Doing A Boje: Using Dramaturgical Analysis In Critical Management Studies

Stream 4: Theatrics of Capitalism

Alexis Downs

University of Central Oklahoma

&

Adrian N. Carr

University of Western Sydney

Department of Management
College of Business Administration
University of Central Oklahoma
100 North University Drive
Edmond, OK 73034 USA
Phone: (405) 974-5333
Email: adowns@ucok.edu

School of Applied Social and Human Sciences
University of Western Sydney
Parramatta Campus
Penrith South DC
New South Wales 1797
Australia
Phone: (61-2) 9685-9081
Fax: (61-2) 9685-9009
Email: a.carr@uws.edu.au
Doing a Boje: Using dramaturgical analysis in critical management studies

Alexis Downs & Adrian N. Carr

On Monday, 2 September 2002, Consolidated Freightways abruptly shut down U.S. operations. Ironically, that Monday was “Labor Day,” a U.S. holiday in honor of labor. In a recorded telephone message, CEO John Brincko notified workers: “Thank you for dialing in on this holiday weekend. I hope you and your family are enjoying the time together. I have some extremely urgent and sad news to share with you today. … Your employment ends immediately” (Russell, 2002). CF employed approximately 15,000 truckers nationwide.

Spun off from its parent in 1996, Consolidated Freightways (CF) was a unionized trucking operation. CF’s creation and cessation followed a pattern begun by Yellow Freight, who sold its unionized segment, Preston Trucking, in 1998 (S and P Business Summary). Preston closed suddenly in July 1999, leaving 4750 Teamsters unemployed. CF’s parent, ConWay, and Yellow Freight, Preston’s parent, are both going concerns. Speculation exists that a spin-off followed by bankruptcy is a strategy for ridding the parent of unionized employees. Without costly union contracts, transportation companies can adjust to post - September 11 and post - Enron competition. In addition, without costly union contracts, transportation companies can participate in the efficiencies of supply chain management as promulgated by companies like Wal Mart.

Our paper provides an analysis of the Consolidated Freightways bankruptcy as metatheater, and we examine the theatrics as played to an external audience and as played to an internal Teamsters audience. We develop this dramaturgical interpretation — of being cast in a role — by focusing on the alterity of corporate management and labor union representation. The paper also involves a critique of the terms-in-use. We also argue that psychodynamic processes are at work below the surface of what is said. By examining the underlying psycho-dynamic forces, such as the archetypal patterns, we explore the intertextual and problematize the management/labor dichotomy.

After providing an explanation of dramaturgical and intertextual analysis, we proceed by following the SEPTET analysis of Boje (2002) We apply that methodology to Consolidated Freightways as theater. Some of this theater is 'transacted' through postings on the internet and specific 'chat sites' — in particular, www.teamster.net. These postings are characters and voices that cannot be considered "off-stage" as they are part of the intertextuality of the CF narrative.

Spectacle, carnival, and intertextuality

What is the spectacle and the carnivalesque? It was Guy Debord (1967) who said that we live in a society of the spectacle. He argues that our reality is created by
others through a circulation of images and delivered through the realm of entertainment. Life becomes something not to be lived, as such, but is a spectacle to be observed (consumed) from a distance. We acquiesce or are passive consumers of the spectacle that is our own alienated lives. Relationships, as part of the spectacle, are largely mediated through images. Reality is philosophized with technology saturating the world. For Debord the spectacle is an instrument of pacification and depoliticization, a “permanent opium war” (Debord, 1967, #44) in which its social subjects are stupefied as to their ‘real’ interests and needs. The Society of the Spectacle is a society that results in a profound alienation. For Debord, there was need to reconstruct the world (situation) to bring back a connectedness with nature and each other, not based on commodification and use-values.

Adopting much of Debord's argument, Boje explains that spectacle is “a theatric performance that legitimates, rationalizes, and camouflages violent production and consumption. Spectacle can be total manipulation of meaning-making processes … the production of a gala event with costumes, art, success stories, team awards, and celebrity appearances to launch a new product, symbolize a change initiative or to put the spotlight on positive acts of corporate power (e.g. community service)” (Boje, 2002). Although a spectacular change initiative can be “quite positive,” led by change agents, the initiatives may invoke vision and culture to co-opt the organization’s employees (Boje, 2002). Arguing that organizational stories are “increasingly carnivalesque” (Boje, 2001, p. 75), Boje explains that carnival is a “theatrics of rant. … In premodern carnival, participants, for example dressed up in the parodied garb and expression of the powerful, the kings, queens, bishops, and other masters. They also staged theatrical events that reversed and otherwise created satire of the feudal hierarchy. Contemporary carnival is a polyphonic (many voiced) expression by those without power, sometimes sanctioned by those in power as a way to blow off steam” (Boje, 2002). Carnival is a theatrics of resistance.

On another level, the notion of “carnival” relates to what Kristeva calls the “double character of language” (1986, p. 39). She explains, “Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality. Confronted with this dialogism, the notion of a ‘person-subject writing’ becomes blurred, yielding to that of ‘ambivalence of writing’. … Dialogue appears most clearly in the structure of carnivalesque language” (1986, p. 39, 43). In other words, dialogue is an intersection of texts: the writer’s, the character’s in a novel, the historical context, underlying psycho-dynamics. Language expresses subjectivity and communication with another. Because dialogue is double and ambivalent, dialogic words can be subversive and carnivalesque — mocking established beliefs and authority. In Boje’s words, “In intextual analysis we look for a crowd of authors, actors and readers engaged in carnivalesque scenes. … Spectacles are enacted to be read as texts along corporately controlled points of view. Intertextuality therefore violates the context-free assumptions of monologic … analyses since it does not stop with a status quo reading of power” (2001, p. 76).

Methodology

The drama of Consolidated Freightways plays to many audiences: Teamsters, investors, executives, creditors, and government officials. There are many versions,
many scripts We focus on the management/ labor conflict and follow Boje’s SEPTET in our analysis.

Boje’s SEPTET consists of the following elements:
1. **Characters**
2. **Plots**
3. **Themes**
4. **Dialogs**
5. **Rhythms**
6. **Frames**
7. **Spectacles**

### 1. Characters

Boje defines “characters” to include the participants and spectators in the theater. Characters include the managers, union leaders, union laborers, and us — Alexis Downs and Adrian Carr. We include ourselves in the list of characters because we are writing this script. We look closely at two major characters, John Brincko (CEO of Consolidated Freightways) and James Hoffa (President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters).

John Brincko is a “turnaround specialist”. In a Press Release of May 28, 2002, Consolidated Freightways announced, “To ensure the successful completion of its strategic restructuring, it has engaged a proven turnaround professional to lead the company. The Board of Directors has elected John P. Brincko, a respected business turnaround specialist, as the company's new president and chief executive officer” (CF, 2002 May 28). Brincko has been president and chief executive officer of more than 50 companies and has not stayed long at any of them. Consolidated Freightways filed for bankruptcy just months after his arrival. He’s the gunslinger of American films. Brought in to clean up a town, he leaves town when his work is done and rides off into the sunset. Brincko has the fame and fortune of a theatrical star. Below is a “party pic” of Brincko from the archives of the New York Social Diary.

Tom Vonderheide, Debbie Brincko, and John Brincko  
(Source: New York Social Diary, 2002)

Teamster President **James P. Hoffa** is the son of the infamous Jimmy Hoffa, former Teamster President, who disappeared in the seventies and was believed to have been murdered by the Mob. Some say Jimmy was a labor visionary; others say he was a criminal and Mob affiliate. Jimmy once explained to an associate who claimed that management would no longer take advantage of labor: "Franco, you're full of it. You give any employer a chance to cut his wages in half tomorrow morning and that SOB will do it. Because he's money hungry and the only way he can make money is by taking it out of the working man's mouth. Don't ever think different. You're young, You're coming up, but, God, you're naive" (Zacharias, n.d.). Jimmy Hoffa may have been right. Today’s Socialist Worker reports, “Corporate America will go to any length to attack organized labor” (Sustar, 2002).
Except for a successful strike against UPS in 1997, the Teamsters’ power eroded in the last quarter century. The number of Teamsters covered by the National Master Freight Agreement (NMFA) dropped to 100,000 (TDU, 2002). (At one time, the NMFA covered 500,000 union members.) Overall Teamster membership in 2000 was 1.5 million members, compared to 2 million members during the 1970s (NPR, 2000). When James Hoffa was elected in 1998, he was hailed as a returning son who would rebuild the union (NPR 2000). Hoffa’s presidency followed that of Ron Carey, who defeated Hoffa in 1996. Hoffa succeeded Carey after Carey was charged with diverting Teamster funds to his 1996 campaign.

According to Hoffa, “The Teamsters are back” (NPR, 2000). Hoffa’s reign is a restoration — a return. Hoffa joined the Teamsters on his 18th birthday (NPR, 2000). He now restores the power of the union.

James R. Hoffa as a Teamsters organizer in 1939.

Hoffa and his family in 1957. From left, James, 15, daughter Barbara, 18, Hoffa and wife, Josephine.

We have cast Brincko and Hoffa as opponents. Brincko as turnaround specialist is to change things for the better bottom line — often synonymous with cutting labor costs. Hoffa, as labor leader, is to bring back the power of the union and resist threats to union membership conditions. Of course, the question is, then, who’s the good guy? Who’s the bad guy? Adrian and Alexis tend to support labor. Adrian was a salaried union official for 15 years and thus he might be prone to looking for good guys in the labor camp. Looking for 'good' guys and 'bad' guys in a text, or assembling a text to clearly have good and bad guys, is something that is common in the human character as a largely unconscious process. In the world of psychodynamics, this process is commonly referred to as "splitting".
Underlying Psychodynamics

Splitting behaviour fundamentally involves dichotomising the world into two antithetical elements. It is a psychological defence mechanism that is engaged, unconsciously, when we feel we are under attack or become anxious. In this regressive defensive reactive process — referred to as a paranoid-schizoid defensive condition — the world can get divided into 'us' and 'them' and objects are split into 'good' and 'bad' or having 'good' and 'bad' parts. This dichotomising becomes manifest in acts of generalisation, distortion, concealment, manipulation, and alike. In an organization context, parts of the organization and its leadership might become highly idealized and others highly vilified. The former become targets of love, affection and even reverential and the latter become targets of hate, scapegoating and blame.

There have been a number of studies that have described splitting behaviour in the context of larger social conflicts (see for example Swogger, 1994; Carr, 1997). Glenn Swogger Jr. (1994), in an incisive appraisal of the environmental movement, is amongst those writers to note the significance of splitting and the associated psychological processes of projection, projective identification in broader social context:

As pointed out by Horwitz (1983) and others, projective identification involves another step beyond blaming: inducing the target of the projection to experience the projected feelings. In face-to-face situations this may involve subtle nonverbal communication or various interpersonal ploys. In public situations, projective identification may involve forms of attack or accusation; legal, financial, or regulatory threats; or manipulation and exaggeration of guilt. ... Wholesale processes of projection and projective identification lead to 'splitting' at the social level: whole classes of people, groups, or organizations are condemned while others may be idealized. The world is composed of 'us' and 'them'. (Swogger, 1994, p. 71)

In the context of a group, it has also been noted (see Bion, 1961; Ogden, 1982) that the individual may draw, in a dependency relationship, from others to help in the face of anxiety. In what is sometimes referred to as 'role suction' individuals in a group may search and pressure, through projective identification, a leader or authority figure into reaffirming the group (ego)-ideal in the face of attack. Thus initiating a response to the attacker and clarifying the nature of the attack. The leader/authority figure may become idealised as the group members, through the process of splitting, collude in their fantasies and simultaneously deny individually and collectively 'bad' parts in themselves and their leader.

In the context of the plot of conflict, we would suggest that all the characters, including us, may to different degrees feel 'under' attack and move in the direction of distortion that comes with splitting. These psychodynamic processes are intertwined with genuine concerns about the plot that is unfolding. Understanding this realm of psychodynamic processes is one that is capable of engendering a positive contribution to the 'players' and those cast as 'bystanders' in social conflict situations. For
example, recognising such processes would alert us to how a situation may become polarised and distortions created that may not only inhibit dialogue, but create an environment in which legitimate questions and issues go unaddressed and judgements become impaired. Similarly, such an understanding might alert us to the inclination to idealise leaders, objects and attributes that not only carry a set of unreal expectations, but simultaneously alerts us to the manner in which we seem to largely relieve ourselves of responsibility to reflectively consider matters on their merits. An understanding of these dynamic processes might also make us wary of the way such processes can be used to manipulate the interests of all players and in particular the way in which guilt can be unfairly induced in others in the drama of it all.

Unconscious processes might become evident and be played-out in the 'text' of the drama. Our dramaturgical analysis must, of course, start with examining how the CF story has been constructed. That’s our point, really. How is the CF story cast? What are the theatrics of the CF drama?

2. Plot

Plots are defined by Boje (2001, p. 108) as "not just a chronology of events", but rather each plot "connects... the chaining of cause and effect or stimulus and response into a pattern, structure or network.” According to Boje, plot "links events together into a narrative structure" (2001, p. 108) but also includes the antenarrative. Included in the antenarrative are the underlying psychodynamics, such as splitting behavior.

The CF theatrics include multiple plots: Mafia plots, terrorist plots, and corporate plots. The riddle of Jimmy Hoffa’s disappearance and suggestions of a Mafia plot persists. Antenarrative rumors of Mob connections at the Teamsters persist. Although former President Carey was credited with cleaning up the Teamsters, he later was accused of corruption. Many Teamsters believed that Carey was framed because he led the hugely popular 1997 strike against UPS, the nation’s largest trucking firm (Jones, 1998). At the same time, the reformist Teamsters for Democratic Union ostensibly supported Carey, but lack of action ensured Hoffa’s bureaucratic machine’s control of the union for the foreseeable future. TDU leaders would, no doubt, dispute that contention.

CF management blamed the company’s failing fortunes on the September 11 terrorists’ plot and a weak economy. The attacks slowed freight demand in 2001 and hurt the entire industry. According to financial reports, the company’s cash and equivalents dropped from $123 million in 1998 to $13.3 million as of March 31, 2002. Long-term debt increased $24 million from December 31, 2001, to March 31, 2002 (see CF, 2002, May 1). According to management, CF lost customers to competitors as the company struggled in a weak economy and battled perceptions that it was on the verge of bankruptcy. CF reported to the U.S. SEC, “The economic slowdown that impacted the Company in 2001 continued throughout the first quarter of 2002. As a result, revenues decreased 19.4% as tonnage decreased 17.1% compared with the same period last year. Shipments decreased 14.3% and the average weight per shipment decreased 3.2% to 969 lbs” (CF, 2002, May 1).
However, when CF slammed its doors in Teamsters’ faces on Labor Day, the IBT Public Relations department blasted CF’s management and vowed to launch an investigation into financial links between CF and CNF, Inc. (Con-Way), the non-union operation that spun off CF in 1996. Suspicious of a ConWay plot, Teamsters President Hoffa said, “This is a devastating announcement. This is one more company destroyed by corporate mismanagement. There are now nearly 15,000 Teamsters without jobs because CF’s management did not adjust to the demands of the market as other successful unionized companies had” (Teamsters PR). Teamsters maintain that the problem was not with the workers (Teamster.net). According to the Teamsters, management failed to find a profitable mix of customers and cargo, and, making matters worse, management adopted an overly aggressive approach to price discounting in order to gain market share. Mike Belzer, a Teamster activist, argues that deregulation of the industry prompted CF’s bankruptcy. According to Belzer, Consolidated reduced its unionized workforce through “double-breasting”: creating non-union subsidiaries, like Con-Way, to compete with the unionized segments (Sustar, 2002). Then, CF Teamsters suggest that Con-Way encroached on CF’s long-haul, LTL business, driving the unionized CF into a cash crisis and forcing CF to borrow against land values (Sustar, 2002). Ultimately CF could no longer secure more financing and declared bankruptcy. On September 9, 2002, one week after CF’s bankruptcy, Con Way — the non-unionized, former subsidiary — announced a 20% discount on transcontinental freight service. Hoffa spokesperson Bret Caldwell says, “We’re going to be looking at all aspects of relationships of the past several years to determine what type of legal action we’ll be taking,” (TDU, 2002). Fred Perillo, an attorney from Milwaukee, is examining the Teamster’s allegations. Are they genuinely based and/or are they merely fed by the psychodynamics of splitting?

**Are these trickster phenomena?**

The trickster is a mythical figure and one of Jung’s archetypes. Archetypal patterns of the psyche are not unveiled through normal linear thought processes, but rather through an impressionistic collection of themes and aspects that seem to cohere to reveal figures with definable features. Archetypes are neither good nor bad; each has a light and dark side revealed through our experiences. The archetype we are interested in is the trickster:

*Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes and is always duped himself. He wills nothing consciously. At all time he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has not control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, social or moral, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being. (Radin, 1956, p. xxiii).*

*“Bad becomes good,” says Hynes (1993, p. 37).*
Specific characteristics of the trickster are these: anomalous; trick-player; shape-shifter; situation inverter; messenger; bricoleur (Hynes, 1993). Tricksters deceive. If we view Brincko — the turnaround specialist — as a shape-shifter, his management of Consolidated Freightways and the bankruptcy are inversions, like that of a Yoruba tale (Hynes, 1993). In the Yoruba tale, the trickster “sets fire to a farmer’s house, helps the family get all their possessions out safely, and then gives these goods away to passersby on the road” (Hynes, 1993, p. 37). The archetypal trickster can alter his appearance: consultant, CEO, laborer, lawyer, union executive. The trickster often has both divine and human traits, rather like Hoffa, who is the son of the founder. If Brincko and Hoffa are tricksters, the good guy/bad guy dichotomy is moot. The multiple plots are trickster activities.

As situation-invertors, says Hynes, “the trickster is often the official ritual profaner of beliefs” (1993, p. 37). By profaning social beliefs, the trickster “brings into sharp focus just how much a society values these beliefs” (Hynes, 1993, p. 37). Perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, Brincko challenges social belief in “making things better.” And consciously or unconsciously, Hoffa challenges social belief in the “restoration” of past glories.

3. Themes

According to Boje (2002), “SEPTET analysis traces oppressive themes and counter-themes”. Themes interrelate and support one another. Themes of loss at Consolidated Freightways are contrasted to themes of gains. Ironically, perhaps, the loss/ gain themes are interrelated with themes of decentralization/centralization at both Consolidated Freightways and the Teamsters.

Loss/ Gain

6,600 CF-logo-bearing diesel tractors sat quiet on September 3 in the company’s 300 terminals around the country. The silence means immediate job losses for 15,000 Teamsters. CF, which combined less-than-full loads for a variety of shippers, had been bleeding money for seven straight quarters. In addition to the Teamsters’ dismissals on September 2, Consolidated Freightways laid off about 85 to 90 administrative employees, or about 10 percent of its Vancouver, Wash., headquarters work force, earlier as part of a long-term cost-cutting effort. Subsequently, CF has dismissed more administrative personnel. In Teamster.net postings some mourned the passing of the CF family, others paid tributes such as the following:
Consolidated Freightways 1966...things were different then. If you went there to work, you worked with men. We all worked hard to keep our jobs. There were some that didn't understand that this job was just for working men. But we soon were rid of them. We worked twelve hour shifts and thought it was a gift. From six in the evening to six in the morning were my hours. If I did that five days a week I would take home two hundred dollars, mine to keep. It wasn't much for all of the hours, But you could buy a pitcher of beer for just a dollar. We used to stop after work to have a few. And shoot some pool, I used to think it was pretty cool. No matter how long we would stay and play We would always make work the next day. CF was the place to be even then - it was in the top ten. We didn't have "rights" to all of the states, But CF was determined to open all of the gates. In those days there were closed states, You could drive through - but you couldn't stop and deliver freight. We would have to interline it and the customers would have to wait. I'm still working with some of the same men that I started with way back then. These were the men that worked hard to keep and preserve this job. All of the military bases were open then. We would pick up and deliver everything from missiles to boots and guns. I think we all sort of had fun, staying up half the night just to get it done. When the seventies came we were still all game. The company was growing at leaps and bounds and we were there to keep it sound. CF was buying companies to get their rights. Before we knew it we were "in tight"! I had a feeling then, that it would never end. Even though we've had our ups and downs I know the company will always be around.

Steve DeFrancesco Mira Loma CA USA

DeFrancesco talks of working hard to preserve his job and the jobs of other working men. He seems, though, to deny the loss or internalize the CF experience: “Even though we’ve had our ups and downs I know the company will always be around.”

Because CF doubts that its assets are sufficient to satisfy creditors’ claims, CF stockholders are unlikely to receive any value for their stock (CFWY.com, 2002). Loss of stockholder value is additionally shocking to employees, who participated in an employee stock ownership plan.

Despite losses to CF employees and shareholders, other parties have gains. According to Kilcarr (2002), “The collapse of LTL carrier Consolidated Freightways may be a boon of sorts to Yellow Corp. and Roadway Corp., CF's two major competitors. Akron, OH-based Roadway may benefit the most because its third quarter freight and revenue levels had slipped below projections before CF announced
it was shutting down”. The trucking industry has suffered from excess capacity. Ironically, the CF shutdown benefits CF competitors. The CF shutdown also benefits ConWay.

Despite Teamster losses, stockholder losses, and administrative personnel losses, John Brincko, chief executive officer, gains. Because CF filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy (reorganization) rather than Chapter 7 (liquidation), pre-bankruptcy management will stay in control (Perillo, 2002). And according to the Services Agreement between CF and John Brincko,

| Company shall pay Brincko Associates a monthly retainer of $100,000. Brincko Associates shall render invoices for Brincko's services and for those of other personnel providing services to the Company twice a month and the Company agrees to pay all such invoices promptly upon submission. A prorated first month's payment shall be made concurrently with the execution of this Agreement. In addition, concurrently with the execution of this Agreement, the Company shall pay Brincko Associates $100,000 as an evergreen retainer (the "Retainer") deposit against the payments required to be paid hereunder. Should Sokol become Chief Financial Officer of the Company, the Retainer shall be increased to $145,000. (CF, 2002, June 30) |

Decentralization/ Centralization

An additional theme throughout the final days of CF is the tension between decentralization and centralization. Brincko said: “Since I joined CF a month ago, I’ve been assessing the highly competitive LTL marketplace and the way our company is organized and operates in this market. We place a high premium on customer relationships and I’m committed to strengthening this aspect of our business and adding to our customer base. This requires a centralized, focused and highly responsive management structure, enabling leadership to make decisions rapidly and implement them directly” (Brincko, 2002, italics is our added emphasis).

Brincko’s “centralized, focused and highly responsive management structure” was able to decide quickly upon bankruptcy. Curiously, as one trickster — Brincko — shifts from turnaround specialist to debtor in possession, another trickster — Hoffa — seems ever intent upon restoring the power of the Teamsters as he struggles with issues of centralization and decentralization. Historically, the Teamster organization was very focused on its local operations; it was its locals. As Strauss (2000) points out, if contracts are negotiated at the local level, members have relatively little contact with the national or international office—and little interest. However, the lack of interest in national politics permit corruption and autocracy at the national level. But because of the corruption charges, involving Jimmy Hoffa and Ron Carey, among others, a shift has been made to “professional” management. For example, the RISE (Respect, Integrity, Strength, Ethics) program is designed to build an “anti-racketing culture” within the Union and develop a code of ethics (http://www.teamster.org). “Professional” management of the Teamsters has increased bureaucracy and, to some extent, centralization. Perhaps for the Teamsters, bureaucracy and election of officials are remedies for corruption.
For the union movement itself, themes of gain and loss and decentralization and centralization pervade the last twenty years. According to Strauss, “Union density has declined sharply as has its political and economic clout” (2000, p. 174), but the decline is attributable to, what Strauss calls, union “apathy, autocracy, and corruption” (2000, p. 181). Apathy, autocracy, and corruption are interrelated, says Strauss, because members don’t seem to care about corruption or autocracy as long as the leaders succeed in collective bargaining.

Interrelated themes of gain and loss, decentralization and centralization also describe the general political environment for U.S. business over the last twenty to thirty years. In the Wall Street Journal, Schlesinger writes, “From the 1930s to the 1970s, Washington embraced an ever-greater role for the federal government. But the economic stagnation of the 1970s convinced politicians in both parties that the pendulum had swung too far. By the decade’s end, Democrat Jimmy Carter launched the modern deregulation movement by freeing up the airline and trucking industries. . . . But the savviest policy makers knew they were making a choice ‘between economic growth with associated potential instability, and a more civil . . . way of life with a lower standard of living’” (2002, p. A1). The point is this: Political choices regarding more centralization — more federal control — interrelate with economic choices — with gains and losses.

4. Dialog

According to Boje (2002), dialog is the:

rhetoric of spinmeisters and the discourse of the world about corporate behavior. … (1) Rhetoric is the obfuscating language and double-speak mixed with euphoric testimonials and bland reassurances attain and shed meanings. Dialog is the scripted and off-scripted, con-scripted and de-scripted, and rescripted rhetorical acts of leaders and followers, regulators and stars of Metatheatre. (2) Dialogs is discourse, the multiple discourses of stakeholders about corporate behavior. . . . Dialogs can be scripted, and con-scripted, and used to persuade and to control spectator behavior. (Italics is our added emphasis)

The Teamsters have wondered how the spinmeisters or “toodleooers” will explain CF’s bankruptcy. One Teamster suggests (Teamster.net):

```
Posted 03-09-2002 at 08:29
As soon as the newly hired workout specialist had a good look and saw that CF had been subsidizing ConWay he knew that the books smelled, and what else would you expect considering Arthur Anderson had worked their accounting magic for CF. Hopefully ConWay will be on the hook for all liabilities incurred by CF for the employees. The remaining question is how will the toodleooers spin this.
```

The spin is “re-structuring.” The toodleooers, such as Patrick Blake, former president and CEO, suggested that CF’s “restructuring” reached the point at which the company required a “business turnaround professional” to carry the process forward to successful completion (Yahoo Finance, 2002). The “re-structuring” discourse
quieted any Teamster reaction. Then the re-structuring is followed by the “turnaround.” And the “turnaround” becomes bankruptcy, and the Teamsters are locked out.

One way to view the re-structuring spin is as trickster speech. As Hynes argues, “Trickster myths can be a powerful teaching device utilizing deeply humorous negative examples that reveal and reinforce societal values that are being broken” (1993, p. 207). In other words, the CF “re-structuring” was a “re-structuring” in the sense that labor itself was re-structured. In the U.S. in 2002, labor is not valued; corporate management is valued. Perhaps CEO Blake and turnaround specialist Brincko are affirming social values by terminating union labor.

*He [the trickster] possesses no values, social or moral, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being* (Radin 1956, p. xxiii).

Hoffa claims, “The Teamsters are back!” (NPR, 2000). They have returned to Las Vegas, according to an announcement on the official Teamster website (teamster.org). In the past, Teamster pension funds were linked to the Mob and to Las Vegas casinos. Is the following announcement carnivalesque? Words can be subversive and carnivalesque — mocking established beliefs and authority. In other words, as Brincko affirms social values by breaking rules (e.g., terminating a union contract through bankruptcy), the union returns to its place of criminal activity at the same time that it promotes a new ethics program.

**Teamsters To Rock Las Vegas!**

**Event Celebrates Elections at School District, America West**

**October 12, 2002**

On Wednesday, October 16, workers at the Clark County School District and America West are invited to meet Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa when the Teamsters Rock Las Vegas.

More than 7,000 workers at the school district and hundreds of America West employees in Las Vegas will soon vote to join the Teamsters Union. The workers are urged to bring their families to meet Hoffa and join with the Teamster family to celebrate their upcoming election victories.

The event is scheduled from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, October 16 at McCarran International Airport, at the Old International Airport Parking Lot, Kelly Lane and Russell Road, in Las Vegas.

For information, call Teamsters Local 14 at 702-384-7841.

(Source: Teamsters to rock Las Vegas)
5. Rhythms

Boje (2002) defines rhythms as "the interaction of order and chaos, flowing, in asymmetry and symmetry, in acts of improvisation and emergent recurring patterns. … Rhythm can be the self-organizing urge of nature and its rhythm manifest through the motion, interaction and evolutionary potential; it can also be a self-organizing motion of organizing and emergence of inter-spectacle complexity".

The creation and cessation of Consolidated Freightways exhibit alternative rhythms: the creation of the non-union subsidiary Con Way and the spin-off of Consolidated Freightways with the rising and falling fortunes of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. We see the movement of “turnaround” against the movement of coming “back” or “restoration.” One of the rhythms of the CF drama is the rhythm of changes over time. The trucks change, for example. We see the timing of the announcement of the bankruptcy.

Posted 03-09-2002 at 06:26
"That's like telling your wife you're getting divorced on Valentine's Day," said Carlos N. Ramos, a spokesman for Teamsters Local 776 in Harrisburg, Pa.

The truck is a 1936 Fageol, the box is 22' long and the trailer is 28' long. Roger W. Sackett Collection (Source: http://www.hankstruckpictures.com/cf_tribute_90_00s.htm)
Units hook up in Springfield, MO after the September 2, 2002 shutdown. Taken in September 2002.

CF Ford straight truck setting at the dock at the Springfield, MO terminal after shutdown. Taken in September 2002.

CF Freightliner hooked to a set of doubles at the Springfield, MO terminal after the shutdown. Taken in September 2002.

(Source: http://www.hankstruckpictures.com/cf_tribute_90_00s.htm)

On the Teamster message board, Teamster.net, we see “acts of improvisation” (Boje, 2002) and self-organization. Throughout the Consolidated Freightways story, we see multiple rhythms, multiple plots, multiple themes, and multiple frames.

Headlights On For CF Teamsters

Author
Headlights On For CF Teamsters

Doug

Registered to:
18-06-2002

From:
Indianapolis, IN

Messages:
251

OFF-Line

Posted 02-09-2002 at 12:36

Freight Brothers,
Turn your headlights on as a show of support for the CF Brothers and their families. This is the sad day for the Teamsters.

Anonymous

User not Registered

Posted 02-09-2002 at 20:55

I do agree my brother, my lights will be on.

6. Frames

According to Boje (2002), “Frames are defined as ideologies that are in dialectic contest, resisting each other, and refusing to synthesize”. Through theater, issues are framed in ways that appeal to the spectators. Thus, says Boje (2002), theater is “about bringing counter-frames to bear on dominant frames”. Negotiating the many ideological frames and mindsets of various stakeholders, and being able to discern frame breaking, are goals of dramaturgical analysis.

Critical dramaturgical theory suggests that the demise of CF results from hyper-competitive practices of global capitalism and turnaround specialists. This ideological frame argues that the days of labor unions are numbered. Deregulated competition requires non-union cost structures. A reform ideology, such as the Teamsters for Democratic Union, would argue that capitalism has temporarily triumphed, but the workers will unite. From yet another reform frame, law enforcement argues that the Teamsters’ days are numbered only due to their own corruption and Mafia affiliations.

Let’s wait and see what happens on Wednesday in the California bankruptcy court. I can’t believe this development isn’t getting more media coverage. I hope it’s true and I hope CF will come back and we’ll keep the teamster jobs! Get rid of the old management and start the company up new! There’s a lot of good drivers out on the street right now waiting for good news.
7. Spectacle

**What is the relation of Spectacle, Carnival and Festival?**

The aim of Festivalism is a reconstruction of Spectacle and Carnival into Liberatory dialog between leaders and people. Festivalism is a theatric alternative to spectacle, brought about by carnivals of resistance (Boje, 2002).

In a society of the spectacle, people are passive consumers of the reality created by, among others, powerful corporate interests. Spectacle is a meaning-making process controlled by turnaround specialists, by toodlelooers. Carnivalesque theater and dialogue resist, as we see in the following definition of a “scab” (Teamster.net):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition of a Scab(by)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shifterknob</td>
<td>Posted 11-10-2002 at 15:25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

from Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Main Entry: 1scab
Pronunciation: 'skab
Function: noun

Etymology: Middle English, of Scandinavian origin; akin to Old Swedish skabbr scab; akin to Old English sceabb scab, Latin scabere to scratch -- more at SHAVE

Date: 13th century
1 : scabies of domestic animals
2 : a crust of hardened blood and serum over a wound
3 a : a contemptible person b (1) : a worker who refuses to join a labor union (2) : a union member who refuses to strike or returns to work before a strike has ended (3) : a worker who accepts employment or replaces a union worker during a strike (4) : one who works for less than union wages or on nonunion terms (5) : any of various bacterial or fungus diseases of plants characterized by crustaceous spots.

I think definition #5 especially fits our bitter little friend... You have a NICE day, Scabby...!

Festival is “in-the-moment enjoyment of a thing for its own sake” (Boje, 2002). As Boje explains, festivalism might be “non-critical art, an aesthetics for its own Dionysian lust for pleasure” (Boje, 2002). We acknowledge the issue. Car racing is probably non-critical, but we think the driver is enjoying the moment and the race.
**Race Car**

Submitted by TeamsterNet

Added Aug 10 2002

Hits 120

Votes 7

Rating 9.57143

Only Members can rate this Picture! You can Register Here

---

**Doing a Boje: A 'Concluding' Conversation**

**Alexis:** You know, Adrian, there’s a good chance that the Toyota was made in the U.S. But the guy driving the car is participating; he’s not a passive consumer of the spectacle. He’s enjoying himself.

**Adrian:** It would seem there are really no by-standers in this story which is not what we were previously led to believe?

**Alexis:** One of the morals of this story is this: Participate. Apathy leads to corruption and autocracy.

**Adrian:** Yes, but we even participate in putatively doing nothing ... and, we also need to acknowledge the psychological intake of what goes on around us and how later we feel guilty in our acquiesce and then seek to project this upon others in all so subtle and not so subtle ways. In doing this we distort our 'hearing' and 'reading'
of the moments that are the text. As we also said before, splitting behaviour needs to be recognised as exactly that for it leads to polarisation and distortions that may not only inhibit dialogue, but create an environment in which legitimate questions and issues go unaddressed and judgements become impaired. I guess, for some, this is part of a hidden text from 'depth' (!) psychology. BUT, for me, this is all part of the story.

Alexis: Of course, another moral of the story might be this: Don’t be deluded by good-bad dichotomies. Watch out for the tricksters because they are the messengers.

References


Teamsters To Rock Las Vegas! http://www.teamster.org/02news/hn_021012_3.htm
Teamsters Press Release Consolidated Freightways Declares Bankruptcy
http://www.tdu.org/Freight/IBT_Consolidated_Freightways_D/ibt_consolidated_freightways_d.htm

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (2002) The roots of job loss at CF.
http://www.tdu.org/Freight/Freight_CF_Roots/freight_cf_roots.html


Zacharias, P. (n.d.). The day Jimmy Hoffa didn’t come home.
http://www.detnews.com/history/hoffa/hoffa.htm