
What doors can we open?

David M Boje. *Tamara : Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science*. Las Cruces: 2001. Vol. 1, Iss. 1; pg. 8, 7 pgs

Full Text (4153 words)

Copyright TamaraLand Publishers 2001

TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science is about free speech and the relationship between science, organization, critical theory, global power, and postmodern culture.

I am by nature a postmodern storyteller. So I will begin Tamara with a story about conversations.

On my journey to initiate TAMARA, there have been other Tamaras. When I finished my Ph.D. at University of Illinois, my mentor was Professor Louis Pondy. He told me, "David you are always talking to people who do not want to know what you have to say. You are always in the wrong room" Shocked and bewildered, I asked, "what do you mean?" "Science," he said "is a mansion with many rooms. In each room there is a conversation and you need to find your room, one with people who want to listen and talk with you."

As we initiate TAMARA, we want you the readers, writers, and wanderers to find your room, to be infected by the conversation, to carry these texts into other contexts, and spread the word about Tamara. But, more than this we want to fashion conversation, to take positions, but also allow for the exchange of competing points of view.

We do not want you to be a faceless, silent passive audience, voiceless, nodding to the players on the stage. Thus, along with our first print issue, we have posted the early versions of texts on the web, so that readers can post their responses, and join in the conversation. I have collected several responses and set them into type in this inaugural issue. I have also invited reviewers to put their discourse into TAMARA. We want to experiment with new forms of article review, to take reviews and publish them along with our essays. This takes a backstage process and puts it front stage. Steve Fuller's essay (in this issue) has more to say on this point.

In this issue Steve Fuller makes the case that the knowledge management (KM) administrators of the university and the Executive Ph.D. in Business are dangerous trends. The result of which can be Knowledge R.L.P The Executive Ph.D. is a program that teaches corporate amnesia, as students learn to institutionalize a corporate conversation. Our Tamara conversation can be subverted into one more corporate conversation.

I got ahead of my story of TAMARA. In the Business College, there is conversation, and you find people meeting in many rooms, but the conversation is dull and boring. Worse in a KM sense we are being rated on producing quantities of dull pieces. I think the real action is beyond the Business College. As Steve Fuller argues, an academic journal can become "bottled messages aimlessly seeking readers" unless we engage the public.

We are specialists in different epistemologies and topics who are in university rooms where we talk of schedules, new hires, promotions, wish for better pay, and debate new courses. Yet I feel

isolated and alone in these rooms of the Business College. I know that I have not learned the lesson that Professor Pondy tried to teach me. Before he dies, he began taking course in Anthropology and music. He was always interdisciplinary.

I do not believe the university as currently fashioned by corporate power and the Weberian cage is what Professor Pondy had in mind for me. He died some years ago, so I can not just ask him. I hear him roll in his grave whenever I hear the words "knowledge management" on a university campus. I recall him saying that if we did not work for pay, then only the people wanting knowledge would stay stick it out. I think this was reference to the more critical attitude of the less professionalized side of campus.

Another solution to the mystery of the Mansion with Many Rooms was my attempt to assemble a conversation between two disciplines who had not talked to one another. In the 1980s people from Folklore and the Business College professors, assembled in Los Angeles for a conference to initiate conversation. My opening speech to the room of organizational behaviorists and folklorists relayed my mentor's advice about seeking rooms in the Mansion of Science, to which I might belong. After some flirting and taunting, and even good debate, a commitment was struck as folklorists and Business College, and even some executives shook hands and agreed to cross disciplinary boundaries. There were some articles and a book as a result, but no serious Tamara took place.

I still search for my answer to Professor Pondy's puzzle, how to conduct conversation in the Mansion. When I could find no rooms for me, I dropped out, and entered my Harley Davidson era. I wore black pants, cap, and boots, and decided science was just not for me. My character became the rebel, riding the Electroglide, between public housing reforms, environmental causes, and most recently animal rights, anti-sweatshop and anti-globalization business practices. Colleagues told me I was not fit to survive in the Business College, a reference to Darwin, I concluded. Yet, these rides to public housing, where I worked with grass roots efforts toward resident management and engaged in activism in my university, were joyous times. For some strange reason, I reentered the mansion, took up the editorship of an unknown journal (Journal of Organizational Change Management) and set about the editor's task of bringing a Board together who could be radical inside the Business College. There were other Harley riders, most without cycles, who were willing to take on corporate power.

As luck would have it, a conference of displaced, rejected and completely marginalized international scholars had just started an association, which was a makeshift Mansion with many rooms, and constructed it downstream from the one called "Academy of Management" and another called "Philosophy" and "Sociology" and still others with names you all know. This minor Mansion, a shack really, was the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD). Abbass Alkhafaji asked me to take over a dead track, and this become a place for "critical postmodern" people to converse. Soon our room in this Mansion became filled with the best and brightest minds, and we debated and argued, dined, and dreamed, nonstop for three days each year. We were awful guests in the Alkhafaji Mansion. We insulted the convention topic, deconstructing it each year, and rallying papers to the opposite view. If the conference did Total Quality Management, we did Anti-TQM; if it was Globalization, we did Anti-Globalization. And we would kidnap the luncheon speaker on these themes, and try to convince him or her that there were other views. You would think they would have tossed us from the conference. Instead they embraced us, because as Abbass tells the story, he formed this new Mansion after the one owned by the Academy of Management refused him and his international brethren and sisteren entry. And soon he co-opted us, by inviting us to set the theme. For over a decade IABD has given our critical postmodern organization theory discourse a home.

We became the stars of the IABD. The people in almost empty rooms began to wonder, why we kent making so much noise kent filling our room and seemed so serious about something. Many

came to investigate, and joined in the dialog. Two other things happened: the bigger, most expensive Mansions noticed our vitality and energy. We got invited to the bigger Mansions, even to Economics.

I was tempted, then seduced, and surrendered to my own lust, accepted their invitation; I did reenter the spectacular Mansion of the Academy of Management. And this year, I am chair-elect of Research Methods Division and wonder if I have learned anything at all. Professor Pondy's voice rings in my ears, "David, are you in the wrong room again?" The second thing that happened as the IABD room began to bulge and rock with conversation, other rooms began to fill, and some members from our critical postmodern room split off to form their own rooms. I was joyous and sad. And when they came back to converse, the dialog was polemic, and I was not as welcoming, as I wanted to be. I asked IABD to support our new journal, and they have.

I still edit that journal, JOCM; it became more successful and recognized each year, and the publishers grew rich by doubling the price each year, till we see this year's price of \$4, 799 (US) a year (It was once about \$75 a year, see <http://www.mcb.co.uk/2001/pricelist/us/usprice.htm> for price list). I was sad, since after a decade of building the reputation, rigor, and readership, the journal is now way too expensive for all but the most elite corporate and university libraries. What fun is that?

Deep down, I felt some new voice calling. It was one of those voices that is speaking, but you can not make out any of the words. I surmised that I needed to try one more time to find my room, and headed for deep space. In virtual space, I could craft web pages, and write and write with no editors, reviewers, or gatekeepers. Yet, I was still outside the Mansion with Many Rooms. I was still lost.

When I attended the play by John Krizanc called "Tamara" I was amazed at his solution to my riddle. The Mansion with Many Rooms was not a fixed point, in Krizanc's vision there were multiple pathways between stages, and no place for me to sit and be a bystander. I joined the spectators as we chased characters in the play from room to room and stage to stage. Then, the postmodern aspects of this affair engulfed me, and I noticed that I had to make choices in this play, and decide which characters to chase, and which stages to enter. And as the chef swung his knife past my nose, cleaving the cabbage head, I knew I had crossed over, and was one of the minor players in this mystery. The multiple, simultaneous stages were networked by my choices. I was less aware of the pedagogy of this theatrics. In reading Augusto Boal, I became aware of my double role as spectator and actor or what he terms, "spect-actor."

Years after, another revelation about the Tamara play became evident. The characters were not fixed points. Each transformed their role, from scene to scene, and from stage to stage. The chauffeur became revealed as a spy pretending to be a chaffer, who was then unmasked as an aristocrat pretending to be a spy, pretending to be a chauffeur. And as I watch him declare his love for the maid, I had to decide which character he was in that moment?

At intermission we sat and enjoyed a banquet feast. And here we were drawn deeper into John Krizanc's Tamara. As we swapped stories with one another, we became new characters, not props on the set, but spies. "Did you go to a room and see who the chaffer became? "What was that aristocrat doing on the stage I did not go to?" Did you see any rooms I did not get into?" As we unraveled who would do the murder in the last scene to come we were part of the all to all

surveillance of Tamara. We had inadvertently become part of this plot.

What is this plot? The theme of the play Tamara is about fascism, and our own complicity in the production of it, our being distributors of the plot from room to room, and our consumption of the play in all its dark force. I was so busy chasing storylines and storytellers from room to room in this Mansion, I forgot about the content of the play. I never did solve the murder plot, and yet I know I was the one who dun it.

When you find out who dun it, it is time to leave that room. The play is over. It is time to find new rooms with different conversations and mysteries.

That brings us to here and now. We must define our own Tamara. It is about fascism but also about corporate hegemony and a globalization that is changing our DNA, our labor practices, and our university pedagogy. And I am complicit, as complicit as I was in Krizanc's play. Since I am talking of the existential being and nothingness of our Tamara, a quote from JeanPaul Sartre (1956: 120) is a place to begin:

On the one hand, we willingly define [Tamara] as being, what is present is -- in contrast to the future which is not yet and to the past which is no longer. But on the other hand, a rigorous analysis which would attempt to rid the present of all which is not it-Le., of the past and of the immediate future-would find that nothing remained but the infinitesimal

This TAMARA we willingly admit is Not-Yet, it is more about the past attempts at Tamara and some possibilities in our future. Taking roll call at TAMARA, several scholars have showed up to have a conversation on these pages, and more in our web sites. They have replied, "Present" to our roll call. It is appropriate to ask in our inaugural issue, who is present, what is present, and what does it mean to be present, and more important as Sartre (1956: 121) demands, "Present to what?"

We are only reciprocally present in the sense of having our words bound together in the same issue. There are beings whose words appear in this issue who have talked to one another, and others who wait for some response (hopefully your response). They wait for you to show up "Present" And not be absent as a referent.

Who is absent? There are many "absent-- referents" in TAMARA. Carol Adams (1990/2000) in the *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-- Vegetarian Critical Theory* develops the absent referent as a "free-floating image" used to reflect being, while that same referent is absent in the act of consumption. Her cause is vegetarianism, animal rights, and women's status in a patriarchal economy. Whatever your politics, there are voices absent, and we end up speaking for the absent referent. And we do substitute free floating images to reflect "Others" status (be they human, plant or animal species). There is a connection between the absent referent of women factory workers in feudalistic sweatshops, and the way their images and material conditions are represented by transnational corporate global power, and reincarnated into postmodern culture and into the university pedagogy. An example from the vegetarian community of absent referent, is the critical analysis of corporate advertising that substitutes the word "meat" for "animal" to make meat-consumption more palatable. Adams makes the case that many ads about animals, women are the absent referent.

The TAMARA board has meat-eaters and vegetarians, pro-business and anti-WTO politics. So you need not conclude that TAMARA is a vegetarian conversation. I will be honest with you. I am a vegetarian and this week some misguided young man called in a death threat, threatening among other things to hunt me down and shoot me like a dog for starting a Vegetarian Club on an Agricultural University campus. I mention the incident, just to let you know that these editorial reflections are being filtered by that event. It is too fresh in my mind to ignore. I have my own who

dun it to solve. And I reflect upon my own complicity, my ability to respond with Ahimsa (non-violence) to an act of terrorism. I am not ready to reflect upon the absent referent; he is still present.

While some board members see the interpenetration of the oppression of women and animals with the postindustrial global practices, others on our board do not. Some are social activists, political reformers, and others have dropped out. Still others focus on language games, not on their political implication.

In any case, there are people made invisible to us by postmodern culture and corporate public relations, and our own university discourse. A group of local reporters reminded me, after I gave a talk on sweatshops, that I do not need to travel to Mexico or China, there are graduate students who have no work alternative but sweaty university wages. They are absent referents in a world where some voices speak for others, and what is absent gets constructed in ways that are hegemonic; this includes my ways of speaking of them now. Enough about the absent.

Where can TAMARA go? I envision possibilities for interdisciplinary scholarship, opportunities for conversations across academic boundaries. Yet, in some strange way, my editorial is about this first issue. It is about the level of violence and greed for profit and the new knowledge administrators, that would censor our discourse, forcing us outside disciplinary boundaries. And Tamara is about organization, about corporate relations to science and university.

Is TAMARA being its future? As I reflect on this editorial, I see myself depicting TAMARA in its past, in the story of the mentoring I obtained from Professor Pundy. And I see its present -- as I rush to fill the white space that is the death of any journal, searching for errors, changing layouts and fonts to make things more readable by deadline. And there is a future being scribed here, a thematic foresight, a provocative attempt to incite conversation, by imagining the banquet yet to take place. And today several Board Members are coming over to celebrate the first issue. But, I must admit that Tamara has yet to take place. We have the image of chasing storylines from room to room, but the wandering and exploring, the encounters with Other have not begun. We anticipate what Deleuze and Guattari call lines of flight, and the unpredictable wanderings of conversation. We have some monologue, a dyadic dialog, and some storytelling, but TAMARA is Not-Yet., We have constituted several rooms that I can tell you about.

I will not repeat the abstracts of each essay and dialog in each TAMARA room. I will say that there are several experiments in writing and wandering in this first issue. Welcome to TAMARA, we offer rooms for discourses, whose time is Not-yet. Please come and converse on our pages and in our virtual rooms.

EDITORIAL ROOM - This editorial essay (above) is a form of postmodern writing, containing self reflection and reflections on my reflecting. I seek to understand my own complicity in the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge. I intend conversations beyond the Business College. I quest for a space beyond rooms in any Mansion. TAMARA is a place for commentary on the interpenetration of science and university, business and society. In global context it is the interpenetration of postmodern culture with postindustrial supply and distribution chains. I will admit that another editorial lurks in the next room. One meaning of the word "Room" is to have space, to have room. Another meaning of room, is a "Room" which implies predications and separations, boundaries. We talk about creating rooms in the TAMARA Mansion, the question is can we create spaces with more permeable boundaries, and more comfortable places to talk.

TAMARA MANIFESTO. In this room I call upon the ghost of Marx to be present in TAMARA. Ontologically, Marx is in his coffin, and our coffin is Not-Yet. Our beings are co-present in a dialog room but we do not co-exist. In virtual space I can click on Marx's Manifesto and Das Kapital

But you may not witness a co-existence.

This manifesto has been through a number of revisions and helped greatly by Steve Best, Ngaire Bissett, James Barker, and Grace Ann Rosile. It defines the terms in the title of our journal and gives some sense of my vision. The theme is that Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science, an interdisciplinary dialog whose time has come. It is a dialog among critical theory, critical pedagogy, postcolonial, and postmodern theory (or the Tamara of these voices, and others too). But, it also crosses those lines to the so-called "hard" sciences; it begins the conversation.

I have some ideas about how it is possible to move this dialog into some work on some social and political issues, such as sweatshops, and animal production, but I have other concerns as well. Bissett and Barker crafted responses to the Tamara Manifesto. I invite others to respond. Something to talk about is the activism of the intellectual.

CRITICAL ESSAY ROOM - We invited three critical essays. We selected these essays to give a sense of the diversity and possibility of our TAMARA discourse. The first by Steven Best looks at the relationship of capitalism to Mad Cow disease. The second is by Steve Fuller and focuses on Knowledge RIP in our education systems. Third, there is the critical pedagogy writing by Helen De Cieri, Julie Wolfram Cox and Marilyn S. Fenwick. We have a response from Herman Garcia and Marc Pruyn, faculty members of Department of Curriculum and Instruction at New Mexico State University, who teach critical pedagogy. The drama between the essays, current and future responses, speaks to the crossing of boundaries between university and knowledge, teaching and society.

DIALOG ROOM - Ngaire Bissett and I begin the debate over the admission of critical postmodern to the Mansion of Organization Science. There are many postmoderns and not all would want to be Mouse or Sword. The conversation we have is about the aesthetic and science aspirations of critical postmodern and the unholy alliance with organization science. I must admit, that Ngaire makes me reflect and admit that the use of science in the title of the journal is somewhat ironic. Yet, I do think that even in the Ag-college there may be a postmodern science. And what better place, there where our food is being reengineered, to look for dialog, for Tamara. We hope this section will inspire others to create debate and dialog, and submit their work to Tamara for review.

SPECIAL TOPIC REVIEW ROOM - George Cairns and Nic Beech are our Special Topic Review editors. They want this section to be different from everything else we do. As they put it, the idea of the reviews section is that it should cross (between and beyond) some of the traditional boundaries of organizational and management 'science'. It will include reviews of published material (paper and web-based), performance, art, installations, architecture, political events, etc. - whatever may contribute to discussion around the themes of particular editions of the journal. I think the Tamara Special Review Room can take us into an analysis and critique of other media. Tamara is the new form of journal, one that is beyond print, entering the cyberspace world, where most journals will end up.

In this first submission, John Coopey takes a critical look at the marginalization of environment in contemporary society. In the Wasteland, Coopey seeks business people who take seriously their responsibilities in the natural environment. There is a theme in this essay, that seems to run through the entire issue. I submit it is one that T. S. Elliot began and we might continue.

MORE ROOMS - This is where we include some background on the play Tamara by John Krizanc. I am trying to find John's address and phone so I can get an interview with him. I want to see how he reacts to a journal named for his play. If you know how to reach him, please let us know. This final section also contains the policies and procedures of the journal Tamara. We invited

some pieces to kick this off, but from here on out, the rules apply. We will be doing those blind reviews, but with a twist. We intend to put parts of the reviews (should they be interesting) into print. We (the writers of this issue) have tried to give you a sense of this inaugural issue. Please check out our call for papers. It will be out of date before the ink is dry here. Check the Tamara web site to find the current stuff. <http://www.zianet.com/boje/tamara>

TAMARA needs your subscriptions. I need them. I recruited enough subscriptions to almost pay the cost of our inaugural issue. But, we will need more orders to pay for the next three planned this year. In the meantime I agree to cover any loss out of personal funds. As we survive this first year, I anticipate enough subscription base to pay for the next. And after that we will hire a real type setter and a full time copyeditor. My thanks to Candace Brown and Stewart Swirsky, that the Tamara Board members for helping me launch this first issue.

[Reference]

References

[Reference]

Adams, Carol J. (1990/2000) *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. NY: Continuum (First edition 1990, 10th anniversary issue, 2000).

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1956) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. NY: Philosophical Library.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

Author(s): David M Boje
Publication title: Tamara : Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science. Las Cruces: 2001. Vol. 1, Iss. 1; pg. 8, 7 pgs
Supplement: Inaugural Issue
Source Type: Periodical
ISSN/ISBN: 15325555
Text Word Count 4153