach was to look at multiple variations of the Disney stories to explore how each version covered a great deal of ambiguity. There are differences between official and non-official stories, between CEO and non-CEO stories. In deconstructing these stories I used several approaches. One was to identify dualities, explore their hierarchies, suggest reversals, and then attempt, where possible, to resituate the duality (without its hierarchical logos). Each story is one consensus, one totalizing account, one set of universals, one set of essential foundations, and one construction. One side of a story masks other sides, and without context, we can miss what is between the lines of a story. To

deconstruct the CEO stories, for example, meant reading for dualistic categories, the hierarchy and themes in the stories to see how one term dominated another, how one character commanded another, how one element shadowed the other, how one voice spoke instead of or ahead of the other voices.

Much about deconstructing the theatrics of organization has to do with noticing voice. Who gets a voice in the CEO scenes, whose voice is marginal to the performance, who gets no voice on stage at all? To deconstruct is to unleash stories that do not fit neatly within the official performance of Disney Storytelling Theater. Disney Theater is founded upon story-manufacturing and story-commodification, on the production and consumption of stories. Disney work is theater work. Disney theme parks, cartoons, and movies is only part of the theatrics. As in Tamara-theater, there are many parallel and simultaneous stages backstage to the official Disney frontstage of corporate image making spectacle. As a storytelling organization, Disney (re) produces itself in premodern, modern, and postmodern discourse.

Before Disney existed, premodern families went to medieval fairs, traveling circuses, and community and religious festivals. In Disney Theater, it is Walt who was the sole creator of Mickey Mouse. But for Dave Iwerks, the son of Ub Iwerks, Walt's once upon a time partner, it was Ub not Walt that created Mickey. Did Ub take a sketch of his Oswald the Rabbit cartoon, round the eyes and ears, in order to create Mickey Mouse? Behind the mystic that Walt was the animator, we find that Iwerks, a prolific craftsman, turned out 700 drawings a day. Behind the appearance of Postmodern Disney, the media company, we find that Walt organized less-skilled artists, mostly women, to do the inking work, at lower wages, than the cartoon-craftsmen, in order to accumulate capital with a more mechanistic labor process. Beneath Disney Theater is the cartoon factory with jobs organized according to division of labor, use of cheap labor under close supervision, a pyramid of functionally managed departments with gang bosses, speed bosses, repair bosses, and inspectors, and finally, the suppression of all craft autonomy with predetermined schedules, formulas, and interchangeable tasks. Ub and the other artists resisted Walt's attempts to implement Frederick

Taylor's (1911) rationalistic principles of scientific management. Ub quit when he realized he lost control of his art. Artists who once were involved in all phases of production now "felt isolated from their colleagues and worked in a creative vacuum" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 42). The artist colony had by 1942, become a modern industrial factory.

Walt, while still in Kansas City, read Edwin Lutz's (1920) book on the industrial production of animation, which states "of all the talents required by anyone going into this branch of art, none is so important as that of the skill to plan the work so that the lowest possible number of drawings need be made for any particular scenario" (Smith, 1978). Walt photostatted the book. As in *Tamara*, the story we construct of Disney *Threat* depends upon the characters we follow from one episode to the next. Here I am following the workers, where most textbooks follow the managers. In *Disney Storytelling Theater*, everything was "Walt Disney presents." Yet, if we only follow the official theater, we miss how Disney constructs its story as an act of domination to other sides of "*the*" story. While Walt is presented in official narration as the Henry Ford of animation, he was an imitator of Bray's administrative methods, and an industry that was Taylorizing story production, and colonizing it with a story-manufacturing system.

Behind the theatric story of artist-work is a theater of less skilled women, doing specialized inking tasks, while male artisans and apprentices did the high skill drawing work. The gender-based system of production was an industry trend. Walt intensified the labor process by opening his own animation and art school on studio grounds to attract more low-wage apprentices. The official story is these were lean times in which the studio could not have survived without Walt's tight (labor process) control.

The theatrical metaphors still in use at Disney have a history. Before workers were "cast members" in *Disney Theater*, and customers were "guests," there was a different theatrics. Walt was the "father" to his "boys" (his term for male animators, storymen, and gag writers) and to his "girls" (his term for women doing the inking and more repetitive drawing work). Disney was "one big happy

family.” The family metaphor encouraged a paternalistic order, where boys were reprimanded or fired for cursing in front of the girls. Walt expected his family to be loyal to him as self-proclaimed father, and to work all hours of the day or night for their paternal hero. But, on May 29, 1941, 293 boys and girls went on strike. The Disney Theater spectacle of “one big happy, harmonious family” was shattered by 1,000 picketers and by stories of the dysfunctional family: unfair salaries, poor working conditions, and a parochial code of behavior. The family metaphor was no longer purchasing employee loyalty. Instead employees observed that an inner circle enjoyed more privileges, including better wages, while they worked like cogs in the machine, punching in and out to go to the lavatory or to sharpen a pencil. Babbit, for example, saw his \$300-a-week salary as inequitable in comparison to that of his female assistant who only received \$50. The Cartoonist Guild union was organizing the unhappy family, and Walt fired anyone that joined, on the spot. He tacked his photos to his office wall, and fired everyone that he could identify.

At a meeting at the Roosevelt Hotel, 50 percent of the Disney family signed Cartoonist Guild union cards. The official Disney story is that those who signed were “misguided boys and girls.” Walt took pictures of the strikers and dove into the picket line with fists swinging. He tried to intimidate by having the “ever-faithful girls” report to work in skimpy bathing suits for auditions for live-action films, threatening to get out of animation work, where the talents of the “boys” would no longer be needed. To get even, Walt denounced Babbitt, Sorrell, and Hilberman to the House Un-American Affairs Committee, as communists.

As with the stories it produces for sale, Disney Theater homogenizes and simplifies stories, camouflages and masks the local authors, and packages Disney stories and Disney characters as entertainment commodities. Disney is deeply embedded in the global spectacle of commodification. Disney character icons appear on everything from toothbrushes to kitchen sinks. Disney, like other corporations, bombards consumer-spectators with “story bits” presented in

shorter and shorter bursts, even to the point at which they become subliminal seducers for commodities.

Beneath the Disney Storytelling Theater of the theme park is a factory. People pay to stand in lines and ride on conveyor belts and wheeled cars that follow prescribed cycle times as they view storyboard sequences of small town, tun-of-the-century, Middle America, and its dreams of science and industry.

Stage performers at Disney, the cast members, do their theatric performances in Disney Theater, wearing their “costumes.” The “smile factory” manufactures “friendly, courteous, fun” on a rigid assembly line (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993; Van Maanen, 1991). In the theater metaphor, employees are “cast members,” wearing “costumes” instead of uniforms, playing “roles” instead of doing jobs, playing to “guest” not to consumers” (Smith & Eisenberg, 1987). The French workers at EuroDisney met the “theater metaphors” with cynicism and resistance. They did not want to be smiling robots, pretending to be stage-performers. Disney’s theatric staging of work induces labor to believe that theatrical values define their value-added. In Marxist terms, use value gets defined as exchange value. We are seduced to forget the factory beneath the boardwalk.

In a Baudrillard sense, there is no longer any detectable difference between theater and work, story characters and workers, story scripts and job descriptions, guests and customers. People relate to Mickey Mouse and the Magic Kingdom as if they were real. “Disneyland functions as an ‘imaginary effect’ concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter” (Fjellman, 1992: 301). The employees who developed the rides, inked the cartoons, sell the popcorn, and perform in the shows do not see a postmodern hyperreality. They see the modern factory. Their reality is “smile or be fired.” The festive “image” of having fun is consumed through commodity purchases in a spectacle of modern production. My point is that the modern and postmodern discourse of Disney is intertextual, or just plain connected. To see Disney as modern smile-factory is to miss its postmodern hyperreality, and vice versa. The smile factory appropriates postmodern sensibility into its theatrical

production, for all to consume. Van Maanen (1992) pointed out how Disney theme parks in Japan, France, and the U.S. differ. The Japanese have intensified the efficiency, cleanliness, and safety aspects of Disneyland to fit their preference for order and harmony. Japan-Disney is more modernist than the U.S. or EuroDisney theme parks.

Disney, in the late stage of its global capitalism, is modifying the standard park form, to reach its fragmented audience. For example, in Japan, Main Street U.S.A., a standard exhibit at Disneyland and Disney World, have been replaced by a World Bazaar, and the robot President Lincoln has been replaced by a robot crane, and even Mickey Mouse has a bit more stylish image. EuroDisney, adds several French touches: Disney's story themes admit their national origins, tables and chairs are not bolted to the floor, and French women do not abide by the standard dress code. Slowly Disney theme parks are revising the staging of Victorian capitalistic dramas. The modern theater needs a more up-to-date booking, a more postmodern act.

Voices – Postmodern analysis question the privileging of any voice. Walt rarely allowed any voice other than his own to take center stage. Walt was the lead act. Musicians, composers, and cartoonists were referred to by Walt as “my musicians,” “my composers,” my “artists.” Even his family members did not have names, “my brother, my uncle, my father, my daughter.” But, to Walt, his characters had names, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc. Eisner has given identity to human voices, such as George Lucas and Michael Jackson. Now Eisner speaks for Walt, crafting his stories in the - What would Walt have done tradition. There is yet a struggle between single-voiced and multi-voiced accounts of Disney.

Marginalizations – A marginalized character at Disney, is for example, an artist who does not get to sign his or her own work. Story sessions to come up with a cartoon could involve more than 20 people. Yet, Walt's animations did not carry screen credits, except for his own signature. By Jack Kinney's (1988) account Disney enterprises paid less than fair market value for art that is now sold for millions. A single frame by Kinney commands thousands of dollars. In the

official Disney story Up Iwerks and Roy Disney (both Disney partners) are marginal characters, as are cartoonists like Kinney, scriptwriters like Charles Shows, and story creators like Babbitt, Sorrell, and Hilberman. Yet, by many marginal-accounts it was Up Iwerks who did the early artwork and is alleged to have designed Mickey and to have even created the famous Disney signature. The point here is not that the Disney version is untrue, but that it marginalizes and eliminates many characters with stories worth telling.

Totalisms – totalism is an historical account that privileges one relatively narrow point of view. His-story glosses many stories. Disney Theater commodifies and controls production and consumption. In postmodern fashion, Walt is himself one of the commodified characters, along with Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Disney Storytelling Theater is a control device because the theatrics embellish Disney philosophy by conveying codes of behavior while obscuring their hegemonic construction. With deconstruction we pull on one of the strings of a totalized account and unravel the traces of its construction. A trace is like a foot print, or the trail a jet has left in the sky after it has messed with the clouds. Even though we do not see a constructor, we can tell one has passed by. Local stories resist the totalizing of an account into *“the” one and only story*.

Universalisms – Universals are grand principles, sweeping statements that gloss over differences in other stories. Stories are shaped to sell particular visions of past or future. Walt’s vision was the “G” movie and a theme park that would appeal to Midwestern America. All facets of the Disney operation “synergized” around these principles. Cartoons and movies generated the characters that became theme rides and icons to merchandise products of all description.

Essentialisms – An essentialism is similar to a universal except that it is a micro theory, an appeal to a fundamental essential of human character. Walt is held out as the essential character of the creative genius and entrepreneur, who personified the American Dream. In other stories Walt was Der Fuhrer, Mr. Fear, Simon Legree, Ebenezer Scrooge, Beelzebub the Devil and Mickey Mou\$. these counter-essentialisms are acts of resistance to a corporate culture where

“smiling” is everything and the American Dream is an essential commodity. Essentialisms mask what Schaefer and Fassel (1988) call “process addictions.” In official stories, Walt was saintly, and on Disney Sunday Theater he was an easy-going, grandfatherly character. But, by many alternative accounts, Walt was intense, moody, vengeful, and used scare tactics in his story meetings. He would drum his fingers on his chair to let a presenter know whether to speed up or slow down a presentation.

Panoptic Gaze – For Foucault a panoptic gaze is a multiple, automatic, continuous, hierarchical, and anonymous power functioning in a network of relations from top to bottom, from bottom to top, as well as laterally, to hold an enterprise together (1977: 175-180). At the heart of Walt’s panoptic surveillance was storyboarding. One of Walt’s animators, Webb Smith, had the habit of sketching gag sequences instead of writing them down and would then toss the sketches in what looked to others like a confused mess all over the floor of his office. Walt was a nut about being tidy, and to avoid Walt’s wrath Smith took to pinning his sketches on the walls. This made Walt furious since he had just spent good money to repaint the walls (Kinney, 1988: 62; Schickel, 1985: 148). Smith then decided to pin his rough sketches to a some two by eight and later four by six-foot boards. This way he could reposition sketches to work out the continuity of the story, lay in the backgrounds, and work with the dialogue. Walt made special use of the innovation. Walt had everyone doing storyboards for every project from cartoons and movies, to theme parks. Walt was also an obsessive snoop, who roamed the halls at night so he could take a peek at the progress of every project in kingdom. A perfect panopticon is the gaze mechanism where you are not sure if you have been gazed or not (as in a prison tower with one-way windows facing the cells). The gaze gets internalized because, not knowing if you are being watched, or not, you gaze yourself. You become a spectator to your self. But in Walt’s case, there was a flaw. Disney people knew Walt had been gazing their boards because he chain-smoked Chesterfields, and would leave tell tale ashes all about. Walt could also not resist messing with the boards.

**Table Two: Contrasts between Modern and Tamara Theatric(s).**

Modern Organization Theater	Tamara Theater
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fixed stage of hegemony</li> <li>2. Back stage does the script, directs the actors, and assigns the roles.</li> <li>3. Oppressive means of inducing consensus by fear.</li> <li>4. Rationalizing what goes on the stage.</li> <li>5. Audience resists by booing</li> <li>6. One voice</li> <li>7. Marginalization of other views</li> <li>8. Totalized history</li> <li>9. Universals</li> <li>10. Essentialist principles</li> <li>11. Panoptic Prison imposing the gaze of self in inscribe performativity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tamara of 12 simultaneous stages.</li> <li>2. Wandering audiences selecting stories to participate in.</li> <li>3. Desire to move between stages and roles</li> <li>4. Desire to ignore the director</li> <li>5. Theaters of consumption of management fashion</li> <li>6. Many voices</li> <li>7. Plurality of views.</li> <li>8. Many his and her stories</li> <li>9. Little narratives</li> <li>10. Situated principles</li> <li>11. Spectators gazing the spectacle.</li> </ol>

In sum, Disney today is not a very postmodern organization. It is, in many ways, just as authoritarian, micromanaged, and surveillance-oriented, as it was when Walt imitated Tayloristic animation practices. It is postmodern in small ways, such as the attempts to include other voices, create dialogue across discourse, and fragment its themes to appeal to each country. Disney is partly hyperreal, with a culture of fragmented symbols in which it is chic to put Mickey Mouse on every conceivable consumer product. Disney is modern in its policing of local stories that are contrary to the Disney grand narrative. Disney is mostly just modern theater, but postmodern in that the spectators treat Disney as more real than anything they purchase elsewhere. To workers, Disney is work; to consumers, Disney is play, even the “authentic” measure of festival. To the postmodern theorist Disney is to be recontextualized in the larger social, historical, and economic contexts that it decontextualizes and recontextualizes as a spectacle of consumption. There is still child labor making Disney T-shirts and toys.

As in Tamara Theater, the Disney storytelling organization is many stories simultaneously performed on many stages, as spectators and cast members

wander from one room to and another doing their theatrics. Each story is an intertextual framing of reality being chased by wandering and fragmenting groups of spectators. Each story masks a diversity of voices. The postmodern analysis breaks away from the fixed stage, the mono-voice, and the universal story line. Yet, Lyotard (1984) reminds us not to reify the discursive metaphor. Disney provides space for some limited forms of alternative theater, it disrupts the continuity and serenity of its own scenes, with play. Yet, there are not too many competing scripts allowed to play out on the Disney stage. Tamara is open conversation in a multiplicity of minor stories that collectively constitute, transform and reform the theatrics of the storytelling organization. If one is a rebel, the point is to use theatrics to alter the “sacred” story, to perform alternate theatrics that are transforming.

While Disney is the master of work-as-theater, others corporations have followed the example. Indeed, to manage and organize like Disney is itself a commodity. Disney University is not just training Disney cast members in Disney Theater. Southwest Airlines, for example, encourages pilots, attendants, and ticket agents to take the stage. Coca-Cola ushers guests in Digital Storytelling Theater in Las Vegas. NikeTown is constructing spectacle stages for its NBA stars, where props rotate and the walls and floors morph to keep scenes changing. The university is no less spectacular. I perform acts of theater whenever I get in front of a student or faculty audience. Business is show business with as much theatric production and direction as any sitcom. Performances are scripted to attract “guests.” The line between work and theater has disappeared. Salesmen and executives are performers on the business stage, but so are managers, clerks, and customer-spectators.

Many other corporations follow Disney to become purposefully theatrical. In the latest Las Vegas spectacle, the “World of Coca-Cola Las Vegas” features the world’s largest (1000 foot, four-story) Coke bottle in a global storytelling theater, where twenty-four rotating, heartwarming Coke-stories are reenacted in digital and folkloric storytelling (McIntosh, 1997).

When the lights dim in the 60-seat theater, a live storyteller recounts beverage tales while the audience watches the show on a 9-x-12-foot projection screen. The storyteller is a hired actor who chooses from seven independent programs, each of which lasts 10 minutes (Axelson, 1997).

Afterwards, the audience interacts with the performance as it fills out pop-quiz forms identifying celebrities they recall from the storylines. The exhibit is also designed to be interactive, by brining the audience into the storytelling process, allowing them to type their own favorite Coke-stories into computer terminals. "Digital Storytelling" is an emerging art form pioneered by San Francisco-based multimedia developer Dana Atchley, and founder of the annual digital storytelling festival. I am very interested in Global Storytelling Theater as a spectacular organization.

**Academy-As-Tamara** What is the Academy of Management conference if not a Tamara, literally a hundred meetings happening all at the same time, as we professors move from one performance to another, knowing that we can never catch but a few spectacles? After months of electronic communication and the simultaneous presence afforded by jet travel, between four and five thousand people assemble as international audience to perform the Academy Tamara. The Academy is only interesting as a spectacle of cultural fast-food consumption, individuated performances on a global stage (Lyotard, 1997: 104-106).

Some spectacles, such as Peter Drucker's performance happen in the big room, as thousands gather to hear him speak. Most Academy performances happen in smaller rooms with smaller audiences. In a hundred rooms, professors, consultants and doctoral candidates wait their turn to perform their ten-minute storyline. Our "theater of consumption" (Firat & Dholakia, 1998) is strangely related to the "global theater of signs" (Lyotard, 1997: 105), both are performances portending a new order of things, both a paradox of standardized and fragmented global culture. The simultaneous stage production varies between global transnational productions and locally originated theatrics. In postmodern global theater, "people move in an out of relationships and situations that they belong to, temporality and affectivity. In a similar vein people are

members of temporary or momentary communities ... the creation of multiple alternative communities to the market society that will produce the alternative to the market: the society of the theater, the theater of life” (Firat & Dholakia, 1998: 155).

Academy as postmodern theater multiplies and destabilizes meanings to become schizophrenia, a grand spectacle of Academic progress and an assemblage of little narrative theater productions.

Tamara is also how I experience my university life. Every semester is a Tamara is scores of courses taught at the same time by scores of instructors, attended by scores of student audiences. The audiences, faculty, books and performances travel between the stages of the Business College. Back stage I work in committee after committee auditioning new players, evaluating performances, writing scripts for cross-functional courses that will be performed in a year or two. It is a theater of intertextuality with references between AACSB codes and conventions and the textuality of our interpretative accreditation performances. There is an “illusion of coherence” between person/character, story/history, performer/audience sustained in the modern theatrics of the Academy that is simultaneously uncovered in the Academy’s postmodern theatrics.

Academy is both modern and postmodern theatrics. More important there is ironic interplay, intertextual weaving, and interpenetration between these manifestations. There is no radical break with modern traditions, but rather a new synthetic theater (Simard, 1984: x).

We all aspire to be actors on a global stage that is fragmenting pluralistically. The Academy is responding to and producing the proliferation of tastes and fashions on the global stage. Academy is a character in global theater. Academy is a director rushing in with script changes in sustainable business education while promoting cyber classrooms. Academy is a series of identity poses, instead of a centered and unified construct. There is a postmodern refusal of closure in these moves, and a modern form of resistance to script changes. There is no resolution of the oppositions of modern and

postmodern theatric(s) in the Academy. Each ten-minute performance is a point of view, a cliché of fast-food consumption, and the Academy is an assemblage of a multiplicity of fragmented points of view.

I am a character with a staged identity that appears coherent, as long as I do not speak of my person, I stage my performance within the coherent rules of presentation, but I leave much unexplained, and the plot remains open in characteristically postmodern style. There is a tension between my lines and my enactment of theater. My plot does not rise, fall, or climax. The minimalism of my 10-minute limit keeps my performance a stereotype. I am telling my performance instead of just enacting. Mine is a deliberate disruption of theatricality, as my speech turns real and I lose my fictional context. I draw attention to my own improvisation to highlight my textual presence. I communicate directly to reestablish connection between you as spectator and me as spectacle. I erase the division between performer and spectator. I blur the boundary between me as performer and me as person. I give you many poses, but no coherence.

We turn next to how postmodern theater might transform spectacles of production and consumption into something more festive. Is spectacle change possible? We turn now to postmodern theater theory to extend insights into organization-as-theater in ways that could take us beyond spectacle to situations of festival.

**Pragmatic Theater Theory** In theater studies, as in the two theater-as-organization studies just reviewed, there is also a split between semiotic/pragmatist (modernist) approaches to semiotic sign systems (Whitmore, 1994) and postmodern theater (Geis, 1993; Simard, 1984; Watt, 1998), who are also sharply divided (Table One).

On the one hand, there is Whitmore (1994) who uses words “spectacle” and “spectator” in a non-critical, pragmatist, structuralist, and even determinist reading of theater semiotics. In his book titled *Direction Postmodern Theater: Shaping Signification in Performance* takes an approach that parallels Czarniawska. Both mention postmodern, but turn to pragmatism and the

semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Peirce, while putting their work in the postmodern condition (Whitmore, 1994: 6-8; Czarniawska, 1997: 57, 168). In both works language becomes a “medium between the knowing subject and the objective world” as Czarniawska (1997: 57) puts it. Whitmore (1994: 13, 28-29, 210-217) use semiotics to develop twenty sign systems that can compare the structural features of various theatrics. In Table Three, I have summarized his 20 systems and entered some contrasts made between modern and postmodern theater in this chapter.

**Table Three: Twenty Semiotic Sign Systems in Theater**

Sign Systems	Modern Theater	Postmodern Theater
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<b>Audience</b>		
1. Spectator	Passive watcher	Active participant
2. Audience	Individuals assembled	Collective involvement
<b>Frames</b>		
3. Physical Environment	Central stage with performers separated from actors	Environmental stage mixing performers and spectators
4. Publicity	Posters with realistic images	Cartoons/ pop art
<b>Performer</b>		
5. Personality	In their star role	Fragmented
6. Voice (spoken word)	Lines are delivered	Reads or improvises lines
7. Facial Expression	Exaggerated	Static
8. Gesture	Gestures of character	Limited
9. Movement	In character	In and out of character
10. Makeup and Hairstyle	Made up in character	Minimalist
<b>Mise-en-Scene</b>		
11. Space	Massive volume	Fragmented
12. Setting	Realistic	Surrealistic
13. Costume	Period	Minimalist
14. Properties	Furniture	Juxtaposed
15. Lighting	Spotlight	Dark
16. Color	Contrast to actors	Varies
<b>Aural</b>		
17. Music	Fits plot	Contrasting
18. Sound	Ambient	Environmental
<b>Offactoral</b>		
19. Smell	Not used	In close contact
<b>Tactile</b>		
20. Touch	No contact with spectators	Touch happens

His theatrical sign system focus with the lens of the semiotician, on how a given spectator hears, sees, smells, tastes, and touches the staged spectacle.

“Spectators” he adds, “see and hear different things, depending on where their gaze rests or shifts to from instant to instant, where they are located in the theater, and how much they are concentrating at each moment” (1994: 16). And spectators vary by their “skill level in interpreting the multiple signifiers that the performance offers” (p. 17).

The semiotic system is exploited differently in modern and postmodern theater. For example, in modern theater the spectator has a specific space apart

from the performers and can stare at the back other spectator's heads, but in environmental theater spectators are mixed with performers: "they share the same space; they can touch and feel, as well as see and hear, not only the performers but also one another" (Whitmore, 1994: 115). "Postmodern theater" says Whitmore (1994: 206) "represents a paradigm shift from linear, story-oriented performance to something much more disjointed and layered."

I am skeptical; the semiotic view of the five senses of theater does not get at the nonlinearity, decenteredness, and skepticism of postmodern (or deconstruction) theory. If we contrast Whitmore (1994) with Simard (1984) and Geis (1993), we get quite a different reading of postmodern theater. By combining social construction with semiotics, Czarniawska (1997), in my view, is less structural, and provides a more political reading of her texts. "Thus, for example, a spectator at a postmodern theater performance is given the creative leeway to bring meaning out of the experience through an interaction with the seemingly disordered signifiers of the performance" than in "tightly proscribed, linear, unified, and closure-oriented production and cluster of signifiers" (Whitmore, 1994: 19-20).

**Nuanced Postmodern Theater** - On the other hand, Simard (1984), Geis (1993), and Watt (1998) have a nuanced postmodern reading of theater, but disagree among themselves as to which particular playwrights are postmodern. All three seem to agree Sam Shepard writes postmodern drama, but take varying positions on works by Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, and several performance-theater artists.

To Simard (1984: 25), who takes a historical-period-shift approach to postmodernism, Pinter and Albee are the first postmoderns, and their work building upon experimental and absurdist work in the 1950s and 1960s; it is foundational to Tom Stoppard, Sam Shepard, Peter Schaffer, and David Rabe. They built upon experimental work such as Luigi Chiarelli's *Theater of the Grotesque*, Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), and Antonin Artaud's *The Theater of Cruelty*. These experiments in impressionist and

minimalist drama play with traditional constructs of plot, dialogue, drama, and audience.

The Theater of the Absurd built upon these beginnings, with Eugene Ionesco's first play, *The Bald Soprano* (Simard, 1984: 8). Theater of the Absurd defines an eclectic range of styles, from Ionesco's "mechanical definitions of Absurdism and *The Bald Soprano* portraying bourgeoisie characters with cliché dialogue and stereotypic action to Samuel Beckett. In 1956, Beckett's minimalist drama, *Waiting for Godot* appeared. In minimalism, the realism of structure, staging, and character are minimized to maximize meaning. Beckett used minimalist staging to draw the spectator into their own subjectivity, and to be free of abstract concepts and ideas, moving to less real instead of more real, and to interior subjectivity rather than external reality (p. 16-17).

Characters [are] reduced to their lowest common denominator, from the tramps of Godot to the lips of Not I, contemplate the nature of their existence in the present, at a given moment in time, located subjectively within their individual perceptions of a time continuum in a reality located in the psyche (Simard, 1984:18).

Harold Pinter's (1957, *The Room*; *The Birthday Party*; *the Dumb Waiter*) also draws on the school of anger, in a synthesis of realist and absurdist techniques (Simard, 1984: 25).

Pinter's characters approach the void of meaninglessness as do Beckett's, but rather than surrendering to despair in a gesture of cosmic symbolism, they attempt to find ways of sustaining themselves in the absence of purpose or meaning.

Pinter explores the existential limits of isolation using minimalist staging and a limited number of characters, as with Beckett, but with an insistence on specific locales and recognizable characters. The spectator focus is on the existential choices the characters make in particular situations. There is little biography for the spectator to assign motive or aspiration, which results in subjective exploration. What do you do in this situation? The plays are static, with little physical action, but dynamic in subtext, set by pause and silence, "conveying the importance of what is left unsaid" (p. 30).

*The Dumb Waiter* (Pinter, 1957) compares society to the forces of a modern organization to explore the menace to individual existence. Space and time are menace themes in his work, examining its source and what it is psychologically based upon. In *Old times* (Pinter, p. 27-8), the character Kate says:

There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place.

In *Theater of Cruelty*, Artaud put on a ritualized drama that parodied the resources of the theater to emphasize performance over text (Simard, 1984: 20). Derrida, in *Writing and Difference* (1978: 248) relates “grammar” to how the Theater of Cruelty:

Will always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a re-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent. The present offers itself as such, appears, presents itself, opens the stage of time or the time of the stage only by harboring its own intestine difference, and only in the interior fold of its original repetition, in representation, in dialectics.

The question is how to analyze what presents itself on the modern theatrical stage of spectacle organization without falling into Derrida’s (1991: 27) trap of “phenomenological reduction.” As Menpes (1995) puts it, “without a coherent structure of thought which challenges the precepts of predatory econopolitics we are consigned to a return of the (sterile) same.”<sup>4</sup> Derrida makes some focused comments on spectacle:

“Grammatology is “a view, a spectacle mounted in the text”, and consequently cannot turn away from itself as it has always already turned away from itself as it has always already turned away from itself as it has always already turned....” (Derrida, as cited in Menpes, 1995).

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<sup>4</sup> Menpes (1995) <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/English/wip/menp3i.html>

Deborah Geis (1993) however, also a periodizer, puts the postmodern theater turn together quite differently from Simard. She begins the turn with Sam Shepard, and then includes David Mamet, Maria Irene Fornes, Ntozake Shange, and Gary and Karen Finley in her list of postmodern playwrights and performance artists. Geis (1993" 31-33) relies upon Frederic Jameson's periodizing concept of postmodernism, as well as Jean-François Lyotard's postmodern condition, including gestures of self-reflexivity.

What is unique about postmodernism in all three texts (Simard, Geis, & Watt) is their search for an aesthetic of popular or mass culture. This takes Geis into works by Jean Baudrillard to include simulacra and hyperreal. Her search for a postmodern aesthetic focuses upon examples where actors hold up photographs of them selves or narrate facts about a performer, to blur boundaries between character and performer, and on changes in staging where the boundary between spectator and performer gets blurred by bringing spectators on stage. For example, in Artaud's (1958:81) *Theater of Cruelty*, "the spectator is in the center and the spectacle surrounds him." Obtaining direct communication between spectacle and passive spectators is what I am seeking to accomplish. In Open Theater's *Viet Rock*, actors touch the spectators and in *Commune* (1970), the play stops until volunteer spectators sit in a circle onstage. In Environmental Theater, audience participation turns the play into a social event where actors become "real people" and spectators become the "performers" (Geis, 1993: 40). These moves to attain spectator participation and improvisation would collapse into Whitmore's (1994) reductionist semiotic sign measures, were it not for Simard (1984) Geis' (1993) exploration of the interpenetrating inner and outer layers of performers and spectators, to reveal existential crisis in spectacle grand narratives.

In Shepard's plays, for example, as in experimental theater, the limits of theatricality are parodied and stretched, but the actor monologues take on improvisational qualities that go beyond illusions of theater-as-life. Shepard sets up a tension between the spoken and visual spectacle, to confront the spectators' reality with strangeness and absurdity. In *Chicago* (1965), the play

includes minimalist staging, a man sitting onstage fully clothed in a bathtub and biscuits thrown onstage and in the play's ending fishing lines cast into the audience. There is playfulness with the spectators, casting them in the role of the fish being hooked, and doing a parody on a "cast of characters." Stud (a character), "exhorts the spectators to join in: Take the line 'in your mouth and out your nose. Ladies and gentlemen, it's fantastic!'" (Geis, 1993: 49). "At times, though, Shepard teases his spectators through the *refusal* of action" (Geis, 1993: 48). And in *Chicago*, actors seem almost aware that in a play. In the Derridean sense the "free play" of Open and Environmental Theater is as Geis (1993: 44) observes, "the resistance to totalizing discourse." Changing the rules and the expected moves of spectacle gets us to deconstruct our own spectator roles. The postmodern aesthetic is an "emphasis on the self-referential and self-questioning text' postmodern metadrama calls continual attention to the ironies and problems of its own processes of representation, its own textuality and theatricality" (Geis, 1993: 46).

This all seems to coalesce into an understanding of postmodern theater, that is, until we read Stephen Watt's (1998) book *Postmodern/Drama*. Watt (1998) finds Simard's (1984) work too periodizing a writing a history of theater, and he is not in complete agreement with Geis (1993). What a mess – how can we decipher possibilities for spectacle transformation, when theatrics is in disarray. Czarniawska has us look at "real" scene-act rations and the postmodernists can not agree which playwright does a postmodern provocation on the spectator's determinate expectations of theater.

There are reasons for this confusion. Watt observes that much of the writing about postmodern culture (e.g., Jameson, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Lyotard, 1984) has not said very much about drama or theater. Ihab Hassan's (1987) *The Postmodern Turn* includes work by Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, and of course Sam Shepard, but these are very different works to postmodern theater critics, mostly not postmodern. There are several books, all with the title, *Postmodern Turn*.

I decided to look to Best and Kellner's (1997) *The Postmodern Turn*. They mention the plays of Tom Stoppard and Hugh Whitmore (p. 259), but say

nothing of Sam Shepard. Their focus on the arts is more on the postmodern turn in architecture and painting (see chapter 4). They do have much to say about Guy Debord's spectacle of consumer-fetish capitalism and the hegemony of its ideology and illusion (see their chapter three). It would seem then that Watt's (1998) challenge has a point: Best and Kellner (which Watt does not review), as well as Jameson, are not addressing the postmodern turn in theatrical drama. I want something to contribute.

Though Geis, Simard, and Watt disagree about which playwrights do postmodern theater, they all do agree that it is an indisputable turn. Experiments in Living, Open, Environmental, and Performance Group Theater are part of the postmodern turn, and this turn provides methods for spectacle critique and even (temporary) festive transformation.

What is unresolved is whether to take a periodization or postmodern theory approach to this turn. In terms of periodization, postmodern theater does borrow from experimental and absurdist movements. I am less concerned about whether it is Pinter and Albee or Shepard who gets the credit for making this turn. My focus is on a postmodern theory of the spectacle of late capitalism. For Watt (1998: 26) "Simard, in particular, shows that the more precisely one tries to locate moments of origin, epistemic change, or periodizing rupture, the more tenuous the historical narrative that results." In postmodern organization theory, a similar point is made about moves to define a periodizing rupture between modern and postmodern organization (Hassard & Parker, 1993). Dimensions of contrast end up in the same semiotic determinism that occurred from Whitmore ((1994). The focus I am drawn to is one of aesthetics. For example in plays like *Les Demoiselles d'Alabama*, the idea is to:

"break up... hierarchical structures" and embraces the "world of commerce and consumption, of the mass media," often culminating in "a multi-media display" (Watt, 1998: 26).

I seek a way to decenter spectacle, to challenge its aesthetics with parody and irony. Festival is not a rupture from spectacle organization read as theater, it is not even an emergent organizational form. And where it has emerged, as in

Renaissance or Music Festivals, as we explored, it is quickly appropriated into spectacle, or set out by spectacle as an ornament to induce shopping or global, national, or city spectacle celebration.

To sum up, in modern theater there is one stage, one script, one audience, and a linear storyline. Postmodern theater is a Tamara of many stories on many stages with the audience participating in the production and consumption of the spectacle. Postmodern theater implodes several boundaries: between person and role (In *Mutation Show*, 1971 actors hold up pictures of themselves as a narrator gives details about their personal lives), audience and stage (In *Tamara* the audience wanders between stages with the performers), audience and performers (In *Commune*, 1970 the play stops until the audience joins the performers on stage; In *Dionysis*, 1969 actors caress members of the audience), telling a story and enacting it in image or behavior (Sam Shepard's plays contrast text and performance). Modern theater presents unified characters while postmodern theater presents a series of character fragments, separate identity poses, without unification. Modern theater presents a storyline, while postmodern theater resists closure, leaves events fragmented and unexplained through a linear narrative.

**Festival Possibilities** In Table Four, I made my own twenty contrasts between Modern and Postmodern Organization Theater. Postmodern Theater sustains an ironic self-distance and ideological candor with modern theater. Postmodern theater recontextualizes through parody and imitation the modern theatrical experience. There is no happy consensus among the separate streams of presentation within or between stages of OT and OD. Against a backdrop of standardized times and formats, there are important cultural and critical pluralistic differences performed in all three streams. There is no unified method, constant assaults on retrospective integration, a widening complexity of ideas exposes serene forms of consensus. The main virtue of each staged performance is "newness" in "recovering and recontextualization of the past" (Currie, 1998: 8).

Modern theater offered narrative coherence that postmodern theater protests. Postmodern theater seeks to expand the complexity and heterogeneity that a coherence and unity narrative excludes (See also Table 3). Coherence is attained in the partial reading of complex and unstable texts. Postmodern theater is about restoring a poly-historical, multi-perspective, and ideological critique of coherence (Watt, 1998; Geis, 1993; Simard, 1984). The implication is that corporate-reality (corporeality) is not as coherent as it is rendered in our organizational spectacles. Ironically, the Academy as fragmented Tamara reinscribes the corporeality in postmodern organization. It is only somewhat playful, an open structure but no anarchy or change, and little improvisation or self-reflection happens there.

**Table Four: Modern and Postmodern Organization Theatrics**

Modern Theatrics	Postmodern Theatrics
1. Coherent/unified subjectivity	1. Decentered/fragmented subjectivity
2. Originality/linear	2. Rupture & Discontinuous
3. Authoritative	3. Anarchy
4. Universality	4. Locality
5. Packaged Roll outs	5. Open structures
6. Individualism	6. Collectivism
7. Form	7. Anti-form
8. Purposeful	8. Playful
9. Design	9. Change
10. Hierarchy	10. Anarchy
11. Finished Intervention	11. Happening
12. Totalizing Creation	12. Decreation/Deconstruct
13. Centering	13. Decentering/Dispersive
14. Grand Narrative	14. Petite Narrative
15. Monologic	15. Spectator participation
16. Text end in itself	16. Improvisation
17. Structured	17. Fluid
18. One place	18. Change place of action
19. One time	19. Change epochs
20. One identity	20. Change identities

To be blunt, my duality of modern and postmodern breaks down, so much of postmodern theater is already appropriated into the modern project. Spectator participation and wandering discourse is just part of the show.

An anti-theatrics critique of organization spectacle would parody the modern theatrics, and form uncontrolled spaces for spontaneous acts of resistance to dominant-power in several ways. First, a festive Academy would be ironic, pointing out how a fragment of postmodern gets read as the totality. But is this totality still so many isolated and fragmented individuals?

In the spectacle, one part of the world represents itself to the world and is superior to it. The spectacle is nothing more than the common language of this separation. What binds the spectators together is no more than an irreversible relation at the very center which maintains their isolation. The spectacle reunites the separate, but reunites it as separate. (Debord, 1967: #29).

Second, it is ironic that people who perform segmented roles in organizations do not more actively resist fragmented spectacles set out as totalizing stories. Third, it is ironic that spectacles about human freedom are so anti-pluralistic. We in the Academy perform caricature roles in an organization of caricatures, a fragmenting spectacular organization realized as total. Fourth, it is ironic that while we are spectators to the fragmentation of our habitat through unsustainable production and consumption practices and to the erosion of species diversity, we enact the fragmenting myth of totality in spectacular organization, in inter-spectacle, as both modern and postmodern manifestations. This is understood as the modern spectacle's ability to incorporate the spectator of world decay into the spectacle of production and consumption, while claiming a festive moment. Evening dances at the convention are festive, the locale is festive, but the spectacle reigns.

**How do we get to Festival?** An anti-spectacle spectacle parodies spectacle theatrics and forms spaces for spontaneous acts of resistance and power. Augusto Boal, for example conducts "Theater of the Oppressed" workshops where participants tell stories containing political or social problems with difficult solutions. We in management conduct Harvard Case Theater where MBAs tell stories containing economic problems with difficult solutions. But in the Theater of the Oppressed Workshops, after the skit is presented, the audience

discusses the proposed solution, and the scene is performed one more time. In addition, any member of the audience can stop the action to propose a better solution and replace a cast member on stage.

Could such theatrics help organizations create festivals by creating forums for collective storytelling that will supplant univocal narratives, and allow spectacle-critique and active experimentation? Harvard Case Theater is usually an abstract representation, the substitution of a story-fragment or a univocal story, with many voices omitted, instead of a chorus of stories and experimental stagings. The pragmatic understanding of semiotic sign systems can assist people as they objectify their spectacular organization by seeing how their collective play makes semiotic choices. The postmodern theater could reveal how a mask of collective spectacle glosses the existential void of isolation and violence. It might reveal what the inclusion of new fragments might look like.

I am proposing a pluralistic, multi-voiced construction of festival. I am proposing that we stop being passive spectators and consumers of spectacles produced back stage. Grace Ann Rosile and I have experimented with such spectacle intervention in a production we call "Renaissance Theater" Old and new storytellers combine to reenact history of their organization collectively. The theater proceeds through acts of deconstruction to make a pluralistic reading of their collective situation. This bit of experimental theater allowed one organization to redefine its history let old officers retire in dignity instead of siege, and let participants on the margin gain seats of power. We think anti-spectacle spectacles might have something self-reflexive to say about critiquing eco, bio, cyber and other spectacles that are in the era of becoming.