

## MANAGERS AS PRACTICAL AUTHORS: RECONSTRUCTING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICE\*

ANN L. CUNLIFFE

*University of New Hampshire*

### ABSTRACT

In *Conversational Realities* (1993), John Shotter draws on social constructionist suppositions to conceptualize management as a rhetorically-responsive activity in which managers act as 'practical authors' of their social realities (pp. 148–59). From this perspective, organizations are reworked from permanent, independent social structures to relational landscapes continually shifting from the imaginary to the imagined in interactive moments. Managing is seen as an embodied and situated dialogical activity in which managers act as authors of organizational realities through their conversations. In this article, I take as my central premise, the constitutive and metaphorical nature of language, and explore the practical, enacted aspects of Shotter's concept of authorship. Specifically, I suggest authorship may relate to how managers attempt to construct a sense of who they are, create a shared sense of features of their organizational landscape, and how they may move others to talk or act in different ways through their dialogical practices. I draw on research conversations with managers to explore how everyday poetic talk may be crucial to the process of constructing self, realities, and meaning. This 'reconstruction' of management practice offers both a different way of thinking about managing and potential dialogical resources which may allow managers to author or construct organizational experiences in more deliberate ways.

### INTRODUCTION

. . . the task of understanding does not basically amount to recognizing the form used, but rather to understanding it in a particular, concrete context, to understanding its meaning in a particular utterance, i.e., it amounts to understanding its novelty and not to recognizing its identity . . . (Voloshinov, 1986, p. 68)

Primarily, I wish to develop John Shotter's notion of 'managers as practical authors' (1993) and explore how this may offer a different perspective on how managers make sense of their everyday lived experience. My work draws upon a recent movement in the social sciences, the 'linguistic turn' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Watson, 1995), and specifically upon debates within postmodernism and social constructionism which replace notions of language as a means of

*Address for reprints:* Ann L. Cunliffe, Department of Management, Whittemore School of Business and Economics, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824, USA.

© Blackwell Publishers Ltd 2001. Published by Blackwell Publishers, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.

representing reality by the idea of it as being constitutive or formative; that is, rather than being merely descriptive of already existing circumstances, language gives form to reality. One consequence of this changed view is that it can lead us to see managers and managing in a different light, not as scientist-problem solvers but as authors. Managers, along with other organizational participants, author the shape of their organization's operational space or social landscape, as well as a sense of their own identities and the identities of those around them. This authorship occurs between people, dialogically, as they respond to each other in their everyday conversations. What makes managers authors, is that they are concerned not merely with the design of organizational structures, systems, or goals, but with creating new possibilities for action, new ways of being and relating in indeterminate, ill-defined realms of activity. In this way, they are more like artists than engineers.

This paper, therefore, will not focus on the discovery of already existing, objective entities, on the interpretation of interview data according to pre-existing categories, or the presentation of a theory of what managers usually do, *but on the linguistic resources available to managers for influencing the constitution of organizational 'realities' and identities*. It does so by offering glimpses of crucial interactive moments, fleeting one-off events, in which possibilities emerge for constructing some kind of sense of or orientation to self, others and our social landscape. Such moments are unique, part of an unfolding and ongoing process in which we respond, try to connect with others, shape meaning, and create opportunities for action in the unfolding flow of conversation. As Voloshinov (1986) notes above, the task of understanding is responding to the novelty of a form and to the difference its use may make in a particular context. In my writing, I have attempted to work in the same way, to stay close to the contours of my philosophical position *and* the living experience of authorship as a shared and responsive process. This process takes place between us in the moment as we talk and, from an academic perspective, in the moment as we respond to and reflect upon a transcript or piece of writing.

In taking this stance – this focus on interactive moments in which people are spontaneously responsive to each other – Shotter sees managing as an interplay of dialogical relations in which managers and other organizational participants seek and respond to the conversational moments, the 'once-occurrent events of Being' (Bakhtin, 1984) in which they find themselves actively engaged. During these moments, people create shared significances and possibilities for action between themselves as they argue 'persuasively for a "landscape" of next possible actions' (Shotter, 1993, p. 148) – hence Shotter's designation of rhetorically-responsive activity. What distinguishes this from conventional approaches, in which management practices are studied in terms of role enactment, functions, and/or competencies within an already existing reality (e.g., Boyatzis, 1982; Horne and Lupton, 1965; Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973; Quinn et al., 1990; Stewart, 1967, 1976), is its focus on how organizational participants draw on a range of intralinguistic resources as they respond rhetorically to each other in an attempt to shape 'realities'. Such resources and responses are intimately linked to our ways of being because they are grounded in our 'active subjectivity' (Cooper, 1987, p. 407); i.e., in the indeterminate, spontaneous, embodied feelings and reactions that occur in and influence our interactions. These suppositions lead to the suggestion that no one person is wholly in control of meaning, rather meaning (as a verb) is a

complex, back and forth, unfolding process of mutual construction, one full of tensions and taken-for-grantedness. Just as in authoring a text, we try to find ways of articulating something still imaginary, on the very edge of existence. By drawing attention to these issues, I hope to build on Shotter's original work, to offer a different way of understanding management and suggest possible linguistic resources that may allow managers to author organizational experiences in more responsive ways.

#### MANAGERS AS PRACTICAL AUTHORS: THE CONCEPTUAL ROOTS

Truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogical interaction. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 110)

The proposal that management can be seen as a relational activity has its conceptual roots within a social constructionist archive. I wish to establish the central premise of social constructionism prior to discussing the main ontological and epistemological suppositions of Shotter's rhetorical-responsive version and the possibilities it raises for management practice. This groundwork is important because it establishes the contours of my approach.

##### *A Conceptual Framework*

Social constructionism gained prominence with formative texts such as Goffman's (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garfinkel's (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, and Berger and Luckmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality*. Contemporary authors (e.g., Gergen, 1994; McNamee and Gergen, 1998; Shotter, 1993, 1996a, 1997; Weick, 1995) are furthering the debate and developing different versions within a constructionist frame. The organizing theme of social constructionism is:

social objects are not given in the world but constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned, and organized by human beings in their efforts to make sense of happenings in the world. (Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994, p. 3)

We therefore play an active part in constructing and making sense of our social realities in our conversations (Hatch, 1997; Weick, 1995), and our dialogical exchanges are a central constitutive feature in our daily and our theoretical sense making. Consequently, a fundamental distinction arises between the traditional stance towards management knowledge, which separates ontology/epistemology and theory from observation by developing a disembodied form of conceptual understanding, and social constructionist forms which intertwine knowing/being and see sense-making arising within ongoing practice. That is, we accept that as managers and researchers we are constructing the very social features we are trying to make sense of.

Shotter's rhetorical-responsive social constructionism makes everyday conversational practices and the embodied aspects of interaction focal. Essentially, he proposes our social world and our identities are constructed between us in 'oral encounter and reciprocal speech' (1993, p. 29). Realities are 'shared significances'

(p. 55) shaped *between us* in our talk as we respond, often in spontaneous and taken for granted ways, to each other and to the surroundings within which we find ourselves. In this way, most of the flow of interaction is embodied, part of who we are and how we relate with others: our living, bodily, reflex, responses as speakers–listeners. Consequently, rhetorical-responsive social constructionism focuses on previously unnoticed intralinguistic practices and responses – how utterances influence/are influenced by responsive reactions, and how they may be embedded within and create our relational encounters. Thus, we must study utterances from within situations.

From this perspective, organizations may be seen as complex, dynamic relational landscapes; emerging public spheres (Shotter, 1998) in which responsive dialogue is both a creative and created force. Any study of who managers are and what they do, therefore goes beyond the conventional identification of variables such as job titles, rank, authority, contacts or roles – to the pragmatics of social discourse, how managers talk about their experience and relate with others in their organizational lives (Watson, 1994, 1995). Managing becomes a relational activity, a rhetorical-responsive practice in which managers, along with other organizational participants, try to create a sense of place and situate themselves in relation to others. This relational activity is both *rhetorically-responsive* (as we react spontaneously in our conversations to words, gestures and feelings), and *contested* (because all involved are trying to bridge the gaps and silences in talk as we try to persuade others to see things our way). Allowing for this possibility means accepting that management realities and identities are not created internally in the manager's mind, nor externally by the organization and its structure, but constructed *dialogically between* managers and others in everyday conversations. In other words, no single individual can be held wholly responsible for what occurs:

What I do now depends on what we, overall, are doing . . . And what I do, is a mixture, so to speak – a complex mixture – of influences from within my self and from elsewhere. This is where all the strangeness begins. (Shotter, 1996b, p. 3)

Thus, we are responding to the circumstances and momentary influences and relationships we experience.

If we accept managing as a relational activity constituted in rhetorical-responsive dialogue, then we do not need new theories about management but to *better understand the everyday conversational realities of managers* (Shotter, 1993; Watson, 1994, p. 5). Practical authorship is often unselfconscious because we take for granted our use of language and its function – ‘good’ practical authors/managers are responsive and reflexive practitioners who recognize the constitutive nature of language that others miss. However, in doing so, they do not act in isolation from self, others, or past/present/future, authorship is always in living response to circumstances: constructing and acting from their own sense of self and others, fitting actions into the social traces of organizational discourse, and responding within dialogue. Managing is therefore tied in complex ways with our sense of who we are in relation to others.

Two major implications of this perspective emerge: first, conversations involve unrepeatable moments which are intimately entwined in our ways of being and relating (Shotter and Billig, 1998, pp. 13–14). This re-visions managing as a con-

tinually emerging, embodied practice, *a way of being and relating*, rather than the conventional view of *management* as a series of disembodied activities. Conversations, language and our everyday forms of talk therefore become important arenas for study. Second, social constructionist research<sup>[1]</sup> focuses on how managers may grasp and create a shared sense, influence and are influenced, construct and act upon images of themselves and others in conversations. Consequently, we need to explore how our sense of self and the organizational landscape are both constructions and products of the dialogical practices of participants.

### *Implications for Research*

Instead of turning immediately, as we have in the past, to a study of how individuals come to know the objects and entities in the world around them, we must begin in quite a different way: we must study how, by interweaving our talk with our other actions and activities, we can first develop and sustain between us different, particular *ways* of relating ourselves to each other. (Shotter, 1996a, p. 299)

Based on these suppositions, management inquiry becomes a two-way, emerging, embodied process in which we try to create order through our stories of the world (Law, 1994, pp. 9–28). Research conversations are not about discovering what *really happens*, what managers *really think*, or what patterns and systems we can identify – a process more typical of realist and empiricist methodologies (Pollner, 1991). Instead, a dialogical stance<sup>[2]</sup> suggests our conversations offer ways in which we momentarily construct a sense of meaning – a meaning always in relationship as our utterances are responsive to other utterances and to our surroundings (Shotter and Billig, 1998).

This approach forces the management researcher to confront a number of tensions: if meaning is created in the moment, how can a researcher access that moment? How can a researcher uncover words already in relationship unless she/he is an active participant in organizational life? How can my writing, which is typically after the event and often my objectivizing voice (Hatch, 1996), claim to tell me anything about how managers relate to others and to their surroundings? Any written analysis, as such, is one person's abstraction of a shared relational event, a unilateral and retrospective process of making sense which typifies the academic language game. I experienced a fundamental tension between engaging in and writing about meaning construction; between myself/the reader as author of this paper, 'my' managers as authors of their organizational experiences, and the coordinated management of meaning between all participants in the interactive moment of the research process. In other words, authorship (organizational or academic) is a complex self–other relationship!

I had already begun a three year process interviewing managers from three different organizations about their organizational experiences. I audio taped our initial conversations, and it was while listening to the managers' stories and colourful descriptions that I really began to connect *the idea* of rhetorical-responsive dialogue with the *lived experience of how we create meaning* in our research conversations. Ideally, a researcher using a rhetorical-responsive perspective would study meaning creation within the flow of conversation, as an organizational participant. Pragmatics prevented me from doing so, yet I had hours of what I felt was rich

dialogue offering numerous possibilities for developing the notion of practical authorship. I began to video tape conversations which the manager and myself watched as a means of exploring how we created meaning through our dialogical practices from a more symmetrical, participative stance.<sup>[3]</sup> In those research conversations, meaning construction is both relativized to the moment while being a retrospective construction of past experiences. Therefore, instead of using the conversations to develop theories about what the manager's experience really is, I offer a participant's (my own) embedded sense of possibilities for meaning construction. In these episodes, the manager/researcher/reader all author meaning. Consequently, I ask the reader not to look for generalities about management, 'objective' explanations, or interpretations of 'real' meaning, but to see this as a piece of writing that explores the fundamental ambiguities, tensions, and imaginative nature of a postmodern/social constructionist understanding of management practice.

My focus is threefold and multi-level: first, an attempt to develop the notion of authorship by exploring potential authorship issues raised by our conversations (first order constructionism). Second, to explore *how managers and myself enacted practical authorship in conversations and the dialogical practices we use in doing so* (second order constructionism). This is important because it highlights the rhetorical-responsive and potentially suasive aspect of practical authorship by drawing attention to moments in the conversation which resonated with me as a participant and helped construct a possible shared meaning in the research relationship. It is reasonable to assume that managers use similar rhetorical practices to similar effect in relating to people in their organizational sphere. My approach of working from within the conversation itself is an attempt to 'talk the talk' of practical authorship. Thirdly, I will draw on postmodern/social constructionist suppositions to link my ideas to the already existing landscape of knowledge and unsettle some conventional ideas about management – a monological commentary. Thus, there are four texts interwoven in this paper: the manager's text, my (participant) interpretation of its meaning, academic rhetoric, and your own text as reader. It is from this perspective I offer the conversational excerpts included;<sup>[4]</sup> not as theories about phenomena but as emerging responsive understandings and shared significances created between researcher and manager about the manager's ongoing lived experience. Such responsive understandings may be experienced by readers in the same way that I experienced them in my conversations. In doing so, we can explore what this might tell us about managing.

#### MANAGERS AS PRACTICAL AUTHORS: RECONSTRUCTING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PRACTICE

It is my intention to develop Shotter's notion of authorship and explore how rhetorical-responsive interaction may help us construct and make sense of experience. I want to begin by outlining my frame for reconstructing management practice. I suggest authorship is enacted in at least three ways: first, managers help make sense of the 'chaotic welter of impressions' (Shotter, 1993, p. 148) and multiple voices speaking in the organizational landscape. By articulating these impressions, they create possibilities for some form of organizing activity to take place. Second, these voices co-construct a sense of self/others and ways of relating to

others and moving on in the landscape. Third, they must also persuade others to talk and act in ways appropriate to the circumstances. Whereas traditional conceptions see managers establishing relationships or networking within existing realities, my reconstruction suggests we author realities, meaning, ways of being and acting in our conversations as we imagine and articulate the possibilities of our circumstances. In this sense, human existence is an unfolding movement or 'becoming' (Heidegger, 1962) and talk is figurative and poetic rather than representational: *not about what is but what might be*. Further, these ways of relating occur in unfolding rhetorical-responsive interaction as we shape and respond to dialogue with others.

Managers used these ways of talking in our conversations. They rarely spoke in theoretical terms but employed very imaginative ways of talking about their organizational experience and the features they felt were important. They spoke through stories, metaphors and archetypes of what they saw as significant events or dilemmas; who said what to whom; and how they/others felt and responded. I was struck by the images created and how effective this poetic language was in giving me a sense of the manager's experience.<sup>[5]</sup> This provided an impetus for reworking management as a relational activity of managing in which good managers continually author a sense of self/others and organizational realities through 'acceptable linguistic formulations' (Shotter, 1993, p. 79). I propose this sense making process is also based on self-reflexivity, an awareness of how we construct the very features we think we are talking about and how our linguistic practices influence this process of construction. If we accept life itself as chaotic and language as ambivalent, then a crucial aspect of 'good' authorship is a manager's ability to 'produce at the appropriate moments utterances responsive to those conditions, to help create in conversations with those around them, a mutually shared "landscape" of possibilities for action' (Shotter and Cunliffe, forthcoming). In the remainder of the paper, I offer excerpts from my conversations with managers, examples of how they and 'we' (researcher and manager) may have enacted practical authorship.

I want to begin with an example of how managers speak in implicit ways about their authorship and how it may be embedded within their experience. Lisa, a Project Manager responsible for relocating 2000 employees to a new centralized location, spoke of how she felt about the 'fuzziness' of the project due to the number of groups involved, conflicting information and late decisions:

*Lisa:* So the understanding of what's real and what's . . . umm . . . it isn't OK to do, is not well understood . . .

I was saying to someone that a lot of what I do at work is I have conversations with people and some days I feel I should be having more output. And they said to me, 'you tend to be in a job with a high degree of ambiguity and in those circumstances, talking things out with people and discussing them – that *is* your job, to help figure out where you are in those circumstances and what needs to get done.' And a lot of what I've been doing is calling together meetings that say we need to grapple with these issues, we need to confront this stuff.

I suggest a crucial aspect of authorship involves creating *dialogical opportunities* for constructing shared significances between participants, and for creating shared feelings in shared circumstances. Within these opportunities, dialogue co-mingles as we

respond to each other and it becomes difficult to separate clear-cut individual meaning. In this example, Lisa talks of her realization that conversations are important in helping people situate themselves and act in the circumstances. This realization came from a conversation with a colleague which gave her a different shared significance. She perhaps responded to what I suggest is a *connective or reflex trigger* – dialogue which triggers an arresting or moving moment (Shotter, 1996a, p. 294), a moment in which new ways of making sense of the situation, new ways of relating and responding to people may begin. Instead of being frustrated at having to talk, she now seems to feel conversations are a ‘moral obligation’ (Shotter, 1993, p. 39), a way of grasping a new landscape of possibilities and creating a new shared sense of how to go on. While these conversations carry traces of past conversations and commitments inherent to the practical flow of living (Richardson et al., 1998), they lead to them being seen in a new light. In this way, managers may be seen as co-authors and products of discourse, and organizations as relational landscapes continually ‘imagined’ (Shotter, 1993, pp. 88–90)<sup>[6]</sup> in the many dialogical practices of constituent members. I suggest ‘good’ managers/authors are sensitive to their relational surroundings, they are able to explicate vague understandings and articulate ‘features’ and relationships from the welter of impressions organizational members experience. In doing so, they create possibilities for action.

In trying to construct a shared sense of their experiences in our conversations, managers used a number of intralinguistic resources: stories, metaphors, dialogue-within-dialogue, archetypes and contradiction. I found myself responding to these (consciously and unselfconsciously) in our conversations. I propose these arresting or moving moments may help us create a shared sense over the boundaries of discourse. Specifically, these rhetorical-responsive practices may help organizational participants make sense of their landscape by constructing dialogical features or conversational reference points or ‘landmarks’. In this way, managers author ‘realities’, deal with dilemmas of who to be, and persuade others to talk or act in different ways. I will explore these aspects of authorship by focusing on how dialogical practices helped create meaning in my conversations with managers. In doing so, I will draw on my own responses as conversational participant as well as existing conceptual resources to situate and open the process to further scrutiny.

#### *Creating Features of our Organizational Landscape*

Drawing on the work of Vico, Shotter (1993, p. 54) suggests we construct a culture’s (organization’s) ‘common sense (its *sensus communis*)’ as we articulate shared feelings in the everyday flow of activities. From this perspective, organizations may be seen as relational landscapes in which participants construct a common sense; a figurative understanding which embraces shared significances rather than a literal description of an external reality. Within these landscapes, managers act as authors with others in co-constructing a dynamic sense of place and trying to make an unarticulated ‘imaginary’ organizational landscape an ‘imagined’ one (Shotter, 1993, pp. 88–93). This distinction, between a fleeting sense and a grasp of ‘thereness’, is central to the notion of social constructionism because it provides a way of understanding how we construct (figuratively) our social realities. The imaginary is something tacit, still emerging in the internal relations of our experience. It is nonlocatable, but nevertheless influences our actions and talk in implicit ways (p. 90). When such relations are articulated as a shared, ongoing languaged activity which order our actions and talk, then they become

the imagined.<sup>[7]</sup> A manager's effectiveness may therefore depend on her/his ability to author acceptable features and persuade others that they can be real. So how might managers try to order impressions with others and create features of their organizational landscape so that some form of organizing activity may take place? I suggest that managers un/consciously construct and respond to organizational discourse, shared ways of talking about features of the organization in which a sense of lived experience is created. These features are not real but imagined in discourse. This organizational discourse is unique to organizational members because it emerges in their relational-responsive activities and the rhetorical practices and utterances that occur between them. Such features may be enfolded and unfold in unselfconscious ways within organizational discourse; nevertheless, they offer a basis for creating some kind of shared significance.

In the example below, the potential impact of rhetorical practices emerges as Vince, the President of a small manufacturing organization, talks about his experience. These practices may help him construct shared opportunities for shared significance, with me as researcher and with organizational members, as he articulates features (the imaginary) and brings them into the realm of talk (the imagined).

*Vince:* I live in this world of uncertainty. I am not naive any longer – I come in in the morning now and I'm a sceptic. I say, 'Okay, first tell me about all the casualties, I want to set priorities. What are the things that might take us out of business today?' I'm not being wise, I'm being a realist . . . right now we're wrestling with keeping two boilers up and running . . .

I can go back Monday and the boiler is gone – so how do we address this problem? You really have to be nimble of foot here, you've got to be able to react, you don't know what's going to be thrown at you. You try to prepare yourself for the unexpected, and with a number of eyes looking ahead with me, maybe we'll see a few of the potholes that are approaching us . . .

Of course, some of these features are not literally real in the sense of being independent or experienced in exactly the same way by those involved. I saw no casualties, wrestling or potholes as I walked around the Plant, but his way of talking created an image of a chaotic organizational life; an image of darkness I still carry with me when I recollect my visits. Such imagery can be very powerful in shaping meaning and has its impact in how others respond and whether they take up similar ways of talking. Vince is perhaps trying to deal with the chaotic welter of impressions by constructing features (casualties, priorities) to talk around. In asking 'tell me about all the casualties . . .', Vince's language may influence and be responsive to (intentionally or unselfconsciously) the talk of other organizational members as conversational participants construct themes around which organizing activity can take place. In this way, through a shared metaphor, a common sense may develop. This sense of shared 'imagined' emerged in my conversation with Dave, the Production Manager in the same company. I came away with the same impression of darkness:

*Dave:* You plan to use this machine and have to use that, and some weeks this breaks and then that breaks – so it's very difficult . . . You plan something then 'Boom!' something happens . . . that's one of the dark tunnels.

His language also gave me an impression of a chaotic battle with machines, of reacting to unpredictability. Looking at these two excerpts, shared significance seems to be connected with both rhetorical and poetic forms of talk. Höpfl (1995) suggests rhetoric is usually persuasive and directed towards already existing ends, whereas poetic forms of talk express lived experience and emphasize ambivalence. For example, Vince uses rhetoric by provoking an intended response to 'I want to set priorities . . . , what might take us out of business . . . ?' Poetic forms of talk, 'casualties', 'wrestling', 'potholes', 'dark tunnels' evoke images in which meaning is more than the image itself and ambivalence emerges through a sense of 'otherness' (Derrida, 1978). Otherness may pervade meaning construction by subverting and incorporating the mimetic; the images in Vince and Dave's talk evoke both a shared sense of disorder and an absence of well being and order. In this way, meaning may be constructed from deferred presence (Cooper, 1989) as we create a sense of the features of our landscape from what they are not as much as what they are.

Similarly, Dave and Vince both invoke comparison in their conversations; this or that, being 'wise' or a 'realist'. Such dialogical practices may offer ways of expressing their felt dilemmas and the juxtapositions may also help them in their struggle to situate themselves and act in relation to each other. These ways of talking, therefore, suggest the ambivalence of the socially constructed experience of those managers; the tension between what is/isn't. Such ambivalence may be explained by Foucault's notion of 'points of choice' (1972, p. 36); choices created within discourse based on differences which may be reconcilable or irreconcilable. From this perspective, authorship is equivocal as we try to bridge contesting images, felt dilemmas, rhetoric and the otherness of meaning. In this process, managers are not the sole originators of organizational discourse but one of many voices in the ambivalence of conversation.

The notion of situated organizational discourse or common sense emerged in my conversations with two managers from another organization. Both used language and highlighted features that were different to Vince and Dave. One manager, Rob, used the term 'deliverables' a number of times in our conversation, I asked him what these were:

*Rob:* I have some very specific deliverables in terms of infrastructure documents which describe who is on the team, what everyone's roles and responsibilities are, how do they interact with each other, how do you communicate to the team, how do you schedule and track schedules – those are all deliverables for me. The extent to which I set up a good infrastructure and I have a plan in the early phases – there'll be less issues and they'll be easier to deal with.

Whereas Vince and Dave used poetic, non-technical expressions which evoked colourful images of dilemmas and battles, Rob's rhetoric created a different impression of organizational life for me; a system which objectifies and elevates control through precise definition in 'infrastructure documents' and 'success metrics'. In this example, ambivalence is minimized by the authority (unequivocality) and directedness (intentional outcomes) carried within his language (Höpfl, 1995). Rob explained that he had picked up these 'techniques' (or ways of talking) from corporate training programmes; events in which shared organizational discourse may be constructed. This corporate rhetoric may provide a way of stabi-

lizing and legitimizing actions and relationships of organizational members, of jointly constructing participation in organizational life, as members figure out how to enact imagined system features and relate to each other. Individual and organizational discourse may therefore create and sustain each other as participants engage in rhetorical-responsive dialogue. Discourse may also legitimate and maintain itself by enactment in institutional sites (training programmes, performance review documentation) and as it becomes subsumed within organizational discourse as common sense. In this way, unconscious rules or taken-for-granted ways of talking unify discourse by defining what should be talked about and acted upon (Foucault, 1972).

In summary, managers may act as practical authors by helping shape organizational discourse and the relational landscapes of possibilities as they articulate features and images in rhetorical-responsive activity. Language and dialogue are organizing forces in creating moral commitments and ways of acting/talking as we respond to each others talk in spontaneous, embodied ways and draw on unspoken understandings. I suggest the constructing process is complex because it is difficult to distinguish between the world (our experience), the way we talk about the world (our conversations) and how we situate ourselves in it (our responsive actions). Whereas many authors see a separation of rhetoric and reality (Watson, 1995, p. 807) or language as literal, I suggest our dialogical practices and realities construct each other as we talk and leave traces or impressions we incorporate in future conversations. In this way, 'knowledge' and practices may be shared and created within discourse, and may become recursive processes (Law, 1994, p. 14). Managers may become 'good' authors by developing a reflexive awareness of how their ways of talking impact this process, and how they may become more responsive to the many voices that surround them.

### *Dealing with Dilemmas of Being*

The basic practical-moral problem in life is not what *to do* but what *to be*. (Shotter, 1993, p. 118)

How do managers construct a sense of self in this emerging and contested relational landscape? The managers I spoke with did not talk about their identity as fixed or bounded in terms of roles or competencies, nor did I get the impression they saw themselves acting out scripted roles (Goffman, 1959). Instead, they spoke about different facets, ways of relating, and the dilemmas they faced. I suggest our sense of being emerges in rhetorical-responsive dialogue between multiple organizational voices. In other words, identity is not categorized as a noun but a way of being-in-relation-to-others as we contest and negotiate who we are in responsive ways. In this sense, the origins of dialogue and self are embodied in our reactions as we find ourselves responding and moving in particular ways. Thus, managing is a way of being because our actions, our ways of making sense and constructing our world are not separate from us, they do not stem from a detached knowledge of the world, but are intimately linked to what we feel, say, and how we engage with our surroundings. We 'continually work on (our) humanness' (Watson, 1994, p. 19), i.e., *who we are* as we relate and converse with people.

Managers may also be seen as rhetorical beings (p. 24) who argue with themselves and others as they respond to different voices (internal and external),

and who experience dilemmas of being as they feel pushed or pulled in different directions. This idea of a 'multivoiced self' (Hermans et al., 1992, pp. 28–9) based on a process of internal and external argumentation was embedded in a number of managers' comments. They spoke of issues they faced in terms of dilemmas of *who to be*, not just decisions about what to *do* – in other words, working on their humanness and ways of relating. This emerged in the previous comment made by Vince: 'I am naive no longer . . .', 'now . . . I'm a skeptic . . .' and surfaced in other conversations. In the excerpt below, the dilemma of multivoiced being can be seen as Lisa speaks of her uncertainty about accepting her current job and how she tries to situate herself in relation to the voices of others:

*Lisa:* Oh, gee! What a thankless task and what an idiot I'd be to take this job!

The Personnel Manager described this job as the Texas Ranger and what I'd heard was that it was more like the Lone Ranger!

(and later. . .)

I'm either the virgin or the whore – as a woman you either get to be tough or nice but somehow you can't be both.

*Ann:* Does that bother you?

*Lisa:* Well, I was especially offended by the idea I was thought just to be tough. I can be tough but I usually believe I have a purpose in it. My reaction was – that's why I have this job! If I weren't willing to stand up to managers bent at me and tell people bad news, I would be completely ineffective . . . and yet the men aren't described in that way.

Lisa is perhaps drawing on familiar cultural icons and archetypes to open up a story line to fit herself into the relational landscape. I felt she was not necessarily talking about these figures as heroes to be emulated, but perhaps more as metaphors for ways of being and relating. From within the conversation, I had a sense of interplay of openness and application (Richardson et al., 1998); an openness of meaning because her language was neither precise nor literal, and also a way of understanding her feelings as the implications of these icons played through me:

- The Texas Ranger out on the plains with his buddies, the wind in their hair, a sense of freedom and camaraderie over the camp fire as they brave the elements together. . . .
- The Lone Ranger with his mask and horse, independent, travelling only with his sidekick Tonto, meeting people but always returning back to the Plains and his own company, just who is that masked wo/man? – no one really knows. . . .

The interplay struck me as I inserted my own interpretation (above) and what this might mean for Lisa. I suggest these are examples of co-authorship of self. Lisa and others in her relational net draw on virtual memories from old television programmes, historical stereotypes and maybe even the previous job holder's interactions; metaphors for grasping a sense of being. The language and archetypes carry subtext or unspoken narratives (as illustrated above) which may shape our ways of being and participating in dialogical interaction. They also helped me

grasp a sense of her relationship with others: put very simply – as the Texas Ranger we might collaborate, as the Lone Ranger we act alone.

I was struck by this dualism. The ambivalence of our constructing process is again implicit as Lisa speaks of these dilemmas of self which emerge as she interacts with conflicting views and demands in her landscape. These dilemmas find expression in the contrasting archetypes: the virgin or the whore, the Texas Ranger or the Lone Ranger. Gergen's idea of social ghosts (1991) is illuminating here; an identity formed from a pastiche of memories. He argues that our days 'become a chaos of competing opportunities and necessities' (p. 73) – a 'multiphrenic condition' in which we acquire many, often contradictory, views. We develop a pastiche personality (p. 149) in which we are inhabited by fragments of memories and by talk occurring in-the-moment. These are not scripts or collaborative performances (Goffman, 1959) but images that may help us construct a *sense* of who we are. This pastiche way of being and relating re-emerged later in our conversation when Lisa invoked another archetype:

*Lisa:* My husband and I were listening to National Public Radio, and they did a story about repo men who tell people they're not fulfilling their part of the bargain, and he said to me, 'that's what you should say!'. But here's the difference – the repo man works for the Bank – I work for the guy who's car's being repossessed! (laughter). It's difficult to take something away from someone and tell them they're going to be happy with me for doing it!

By talking in this way, managers may be creating 'a new, artificial, intralinguistic or imaginary context . . . for (their) own further activities' (Shotter, 1993, p. 93). Such linguistic practices were used by other managers, for example:

*Steve:* My job has turned to high risk since deregulation – even though it is still highly regulated. Before it was real easy, now I feel like Paul Revere's horse – it was the horse that ran from Charlestown to Lexington – Paul yelled – nobody remembers the horse!

This is not a precise (nor literal) way of talking but the image resonated with me and created a sense of how Steve *felt* about his relationship with others. A sense of otherness may also be implicit in Steve's comment that he is the horse not Paul, a remark which carries as much about what *is not* as what *is*. I felt Steve experienced a sense of frustration in not being who he wants to be.

I suggest authorship of self is an embodied, contested dialogical practice, shown in the ways managers spoke about themselves. They referred to archetypes, images of who to be or not to be, dilemmas, struggles with other voices in their landscape. Perhaps embedded in this language is the 'otherness' of being – subjects created out of the uncertainty of division or '*differance*' (Cooper, 1987, 1989). Lisa's two 'ghosts' of the Lone and Texas Ranger may help construct each other because while separating the notions as oppositions, they may also be part of a whole, i.e., mutually-defining oppositions. One ghost may defer (in time) and differ (in space) as her relational net changes, but the other is always present in its absence – in other words, she may be the Lone Ranger to some, but only because the Texas Ranger is deferred momentarily.

This notion implies we cannot grasp a sense of wholeness in being because of the constant interplay of absence/presence, openness/application, the juxtaposition of this/that. In this sense, authorship of self is contested with self and others within our daily conversations. From this perspective, 'human experience is pervaded by an "existential ambivalence" which in turn serves as the drive to organize' (Cooper, 1989, p. 481). For example, the oppositional archetypes Lisa talks of can activate very different ways of talking and acting and these could be seen as points of choice she has to reconcile. Constructing a different selfhood may depend on 'good authorship': our ability to persuade others to talk and relate in different ways, to find new social ghosts or new ways of imagining. Lisa tried to resolve her ambivalence by constructing a new relational net from which she could derive some sense of order and collaboration:

*Lisa:* One of the concerns I had about this job was the degree to which I would be lonely – part of what I did before I took the job was to negotiate some liaison with Personnel . . . she's an extremely powerful person and she likes to work collaboratively . . . she's done a lot for making a difference here.

Here, Lisa may be authoring her sense of self as she deals with her feelings of disjuncture by constructing dialogical opportunities and new ways of relating with people in her organizational landscape. She may be constructing a sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1990) or reliability in social relations which may help a person 'prevent himself from losing himself' (Laing, quoted in Willmott, 1986). Thus, the Personnel Manager may be helping Lisa broker between the identities of the two social ghosts by constructing connections and more collaborative ways of relating. In our interaction with others, we respond to different voices and struggle to accommodate them and our own voices in our sense of self. In this way, our rhetorical-responsive activity creates and is created by our ways of being.

Managing as an embodied practice, a way of being was also implicit in our conversations because of the way managers spoke about their feelings, frustrations, joys and dilemmas. They seemed to want to draw me into their experience. All of the managers spoke of how they *felt* about themselves, others, and what they did:

*Lisa:* When I talk to the male managers . . . I've left meetings with them feeling very depressed and when I talk to the Personnel Manager I feel very enthusiastic and feel I could make a difference.

*Vince:* So, I'm certainly seeing my role as less involved, although you still, in a small business, get pulled in to a problem on the shop floor level. But basically I'm more removed, which creates some anxieties because it's that letting go – do I really have the confidence?

In summary, managers may act as practical authors negotiating a sense of who they/others are through contested and responsive conversations with others. This interaction may involve a struggle between different voices within or between us which may, in that struggle, create opportunities for situating ourselves or creating new possibilities for *being* in our organizational landscape. 'Good' authorship means developing a reflexive awareness of this process, of how ways of being are intimately woven into our ways of talking and relating with others.

*Connecting with and Persuading Others*

I have suggested conversations can be seen as ways in which we shape a 'common sense' or illusion about how to carry out our social practices. Within this perspective, *how* we create 'a shared *significance*' (Shotter, 1993, p. 55), how we construct the imagined from the imaginary (p. 80), or how we coordinate activities between ourselves, become central issues if we are concerned with developing a more deliberate authorship and reflexive management practice. In this section, I discuss how managers talk about the way they connect with others – and how they connected with me – as a means of exploring how we may socially construct possibilities for coordinating action. I propose we do so through rhetorical-responsive dialogue; e.g., metaphors, stories, and reflex or connective triggers.

Metaphors and stories can provide ways of crossing the boundaries of discourse to create a sufficient common sense to allow us to act within a context. They open up possibilities for connecting by creating images that strike the imagination of other participants in the conversation (Alvesson, 1993). Metaphors may tap into a tacit understanding by resonating with others in poetic, imaginative ways. This was highlighted in some of the previous excerpts; for example, Vince's metaphor of the battlefield and Lisa's Lone and Texas Rangers drew my attention in a potent, imaginative way to their experience. I was struck by the images they created and could relate to them – they stood out in my memory long after our conversation had finished. This embodied and powerful way of talking resonates with the listener and allows them to share an image. The symbolism creates strong impressions, images and feelings which can be potent in making connections with others.<sup>[8]</sup> Managers may use both rhetoric and poetic language in implicit and reflexive ways to connect with others as a means of constructing ways talking and acting.

Stories offer one way of connecting; of trying to grasp what is happening (Boje, 1991) and impacting others through emotional pull (Downing, 1997). All of the managers I spoke with told stories about their lives. I commented to Mike that he told many stories in our conversation:

*Mike:* and I do a lot of that. For me its probably the most effective way – in dialogue – to tell stories and use analogies and to make pictures . . .

*Ann:* . . . it can be very persuasive . . . ?

*Mike:* . . . by native style I'm much more a storyteller. Matter of fact, sometimes for presentations I've written fables and presented . . . a particular Board of Directors – I remember we were struggling with an issue about strategy and where do we go and they had a very difficult time seeing themselves in the picture, right? and what they were causing to happen in the organization. So I wrote this about 6–8 page fable, and read it at the board meeting – about the Middle Ages – and likened our organization to a marauding band that had to support itself off the land at the same time it was trying to . . . and they got it – they could find themselves and it was very helpful.

*Ann:* Did they make those connections with themselves?

*Mike:* Oh yes, it wasn't subtle. (laughter) It just moved it out into a safer context for them to see themselves . . .

The rhetorical and poetic nature of dialogue is exemplified here both in content and process as Mike uses a story to show the value of his storytelling. By using a

fable to influence his Board and shift their thinking to a more reflective mode, Mike is perhaps using a *connective trigger* or emotional pull to shift their ways of talking. His story certainly acted as a trigger for me. I suggest Mike is not the sole originator of meaning in his story-within-story, but meaning depends upon the responsiveness of the listener(s) and the resonance of the symbolism. Connecting and creating meaning is therefore a relationally-responsive process because the speaker may supply the signifier (the words or sound image), the listener provides the supplement or interpretation (Gergen, 1992). In this excerpt, Mike's story is the trigger (perhaps to feelings of discomfort with old ways of acting), but different ways of talking and acting depend on listener responses.

This example further illuminates the notion of managers as practical co-authors as they shape conversations, influence and are influenced by the talk of subordinates/colleagues/bosses. We often do not realize that our talk occurs in a 'chaotic zone of indeterminacy' (Shotter, 1996a, p. 8), in which it is unclear who influences whom, why someone says something and why someone responds the way they do. We cannot explain all we know or how meaning is created because our interactions are responsive, indeterminate and always in relationship. I suggest we somehow connect and persuade self/others in the otherness of our rhetorical-responsive interaction; what is/is not, who we are/are not, what is imaginary/imagined. The illusions we create in our talk may invoke responses from others in terms of resonance, dis/agreement, negotiation, participation, or acceptance. These responses are rooted in our intralinguistic practices which can offer potent ways of connecting.

Up to this point, I have talked about 'common sense', organizational discourse and connecting, which imply unity – while also emphasizing the ambivalence, contestation and otherness of social construction. To clarify my position, I suggest that as we search for ways of connecting and persuading others, of sharing a common sense, we are also acting into and at the same time constructing vague, always emerging realities. In this 'hurly burly of everyday life' (Shotter, 1993, p. 174), the imagined is often contested by multiple voices (within us and between us) which means the constructing process is open, transitory and embedded within the particular circumstances we find ourselves – any imagined reality can always be updated or renegotiated. The transitory nature of our connections was apparent in my conversations with Vince and Dave, the President and Production Manager from the same company. Vince spoke of the value of encouraging and discussing diverse ideas from management team members and how this was embedded within his history of past conversations. It is this embeddedness that allows some continuity:

*Vince:* Let me tell you where I come from; growing up in a small organization where basically there was the owner, myself and this guy – the three of us are very much alike. So you sit around the table and everyone just keeps nodding – not good! It almost becomes inbred and your thinking becomes alike and that's not healthy. This has now blossomed into a bigger group and now we've got synergy – a number of different minds working together.

Dave connected with this issue in a different way:

*Dave:* Sometimes issues arise and the subject just grows out of proportion and I basically just want to get something done. I can see so much, other people can

see more or less – so I try to put my foot in somebody else's shoes and try not to jump to conclusions, but sometimes it's hard not to do that. You just do the best with what you've got . . . As a group, sometimes we go right to the point, and I love that and wish it would happen more and we make the decision. But a great percent of the time we'll discuss the things and look at it under the microscope and enlarge it more and more that sometimes we forget why we are doing it, why we're even here to think about the problem. And we sleep on it . . . sometimes for weeks and sometimes it makes sense to do that and sometimes it doesn't.

From this perspective, everyday discourse may incorporate multiple voices dis/connecting and negotiating across an indeterminate linguistic community.

Despite this indeterminacy, managers may act more reflexively as practical co-authors by recognizing the potency and resonance of dialogue. Connections may emerge as a manager uses strong metaphors that resonate with others to create a common organizational dialogue in which members may situate themselves. The features elevated in organizational discourse can offer dialogical organizing opportunities in the sense that they can provide themes for talk and for organizing action. In this way, metaphors (the battlefield, or the system) may influence discourse between managers (and vice versa) which reduce the zone of indeterminacy and lend a shared significance. Metaphorical and poetic ways of speaking can be very potent in connective and suasive ways. The vibrant use of language, poetic imagining and resonant ways of speaking can be very evocative in opening up possibilities for creating embodied connections and causing us to be struck or moved to talk or act in different ways. This is an important issue, because managers are expected to persuade and move people to act in particular ways within their organizational landscape. By viewing managers as practical authors and by raising awareness of more potent ways of speaking and connecting, authorship can be constructed as a more deliberate and creative experience.

#### SUMMARY

My intention in this paper is to build on Shotter's notion of 'managers as practical authors', by offering examples of how managers may intentionally or unintentionally author organizational experiences through their dialogue with others. I suggest 'good' authorship involves a reflexive awareness of the constitutive nature of language and being responsive to other voices and the otherness of our landscape. These suppositions lead us to a different understanding of who managers are and what they do – an understanding grounded in the notion that *managing* is about ways of being and relating as opposed to the view of *management* as an objectivized and bounded activity. Managers do not act as rational agents in an already existing reality but simultaneously construct, make sense, and are constructed by dialogue and ways of relating in their organizational landscapes. 'Good' managers are those who have a reflexive awareness of the complexities of the authorship process and who may use a range of linguistic tools to jointly construct possibilities for participating in conversations and organizational life in different ways.

I also suggest social constructionism leads to a different way of researching because it focuses on how language may shape the way we relate to our surroundings, how we act, how we grasp a sense of ourselves and others. Read against these suppositions, this paper is not about representing the manager's reality or providing a theory of management, but about how researcher and manager both author and are products of meaning and language. The conversational excerpts emphasize the uniqueness and taken-for-grantedness of this process. Managers talk about their organizations in very different ways and are often unaware of the language they use (in a conversation with Vince two years after our initial conversation, he used the same metaphors and was surprised when I drew attention to his way of talking). However, by highlighting these different intralinguistic practices – metaphors, stories, social ghosts, and dialogical triggers – resources are available to help managers become more reflexive authors within the unique situations in which they find themselves. Thus, managers, organizational participants, researchers, etc. may become more reflexive co-authors by developing an awareness of their influence in co-constructing organizational and individual discourse, jointly ordering impressions, creating shared significances about realities and self, and opening up possibilities for action in their everyday conversations.

#### NOTES

\*I am especially indebted to John Shotter for his help and insight. I also thank the two anonymous reviewers for helping me sharpen my ideas, and Robert Chia and Mark Easterby-Smith for their comments on a very early version of the article.

- [1] I wish to make a distinction here between first order constructionist research, which looks at how others socially construct their realities, and second order constructionist research which explores how researchers themselves are part of the process of construction. My intention is to take the latter stance.
- [2] For an account of dialogical or discursive psychology (based on the work of Antaki, 1994; Bakhtin, 1984; Billig, 1991; Voloshinov, 1986; and Wittgenstein, 1953), see Shotter and Billig (1998).
- [3] I video taped my initial conversation with the manager. I then video taped a second conversation where we (the manager and myself) watched the first video and discussed how we talked about and created a shared sense of the manager's experience.
- [4] I selected specific conversational excerpts because (as a participant) they either 'struck' me at the moment of speaking and remained with me long after the conversation took place and because, in retrospect, particular ways of talking resonated with my research story. I wish to emphasize that these conversations were not part of the manager's everyday organizational life but discussions in her/his office. In this sense they are outside the manager's lived experience and the relational-responsive relationships and dialogue that occur. A dialogic perspective means engaging in the interaction between organizational participants. Time prevented this; however, I did speak with a number of managers within each organization. I acknowledge the inconsistency between my suppositions and research design and suggest that unless we (as researchers) become actively involved in the manager's world it is difficult to be self-exemplifying. I propose all conversations are relativized to the context and moment they are held and even though we may participate in organizational life, any attempt to access shared meaning will be a retrospective one as we reflect back on events. I suggest my research conversations be seen from the perspective of an embodied dialogical practice in which *a*

*manager and researcher* co-construct momentary connections about how each makes sense of the manager's lived experience. I am not claiming the conversations are representative of an actual reality but offer a way of exploring possibilities of how the discursive practices of participants may help co-construct meaning and how these practices may spill over into organizational lives. In other words, the manager and researcher are both practical authors in the process of ordering impressions.

- [5] I hope readers may be 'struck' by the images and words in the same way, at various moments, while reading this text.
- [6] Please see the next section for elaboration of this term.
- [7] The imagined offers frames for our way of talking, for example, the frames of manager-as-scientist, or author, organizations as systems, communication as sender-message-receiver.
- [8] I explore these issues of poetic language in depth elsewhere (forthcoming).

## REFERENCES

- ALVESSON, M. (1993). 'The play of metaphors'. In Hassard, J. and Parker, M. (Eds), *Post-modernism and Organizations*. London: Sage.
- ALVESSON, M. and KARREMAN, D. (2000). 'Varieties of discourse: on the study of organizations through discourse analysis?' *Human Relations*, **53**, 9, 1125–49.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by C. Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- BERGER, P. L. and LUCKMANN, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- BLACK, M. (1992). 'More about metaphor'. In Ortony, A. (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOJE, D. M. (1991). 'The storytelling organization: a study of story performance in an office-supply firm'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **36**, 106–26.
- BOYATZIS, R. E. (1982). *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- COOPER, R. (1987). 'Information, communication and organization: a poststructuralist revision'. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, **8**, 3, 395–416.
- COOPER, R. (1989). 'Modernism, postmodernism and organizational analysis 3: the contribution of Jacques Derrida'. *Organization Studies*, **10**, 4, 479–502.
- COOPER, R. and FOX, S. (1990). 'The "texture" of organizing'. *Journal of Management Studies*, **27**, 6, 575–82.
- CUNLIFFE, A. L. (1997). 'Managers as Practical Authors: A Social Poetics of Managing and the Implications for Management Inquiry and Learning'. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Lancaster University, UK.
- DERRIDA, J. (1978). *Writing and Differance*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- DOWNING, S. J. (1997). 'Learning the plot: emotional momentum in search of dramatic logic'. *Management Learning*, **28**, 1, 27–44.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books: New York.
- GARFINKEL, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- GERGEN, K. J. (1991). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- GERGEN, K. J. (1992). 'Organization theory in the postmodern era'. In Reed, M. and Hughes, M. (Eds), *Rethinking Organization: New Directions in Organization Theory and Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, 207–26.
- GERGEN, K. J. (1994). *Realities and Relationships*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- GIDDENS, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- GOFFMAN, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- HARDY, C. and CLEGG, S. (1997). 'Relativity without relativism: reflexivity in post-paradigm organization studies'. *British Journal of Management*, **8**, Special Issue (June), S5–S17.
- HATCH, M. J. (1996). 'The role of the researcher: an analysis of narrative position in organization theory'. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, **5**, 4, 359–74.
- HATCH, M. J. (1997). 'Irony and the social construction of contradiction in the humor of a management team'. *Organization Science*, **8**, 275–88.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. New York: Harper & Row.
- HERMANS, H., KEMPEN, H. and VAN LOON, R. (1992). 'The dialogical self: beyond individualism and rationalism'. *American Psychologist*, **47**, 23–33.
- HÖPFL, H. (1995). 'Organizational rhetoric and the threat of ambivalence'. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations & Societies*, **1**, 175–87.
- HORNE, J. H. and LUPTON, T. (1965). 'The work activities of "middle managers" – an exploratory study'. *Journal of Management Studies*, **2**, 1, 14–33.
- KOTTER, J. P. (1982). *The General Managers*. New York: Free Press.
- LAW, J. (1994). *Organizing Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- LYOTARD, J. F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- MCNAMEE, S. and GERGEN, K. J. (1998). *Relational Responsibility: Resources for Sustainable Dialogue*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- MINTZBERG, H. (1973). *The Nature of Managerial Work*. New York: Harper & Row.
- POLLNER, M. (1991). 'Left of ethnomethodology: the rise and decline of radical reflexivity'. *American Sociological Review*, **56**, June, 370–80.
- QUINN, R. E., FAERMAN, S. R., THOMPSON, M. P. and McGRATH, M. R. (1990). *Becoming A Master Manager: A Competency Framework*. New York: Wiley.
- RICHARDSON, F. C., ROGERS, A. and MCCARROLL, J. (1998). 'Towards a dialogical self'. *American Behavioral Scientist*, **41**, 4, 496–516.
- SARBIN, T. R. and KITSUSE, J. I. (Eds) (1994). *Constructing the Social*. Inquiries in Social Construction Series. London: Sage.
- SHOTTER, J. (1993). *Conversational Realities: Constructing Life through Language*. London: Sage.
- SHOTTER, J. (1996a). 'Dialogical realities: the ordinary, the everyday, and other strange new worlds'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, **27**, 2/3, 345–57.
- SHOTTER, J. (1996b). 'Dialogical realities: the construction of "social worlds" in practice'. Paper presented at New York, April.
- SHOTTER, J. (1997). 'The social construction of our "inner" lives'. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, **10**, 1, 7–24.
- SHOTTER, J. (1998). 'An organization's internal public sphere: it's nature and its supplementation'. Commentary in O. Palshaugen, *The End of Organization Theory? Language as a Tool in Action Research and Organizational Development*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 131–46.
- SHOTTER, J. (1999). 'Inside dialogic realities: from an abstract-systematic to participatory-wholistic understanding of communication'. Working Paper, University of New Hampshire, USA.
- SHOTTER, J. and BILLIG, M. (1998). 'A Bakhtinian psychology: from out of the heads of individuals and into the dialogues between them'. In Mayerfield Bell, M. and Gardiner, M. (Eds), *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: No Last Words*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 13–29.
- SHOTTER, J. and CUNLIFFE, A. L. (forthcoming). 'Managers as practical authors: everyday conversations for action'. In Holman, D. and Thorpe, R. (Eds), *The Manager As Practical Author*. London: Sage.
- STEWART, R. (1967). *Managers and their Jobs*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- STEWART, R. (1976). *Contrasts in Management*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

- VOLOSHINOV, V. N. (1986). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (first published 1929).
- WATSON, T. J. (1994). *In Search of Management: Culture, Chaos and Control in Managerial Work*. London: Routledge.
- WATSON, T. J. (1995). 'Rhetoric, discourse and argument in organizational sense making: a reflexive tale'. *Organizational Studies*, **16**, 5, 805–21.
- WEICK, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Foundations for Organizational Science Series. Beverley Hills: Sage.
- WILLMOTT, H. (1986). 'Unconscious sources of motivation in the theory of the subject: an exploration and critique of Giddens' dualistic models of action and personality'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, **16**, 1.