Critical Performativity: The Unfinished Business of Critical Management Studies

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Abstract

We argue critical management studies should be conceptualized as profoundly performative project. The central task of critical management studies should be to actively and pragmatically intervene in specific debates about management and encourage progressive forms of management. This involves CMS becoming affirmative, caring, pragmatic, potential focused, and normative. To do this, we suggest a range of tactics including affirming ambiguity, working with mysteries, applied communicative action, exploration of heterotopias and engaging micro-emancipations.

Key words: Critical Management Studies. Pragmatism. Research Methods. Public Engagement.

Introduction

In the last fifty years, the notion of management has spread from large corporations into small business, the professions, the public sector, and the non-profit sector (Grey, 2005). Today we are being asked to manage child-raring, love, and conflict (Hancock and Tyler, forthcoming). This might increase efficiency and effectiveness, but it also involves a wholesale shift in the power towards 'managers' (Parker, 2002). It is these power-relations which Critical Management Studies (CMS) seeks to examine and call into question.

During the late twentieth century, a number of schools of thought have questioned the power relations implied by management. These included labour process theory (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979), feminist organization studies (Ashcraft 2009; Calás and Smirchich, 2006), radical humanism ideas (Benson, 1977, Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and 'critical' versions of post modernism (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). These attempts to question management are now brought together under the banner of Critical Management Studies (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). Although CMS was seen as an esoteric and marginal project fifteen years ago, it has recently achieved the status of an institution (Willmott, 2006), with a strong presence in at least UK academia. It has a bi-annual conference, specialist conference streams, text books, and collections of classics (Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2008). A collective identity of 'the critter' has now emerged among adherents of CMS.

As CMS has expanded, some have begun asking what the project is all about, what holds it together, what it is trying to achieve, what it actually achieves, and whether it is actually achieving these aims (Clegg et al., 2006; Grice and Humphries, 1997; Reynolds, 1999; Thompson, 2004). In this paper, we push these critical questions further by challenge some common views on what critical management studies is about. Side-stepping controversies about epistemology and ontology, we focus on the political character of CMS. We reject the idea that CMS is anti-performative (Fournier and Grey, 2000). Instead, we suggest that *critical performativity* is a more 'constructive' direction for CMS. For us, critical performativity involves the active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices. This is achieved through affirmation, care, pragmatism, engagement with potentialities, and a normative orientation. Focusing on engagement with theories of management

provides a way for CMS to create social change through the practice and productive engagement with specific theories of management. Finally, critical performativity moves beyond the cynicism that pervades CMS. It does by recognising that critique must involve an affirmative movement along-side the purely negative and critical ones which seem to predominate in CMS today.

In order to make this argument, we by beginning with attempts to define critical management studies by focusing on what Fournier and Grey (2000) call an 'anti-performative' orientation. We argue that by shifting our understanding of what 'performativity' means, it is possible to see CMS as a potentially performative enterprise. In particular, we suggest that a more fruitful way of conceiving of performativity draws on the work of J. L. Austin and Judith Butler. This leads us to look at performativity as the practical and sometimes parodic use of discourse. We then seek to flesh out our approach to CMS and suggest some tactics that researchers might use to pursue a performative CMS. We round off the paper by drawing out our contributions to the debate around CMS and highlight areas for future prospects for a performative CMS.

Clarifying Critical Management Studies

Perhaps one of the earliest attempts to provide some systematic criteria for what CMS is can be found in Benson (1977). He makes the case for a dialectical theory of organization that draws on a Marxist vocabulary to argue that organizations should be seen as a contradictory social process. Similar issues are identified in a seminal critical work in Europe that sought to engage the 'darker side of organizations', introduce contentious topics previously not dealt with (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1977). Wood and Kelly (1978) argue that 'critical management science' would involve treating managerial theories as problematic and open to contestation and challenge through processes of resistance. Some early work on CMS took inspiration from the development of professional approaches in other fields such as critical legal studies (Kairys, 1998), and critical accounting (Chua, 1986; Tinker, Murino and Neimark, 1982). This highlights how 'technical knowledge' like law and accounting is deeply embedded within social values and supports oppressive social structures.

These themes were picked up in critical analyses of culture (eg. Stablein and Nord, 1985; Knights & Willmott, 1987). These authors made a case for a critical approach which would be oriented by a drive towards emancipatory social change. This call was further developed by Alvesson and Willmott (1992) who claimed that instead of critical management studies seeking to achieve far reaching 'emancipation', it should instead seek to develop what they call 'micro-emancipations'. Other influential work during the early stage of CMS were Burrell & Morgan (1979), Clegg & Dunkerley (1980) as well as post-Braverman labour process studies like Burawoy (1979) and Edwards (1979). (See collections of texts in Grey & Willmott (2005.)

More recent work argues that CMS is invoked so authors can say 'something about his or her political sympathies – broad left, pro-feminist, anti-imperialist, environmentally concerned and so on – as well as usually expressing a certain distrust for conventional positivist formulations of knowledge within the social sciences' (Parker, 2002: 117; see also: Sotirin and Tyrell, 1998). A common refrain is that organizations are riven by contradictions and clashing power relations. CMS seeks to both acknowledge and radically transform these relations of power in order to achieve emancipation.

In their important essay, Fournier and Grey (2000) argue that a set of specific historical conditions gave rise to CMS. These included 'the New Right and New Labour; managerialization; the internal crisis of management; shifts in the nature of social science as well as specific factors concerning UK business schools' (p. 8). They then go on to note that the CMS 'encompass(es) a plurality of conflicting intellectual traditions, including some authors who would reject the CMS label' (p. 17). Despite this plurality, they argue that boundaries are drawn around what CMS is on the basis of anti-performativity, de-naturalization, and reflexivity (see also Grey and Willmott 2005). By anti-performativity, they mean that CMS should resist attempts to 'develop and celebrate knowledge which contributes to the production of maximum output for minimum input; it involves inscribing knowledge within means–ends calculation' (p. 17). By de-naturalization, they mean CMS involves 'deconstructing the 'reality' of organizational life or 'truthfulness' of organizational knowledge by exposing its 'un-naturalness' or irrationality; CMS is about 'denaturalisation''(p. 18). By reflexive,

they mean that CMS should challenge the implicit assumption around positivism that are often taken for granted in critical work.

Critical Realists like Thompson (2004) have taken Fourier and Grey to task for becoming obsessed with epistemological and ontological quandaries and ignoring the politics of the workplace. For Thompson, concerns about knowledge claims and the nature of reality lead us to relativistic commitments that make it difficult to make meaningful truth claims. In order to mitigate these concerns, Thompson (2004) draws on critical realism in a measured endorsement of a particular version of emancipatory politics and reflexive epistemology. But he parts way with Fournier and Grey by arguing that critique should fix itself to a naturalised ontology. That is, critique would recognise that our knowledge of the social world is always fallible and open to continued revision, but the social world itself has a real basis that is not just constructed through perception or discourse. The task of critical management studies is to reveal the real structures of oppression, call these structures into question, and remaining reflexive about the knowledge claims we make.

Thompson's intervention is valuable insofar as it reminds us that if CMS is to be socially influential, it must focus on effective political engagement. However focusing critique on real structures of oppression means that Thompson poses a fairly limited domain of possible forms of political engagement. He dismisses engagement with issues of ethics because 'starting with ethics means finishing with nothing to argue about but our own value preferences' (Thompson, Smith and Ackroyd, 2000, 1156).

The question of anti-performativity is also confronted by Grey and Willmott (2005) who agree that an 'anti-performative' orientation should lie at the heart of CMS. However, they finesse their understanding of what anti-performative knowledge involves. They argue CMS 'should not involve an antagonistic attitude towards all forms of "performing", only to forms of action in which there is a means-ends calculus that pays little or no attention to the question of ends' (p 7). This uncertainty around 'anti-performativity' begs the questions of: What does performativity involve? What does anti-performativity mean for CMS? What are the pitfalls of this anti-performativity orientation?

Anti-performativity

Most practitioners of CMS define performativity in a particular and narrow way. Performative 'inscribing knowledge within means-ends calculations' (Fournier and Grey, 2000:17). This definition relies on Lyotard's (1984) understanding of performativity as 'the optimisation of the global relationship between input and output' (Lyotard, 1984: ch 4). For Lyotard, performativity was one of the dominant ways in which modern knowledge may be legitimized, less through being true than for their technical value in producing results. To use performativity to justify knowledge is to point to the means-ends benefits that a body of scientific knowledge might create. Performativity involves an attempt to use science to increase technological control of a phenomena, thereby 'minimizing risk, unpredictability, and complexity' (Benhabib, 1984: 104).

Underlying this are many of the concerns of Frankfurt school critical theorist, and in particular the ongoing critique of knowledge being tied to processes and requirements of industrial manufacture (For review see: Scherer, 2009). For Horkheimer and Adorno (1970), critical theory constitutes a decisive break with 'traditional theory'. It embraces the goals of the enlightenment, but instead of putting them into service of increasing productivity, it seeks to call into question this body of knowledge. This involves critiquing the ends various hyper-rational means such as scientific reason have been put to (Horkheimer, 1972). An 'anti-performative' orientation involves an active and unceasing negative engagement with forms of instrumental reason that pervade modern organizations and societies and creates a 'surplus repression'.

However, claiming that CMS is a purely anti-performative enterprise has a number of problems. The first problem with closely identifying CMS with anti-performativity is that anti-performativity seems to exist in tension with attempts to promote social change. The desire to promote social change means that critical management studies necessary involves intent to actively engage and transform the social world. The consequence of holding strong to the credo of anti-performativity is that CMS withdraws from any attempts to engage with practitioners and mainstream management theorists who are at least partially concerned with issues of performativity. Instead of engaging these groups, an anti-performative CMS satisfies itself with attempts to shock the mainstream out of their ideological slumber through

intellectually 'pissing in the street' (Burrell, 1993). This stands in stark opposition to attempts to face the practical demands of emancipatory social change.

Indeed, Fournier and Grey (p. 22) themselves note the CMS can become preoccupied 'with the grounds and "righteousness" of our critique' which has the result of 'distracting us from engaging with organizational practices and participants' (see also: Anthony, 1998). Jaros (2001: 38) echoes this sentiment by arguing 'we seem to spend more time debating with each other about political economy that we with do the right wing forces that are carrying the day'. Similarly, Parker (2002) sarcastically bemoans the completely lack of impact that the glass bead game of theory trading in CMS has. Those commenting on management pedagogy have noted that a critically oriented programme can fail to engage students and provoke un-necessary resistance (Reynolds, 1999). Grey and Sinclair (2006) have argued that the exclusionary language and esoteric concerns of large swathes of CMS make it utterly ineffectual in engage even our own students and colleagues, let alone a broader public. Most recently Perrow (2008) has pointed out that CMS has often been inordinately concerned with 'post modern theorizing' and has neglected pressing concerns such as safety, the control of corporations and economic power.

Second, by placing itself into a consistently negative position, CMS is unable to put forward a firm claim about what it actually wants and desires. By perpetually setting itself up in a position of critical judgement, all critical management studies is able to do is go through the motions of demolition and destruction (for a parallel argument, see Latour, 2004). CMS becomes doomed only to break, never to build. This excessively destructive footing means that CMS finds it difficult, if not impossible to begin to sketch out the kind of world that it might actually want (Böhm, 2005), and the criteria organizations should be judged towards (Thompson, 2004). That is, it is unable to put forward a solid ethical basis upon which critique might proceed and a political vision that guides the task of critique. Put bluntly, the practitioner of CMS is always able to tell us what is wrong with the organizations we have (they are capitalist, managerialist, patriarchal, imperialist, technocratic, dualist etc) but when the question comes of what they would actually want, their rapid attack are turned into a vague set of platitudes, pauses and vacillations.

Third, identifying CMS closely with the idea of anti-performativity creates a kind of cynical consciousness. This happens when we engage in a progressive intellectual enlightening of organizations by shedding the light of reason onto previously shadowy worlds of power relations. While this progressive process of enlightening certainly has an emancipatory potential, it often progresses largely through the activity of the mind rather than socially visible action. The result, Sloterdijk (1987) argues, is the cynical modern consciousness whereby we intellectually engage with a particular phenomenon, but we remained practically trapped and almost dependent on this phenomenon in a kind of sick embrace. This makes the would-be critic into a world-weary character who consistently tries to escape from a world that they can see so many flaws in, but at the same time depends on this world they loath so much (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). The result is that CMS may be contributing to the death of management (Locke, 1996; Grey, 1999; 2008) without taking responsibility for what is replacing it. While this might seem to be a great achievement to many critics, the practical result is not necessary organizations and working life full of free people producing valuable goods and services without constraint and control. On the contrary, the relatively soft dictates of management are rapidly being replaced with the brutalities of finance (Ghoshal, 2005; Kuhruana, 2007). Another trend is increased focus on great leaders providing followers with goals, meaning and identities (Carroll and Levy, 2008). Thus, by abdicating responsibility for managerial practice, CMS may have inadvertently helped to lay the ground for the increasing dominance of financial approaches or a naive worshipping of leadership as the solution to problems of coordination and organizing.

Fourth, most CMS research is intimately intertwined with performative intent. To be sure, most management research is produced with varying performative intents such as career advancement or contributing to business efficiency. Like other management research, CMS research is often produced partially with an eye to gaining a publication which can help to further ones career (Thompson, 2004). This drive to publish has become even more pressing with the introduction of various research auditing exercises in many higher education systems (Shore and Wright, 1999). These auditing exercises certify a good scholar in terms of their efficient throughput of ideas (or otherwise) into academic papers. Indeed, we would even argue that the reason that CMS has had a degree of success, at least in the UK, is because a range of critically

oriented scholars are particularly efficient at 'through-putting' critique. This may be an effect of them being more intellectually minded and research-oriented than many of their 'mainstream' colleagues and also being less in demand for various more profitable side activities (consulting, executive teaching) which tend to distract managerially oriented academics from concentrating on research.

Moreover, CMS relies on a performative orientation in the broader society and economy in order to do its business. The CMS community, as other knowledge workers, profit from reasonably comfortable lives which result from the efficiency of the agricultural, industrial and service sectors of the capitalist economy. Anti-performativity might be preached at conferences and in the pages of journal articles. However the same pundit of anti-performativity relies on air travel companies employing efficient means-ends calculations to ensure their passengers arrives at the venue on time, often so that they (we) can attack the machine bureaucracies and service management systems making this transport possible. The 'critter' relies on hotels who use performative knowledge to ensure the right amount of comfortable accommodation is on hand. They also expect standards of efficiency when they retire to a restaurant for a meal. When signs of 'anti-performativity' do appear in practice, critters – like other mortals – react with stoic disquiet, complaint or even a hot temper. But after having cooled down, renewed energy is devoted to attacking the performativity principles (e.g. service management) that may have prevented the frustrating experiences CMS scholars as customers may suffer and complain about (Collinson, 1994).

Rethinking Performativity

Many of the criticism we mention appear to be in stark tension with avowed ethos and implicit spirit of Critical Management Studies. We would therefore like to suggest that Critical Management Studies should reconsider its close connection to the idea of anti-performativity. To do this, we would like to invoke an alternative conception of performativity. This conception suggests that this is not just about efficiency aiming to maximize productivity and growth, but involves a process of doing things and actively intervening and producing outcomes.

At the heart of this alternative lineage of performativity is J. L. Austin's (1963) classic, *How to Do Things with Words*. In this collection of lectures, he argues that some language describes things in the world. Austin points out that there are another set of words that that actually do things. He calls these 'performatives'. Some examples of performatives include a priest uttering the words 'you are now married', a ship owner declaring 'I name this ship the Fitzcaraldo', a judge saying 'I sentence you to death' or a reviewer ticks the 'rejection' box in the review sheet. In these cases, words actually creating a social fact rather than simply describing a situation. Although not without its critics (see for instance: Derrida, 1988), researchers have argued that Austin's work points out that many models of management could be considered to be performativities which are a form of action in and of themselves (Fleming and Sturdy, 2003).

This theme of performativity as a kind of active intervention is picked up by Judith Butler (1990, 1993. see also: Borgeson, 2005). For Butler, 'performative acts are forms of authoritative speech; most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power' (1993: 225). What is notable here is that performativity is not just a matter of making use of words, it is also a process of performance. Beginning with some of the themes found in Foucualdian analyses of discourse, she argues that discourses need to be made performative. Through being made performative, and because we must make use of them, discourses create spaces where we are able to recreate how they are configured. Thus performativity involves an ongoing process of acting and enacting a discourse in different ways. For her, 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act" but, rather, as the reiterative practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (Butler, 1993: 2). Butler's particular concern is how discourses of gender are sexuality made performative. Butler frequently draws on examples from 'queer' sexualities to demonstrate how these groups are able to pick up what might seem like relatively constraining and limiting discourses of male and female sexuality, and through making them performative, radically change them. In the context of CMS, this would make performativity an attempt to actively intervene in discourses such as project management techniques (Hodgson, 2005), leadership (Learmonth, 2005), entrepreneurship (Bruni et al, 2004), gender in the workplace (Linstead and

Pullen, 2007), and commercialism in computer programming (Case and Piniero, 2006).

Approaching performativity as a possibly subversive mobilizations and citations of previous performances instead of an over-arching concern for efficiency leads us to ask whether CMS should actually seek to become more performative rather than eschew performativity as Fourier and Grey (2000) suggest. If CMS was to think of itself as a performative enterprise, its' central aim would be actively and subversively intervening in managerial discourse and practices. This might build on studies of organizational discourse that examine how bodies of text and talk are produced, circulated and consumed (Hardy, 2001; Philip and Hardy, 2002; Grant et al, 2004). This would involve acknowledging discourses can be a strategic resource used by differing actors in often contrasting ways (Hardy et al, 2000). Indeed, Hardy and colleagues argue that a central moment in this struggle to use a discourse is the moment of 'performativity', which they conceived of as ensuring that 'the concepts evoked in discursive statements are embedded in the larger discursive context' (p. 1236). This definition of performativity differs significantly from our own insofar as we seek to emphasise the process through which discourses are actively used and sometimes paraodied and changed rather than just how they are fitted with existing meaning structures. Nonetheless, Hardy and colleagues draw attention to the importance of CMS recognising the active and sometimes subversive use of discourse. This reminds us that CMS could indeed be seen as a performative practice aimed at radically transforming social relations rather than simply reproducing them.

Elements of a Performative CMS
The combination of the overall ethos of critical theories – the critical scrutiny of forms of social domination encouraging emancipation/resistance (Alvesson, 2008) – with an acknowledgement of the need for performative engagement means some revision to how we do CMS. For us, this involves adopting an affirmative stance, an ethic of care, a pragmatic orientation, attending to potentialities, and a normative orientation (see: Table One for summary). In what follows, we explain each of these elements. We also offer some potential tactics for mobilising these elements. From the outset, we should be clear that the tactics we offer are by no means exhaustive, nor that these are of exclusive relevance only for 'critical performativity'. Rather, we put

them forward in an attempt to spark exploration of other potential approaches that increase the performative capacities of CMS. Finally, the tactics we suggest has the potential to advance each of the elements. Our coupling below is mostly – but not completely – for illustrative purposes.

- Insert Table One About Here –

Our overall logic is as follows. CMS needs to appreciate the contexts and some of the constraints of management. It needs to takes seriously the lifeworlds and struggles of those engaged in it. From this follows some degree of respect and care. It should also open up a space for critique and challenge. Caring means being prepared to engage in critical dialogue and a wish to encourage reflection, even on ones own certainties. Critical interventions – critiques, concepts, thick descriptions – then are pragmatic. It involves asking that question of what works, what is feasible, and what is perceived as relevant for those being addressed. But critical pragmatism also seeks to stretch the consciousness, vocabularies and practices that bear the imprints of social domination. The social engineering of dominant objectives and practices are at least balanced with a strong sense of a better world. Finally, the characteristics of these ideals need to be grounded in a clear normative philosophy.

Although we think that the wholesale application of all these elements to a study is preferable, this might set the bar too high. Also, there are situations where some of the elements may be more or less relevant. For instance, in some situations it may not be helpful to point out alternative potentialities, or champion a particular normative stance. After all, in some cases we don't need to reimagine reality or wear values on our sleeves. We just need to fix what clearly is broken. Frankly, we think that the application of one of the elements in a study is progress. In this way, we suggest that CMS can become more performative by mobilizing different elements in different situations.

Affirmative
Critique involves an *affirmative stance*. That is, critique would not stand outside or attempt to deny its object of analysis. It would be cautious about assuming 'that one's object of study is known prior to it being encountered' (Clegg et al, 2006: 13). Doing

this does not mean simply adopting all the rules and mores associated with ones object of analysis. Rather, it involves a practice of what Spivak (1999: 425) calls 'critical intimacy'. For example, there are some studies looking at managerial practices such as total quality management (eg. Knights and MacCabe, 1998), business process re-engineering (eg. Knights and Willmott, 2000) and leadership (eg. Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003) that seek to engage very closely with these practices. By doing this, it becomes possible to locate points within that practice with liberating potential. The logic is to proceed from our informants practices and experiences and then, when deemed to be relevant, expand horizons through selective and informed critical-constructive questioning.

One possible tactic for working affirmatively with managerial discourses involves digging out the mixed and ambivalent metaphors that are already at work in managerial discourse. Those working within CMS will recognise that managerial practices are associated with a series of metaphors (Morgan, 1997; Keenoy et al, 2003). Perhaps what is distinctive about CMS as a genre is that it has a certain taste for 'darker' metaphors that draw out the dastardly and exploitative aspects of organizations. Some of the metaphors which are routinely identified by CMS include organizations as psychic prisons, discursive traps, labour camps, monuments of human stupidity and irrationality, instruments for domination, and patriarchy writ small. These 'dark' metaphors are certainly useful in drawing the reader's eye towards the gloomy corners of organizational life as well as giving voice to the pain and anguish that many in organizations suffer. But doing so often amounts to attacking organizational life from the outside. This leaves little space for the affirmative experimentation with new metaphors which might be floating around in an organization.

In order to break out of this deadlock, a performative critical management studies might seek to affirm practitioner metaphors that do not necessarily lead to forgone conclusions. One option is that CMS might affirm some of the more 'ambivalent' metaphors found in organizational life. This could open up space for a more ambivalent exploration of managerial practices. Czarniawska (2005: 159) for instance suggests that 'the organizing is neither a saga or a tragedy but a thrilling drama'. By evoking the drama metaphor, we do not begin with the pro-management saga or

archetypical critical 'tragedy'. Rather, we create a kind of open-ended space where a drama in which there is a conflict and tension between various forces without any predefined outcome. This opens the research up to a far greater range of possibilities than if they begin with an assumed ending in mind. Some examples of such open metaphors include happy prison, affluent production and tragi-comedy (Alvesson, 2008). By engaging with these mixed or ambiguous metaphors, we begin to affirm the various tensions, ironies, aporia and ambiguities that already lurk within organizational life..

Care

As we have already argued above, most current versions of CMS rely on an oppositional stance. In contrast, a critical-performative approach involves asking practical questions which cares for participants' views at the same time as it seeks to challenge the same participants. This is a difficult balance to strike. As Czarniawska (2005: 159) points out 'as researchers it is our moral right to reveal everything that harms people or makes them suffer. At the same time I believe that researchers have no moral right to decide that something is wrong or absurd if the involved actors do not think so'. Indeed this right to reveal conditions which harm people as well as the responsibility to care for their voice is not something which is unique to researchers. It is a basic debt we owe all our fellow humans. But this debt comes with a significant dilemma of caring for an actors' views at the same time as we seek to challenge it. Arrogance and elitism is one risk. The other risk is accepting and legitimizing the social order. As we see it, there is no lasting resolution of this dilemma. It must be practically and productively negotiated in an everyday fashion. This process might involve challenging participants by encouraging them to question themselves and consider the consequences of their actions such as environmental destruction, gender domination, and excessive consumerism. But it also involves willingness and openness by the researcher to be challenged and have their views radically called into question by those that they are studying. At the most basic level, this involves recognising the right of participants to speak as rational, reflexive individuals. This means at least a minimal commitment to listening to and engaging with the 'folk theories' of ones participants (Garfinkel, 1967). It also means inviting those who are being studied into conversations about research results, and listening to people struggling with the often difficult task of making organizations work. Further, it

requires at least a minimal commitment to some reflexivity about how one's position as researcher, the set of theories one uses, and one's expert definition of what is occurring and what is at stake (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000; Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008; Johnson and Duberly, 2003; Skeggs 1997).

Perhaps a good strategy of critique may involve infestation from the inside rather than attack from the outside. To take this point seriously would involve recognising that we must widen our interpretetive repertoire. Minimally, the ethic of attack, destruction, demolition, and explosion needs to be complemented with an ethic which emphasises care, preservation, and nurturing (Jacques, 1992). By infusing this ethic of care throughout CMS might lead to minor changes such as the standards and protocol of debate and collective work within the field. This would recognise that the kind of intellectual engagement that we want to foster and indeed preserve is one that recognises an ethic of care towards our partners in debate. This does not mean that we seek to give up struggling with the other person intellectually. Rather it means that we should recognise that this struggle must fundamentally be what Karl Jaspers (1932) calls a 'loving struggle'. It involves recognising the right of the other person to exist, but a simultaneous commitment to pushing questioning and extending that other person in a way which pushes them to extend their sense of who they are and might become (Fleming and Spicer, 2007). For some this might involve engaging in a serious, open and non-determined dialogue with mainstream theories as well as practitioners (Watson, 1994; Anthony, 1998).

How can openness and curiosity about the social world be cultivated? One potential tactic for doing this involves the search for and construction of mysteries. This methodological tactics involves being open to the unexpected which come from our engagement in a research site. This might include results that deviate from favoured assumptions, languages and metaphors (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). The idea is to try to shake off some of the weighty intellectual baggage that tends to make the critical project over-determined, predictable and ungainly. Making CMS socially relevant through connecting with local conditions would involve maintaining an eye for the mysterious. Such mysteries may be a theoretical paradox, an unexpected empirical finding, or a point of confusion within a research site.

Adopting a mystery led approach would represent a significant departure from the theory led protocol that dominates most Critical Management Studies. Currently, CMS researchers search for confirmation and interesting applications of already well established theoretical ideas. For instance, Foucauldians have undertaken a long and productive search for panoptic arrangements and forms of subjugation which they claim dominate institutions (eg. Hoskin and Macve, 1986; Knight and Willmott, 1989; Townley, 1993; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Hodgson, 2005). In contrast, a mystery driven approach would involve caring for the perspectives suggested by research participants which do not fit our theories. For instance, it would involve asking when is it that organizations do *not* exhibit panoptic like structures? When do attempts to manipulate employee subjectivity *not* occur or occur but simply fail? What about instances when attempts to regulate subjectivity are not present at all, or not being picked up by those being targeted? When is gender not constructed in ways disfavouring females? And how can workers exploit capitalists?

By remaining open to these possibilities, entrenched theoretical frameworks might be actively called into question. This would require an active and conscious effort of both understanding and dealing with important deviations from some of the treasured assumptions of CMS. Doing this increases the chances of a kind of double-seeing where what we do not know is held in tension with the body of theoretical and empirical knowledge we have built up. Out of this difficult tension, more innovative and perhaps richer insights into pro- and anti-management themes may be produced.

Pragmatism

A critical performative approach rejects attempts to present leviathans as a totally integrated, all powerful, singular entities (Latour, 2005). By treating these entities as such, we unwittingly continue to affirm the sovereignty and all-powerful nature of these systems and convince ourselves and perhaps more importantly others that they cannot be challenged or changed (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Instead, performative CMS would treat these systems as a complex of different institutions and a plurality of actors and interests with different logics that are constantly pulling themselves apart. This would shift our focus from 'matters of fact' to 'matters of concern' that are complex gatherings of a whole range of people, technologies, and institutions (Latour, 2004). To do this would require a strategy of engaging with organizations in a

piecemeal way. This would involve 'revolutionary reform' (Unger, 1987) where we would seek to change management by making incremental incisions into particular processes. In CMS inspired discourse analysis there are several examples of studies trying to give space to voices in organizations un-heared or marginalized but, if supported, able to unsettle dominant ones and pursuit new meanings (Grant and Iedema, 2005).

One potential tactic for pursing a pragmatic stance is applied communicative action. This would involve adopting a pragmatic approach to Habermas' (1984) ideas on communicative action (Forester, 1993; 1999; 2003, see also Deetz 1992). This involves 'putting *ideal* speech aside' and exploring 'the *actual* social and political conditions of "checking", of political voice, and thus too of possible autonomy' (Forester 1993: 3 [italics added]). This requires us to create a space where participants with an interest may be involved in debate and dialogue. Each intervention would involve crucial components of encouraging genuine listening amongst participants in a dialogue, facilitating thinking in action as a collective endeavour, and developing a joint commitment to constructive argument amongst participants involved in deliberation. Keeping an eye on the systematic distortions of communication (power relations, ideologies, organizational structures and norms) is vital (Alvesson, 1996). One recent example that has been explore of such a deliberative process in organizational is so-called 'multi-stakeholder forums' which bring together companies, regulators, industry experts and social movements around contentious aspects of corporate activitiy (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007). These forums may create a space where different groups can engage in meaningful and affirmative dialogue that challenges and unsettles the views of the other participants. However, it is important for the CMS practitioner to be aware of how easily such forums can be captured by particular participants who then close down the possibility of 'free and open' dialogue (Edwards and Willmott, 2007). CMS offer ample resources for counteracting this.

Potentialities

A performative CMS would engage with *potentialities* rather than just actualities. This involves recognising that 'human beings are not restricted to exist in a particular state; their being and their material environment are not exhausted by their immediate circumstance' (Chua, 1986: 619). Engaging with potentialities involves moving

beyond critiquing contemporary management practices that actually exist and instead attempting to create a sense of what could be. We would become interested in the question of the kind of organization to come, rather than focusing on rejecting the organization that we currently have.

The exploration of heterotopias is one potential way of nurturing potentialities. For CMS, the world of management is a violent and unending catastrophe of repression, dependence, humilitation and pain. CMS also presupposes an idealized world where this incessant catastrophe can be resolved or mitigated. In this sense, CMS is Utopian because it envisages a 'no place' such as an idealised world, city or state of affairs (Kumar, 1991). Utopias may be evoked by management and their supporters to celebrate a 'future perfect' (Ybema, 2005). However, utopias are also evoked by those how seek to resist or escape managerial control (Parker, 2003). For instance there are many examples of workers utopias where labour has been banished, delicious food and heady liquor is at hand, and where there are no bosses to disturb a gentle afternoon nap. These utopian visions were used as a bench-mark to assess current conditions and to keep hope alive even among the most down trodden. However, such strong notions of Utopia tend to emphasise the vast gap between reality and Utopia will emphasize how imperfect an organizational is. The result is that people turning away from the dis-orderly outer world in order to nurturing their more controllable inner world (Arendt, 1958).

The potentially immobilizing aspects of utopias may lead us to question how useful they are in developing a performative CMS. The problem is not with Utopias as such. Utopias are fine for stimulating thought and fantasy and even ideological outrange. However they are less useful for stimulating progressive practices. As a more fruitful alternative to Utopias, we suggest the concept of heterotopia (Foucault 1984/2000). Heterotopia means other places, rather than no places. They are spaces of play that encourage the exploration and imagination of alternative modes of being and doing (Hjorth, 2005). In his essay, Foucault points to existing sites were people engage in deviant behaviour. He uses the term for denoting spaces where normalization is temporarily short-circuited. Such spaces may operate as more or less realized versions of utopian thought. Foucault explicitly mentions religious colonies as examples of heterotopia. Heterotopias present a world that is not too distant from the world in

which we dwell today. Because it is not too distance, a sense of hope and possibility is nurtured. Heterotopias introduce touches of 'realism' by also acknowledging that problems, struggles and conflicts might also exist in this other-place. By including some signs that struggles exist in a heterotopia, we avoid propagating the illusion of a world without conflict. Heterotopias offer the possibility of transforming the nature of struggles in an organization rather than the elimination of struggle altogether. The result is that when struggles do appear, they are seen as part of the process of actually bringing into being this heterotopia.

One strand of literature that has explored how heterotopias are engaged in the contemporary workplace is studies of tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2001). This work shows how organizational activists seek to create these visions of other possible places in organizations. For instance, Gay Lesbian Transgendered and Bisexual activists sough to propagate an image of the workplace as one where a range of sexualities could be accepted and indeed celebrated. Similarly, feminists long campaign for workplace equality has involved articulating different visions of what a gender neutral or a women's space at work might look like. Through 'tempered radicalism' that is based on small steps and negotiated discrepancies, these two heterotopias have slowly been brought into being in some spaces (Meyerson, 2001).

Another provocative example of exploring potential heterotopias can be found in recent work on new forms of team working (Heckscher and Adler, 2006), and analyses of the new economy and so-called 'cognitive capitalism' (Hardt and Negri, 2000; 2004) What these studies argue in various ways is that the shifts in the means of production (ie. knowledge and affect skill) into the hands of workers (ie. knowledge and care workers) has resulted in the potential for a major shift in the control of the workplace. This is because new forms of working give significant autonomy and open up interesting potential for liberation of employees from existing patterns of exploitation through taking advantage of the fact that they increasingly control the means of production as well as the means of organization (cf. Boltanski and Chiapellio, 2006). This potentially opens up the possibility for what Hardt and Negri (2000) have provocatively referred to as 'elemental communism'. By this they mean the possibility of organising work and production in a way that is governed by a community rather than management or shareholders.

Normative

We have already noted that some proponents of CMS are actively dismissive of ethical debates because they leave us nothing to speak about but our value commitments (Thompson, Ackroyd and Smith, 2000). Recent years have seen a rejuvenation of debate about ethics in studies of CMS (for review see: Jones, Parker and Ten Bos, 2005), however much of this work is overtly concerned with the *experience* of ethics rather than directly engaging with the criteria we might use to make an ethical judgements (eg. Hancock, 2008). Feminism (eg. Calás and Smirchich, 1996) and Habermasian accounts of deliberation (eg. Scherer and Palazzo, 2007) are to some extent exceptions. This reminds us that, although a practitioner of CMS is quite happy to point to something being 'bad' or 'problematic', they are far less likely to be able to innumerate the political bases upon which they might consider something to be 'good', at least if this good calls for sacrificing something less good. It is easy to advocate higher wages for those below average, secured retirement funds, more democracy, less pollution, more resistance, less consumer control, more job security, improved work-life balance and better working conditions, than to say something about the costs and revised priorities that increased emphasis on these new claims would entail.

A performative CMS would take a step further and seek to innumerate and rationally justify the claims around the political orientation of CMS (Böhm, 2005). It would be clear about what it wants, or at least debate it. Important here is to acknowledge conflicts that might arise. For instance, the choice between the tyranny of hierarchy and tyranny of structurelessness is not easy to make. In order to do this, performative CMS may take advantage of normative resources within political philosophy in order to develop a theory of a politically desirable organization (eg. Kymlika, 2001; Woolin, 2004). Here we do not seek to proscribe a singular set of criteria. Rather, we are gesturing towards the need to begin the debate about what these criteria may actually be and about potential costs and sacrifices involved.

A launching point for this debate might be the suggestion in earlier work on CMS that the over-riding aim of the endeavour is to promote micro-emancipation (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 1996) and autonomy (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004). This might

involve drawing attention to the myriad of options for micro-emancipation offered by contemporary organizations. Arguably, there is often limited space for large-scale revolutions that radically undermine structures of domination and the strategies of an entire business (cf. Böhm and De Cock, 2007). However, as studies of resistance have found, there is ample space within organizations for actors to carve out spaces of autonomy within these struggles. Sometimes these struggles may prove to be relatively self-defeating, only reproducing patterns of entrenched power relations (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Struggles may also be socially negative. For instance, an individual may escape management control but freedom at work may be the expense of other human beings. A flight mechanic or a nurse bending rules may harm safety. However at many points struggles may be more 'positive' insofar as they seek to actively transforming power relations benefitting the social good. Organizations can be seen as rich fields for micro-emancipation. These are manoeuvres that do not necessarily involve significance changes in the short run. Rather, they gradually reduce the constraints people in organizations face and also give them more latitude for initiative and self-determination.

Micro-emancipations involve specific and focused attempts to create spaces of autonomy among institutionalised relations of power. This involves crafting spaces of freedom from the 'bottom up'. This often occurs through the micro-transformations of aspects of everyday life such as the patterns of interaction and talk, our sense of self, the bodies of knowledge and skills we use, and everyday patterns of sharing resources between people (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Through engaging with and tracking these actions, CMS will be able to show that many alternatives to current systems of managerial domination and exploitation currently exist and do indeed work (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Moreover, CMS might be able to act as a kind of emissary between the various micro-emancipations in organizations. This might involve 'translating' (Czarniawska and Sevon, 2005) micro-emancipations from one context into other contexts. It might also involve drawing out links or 'articulations' between a series of micro-emancipations in order for them to gain greater collective power (Willmott, 2006).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to address some of the unfinished business of critical management studies. We have argued that instead of fighting against performativity, CMS should seek to become *more* performative. This would require attempts to question, challenge and radically re-imagine management through practical and direct interventions into particular debates about management. Performativity is not bad in its self. The problem is to carefully decide what kind of performativity we want. We have argue that doing so involves CMS taking an affirmative stance, developing an ethic of care, having a pragmatic orientation, engaging with potentialities, and striving for a normative orientation. In addition, we have suggested some tactics that researchers might use to make critical management studies more performative. By mobilizing these tactics we hope that CMS might cease to merely interpret the world in a negative way and instead seek to actively change it.

By championing *critical performativity*, we hope to have made a number of contributions to the ongoing debate about critical management studies. First, we have identified and celebrated the performative intent that lies at the heart of much critical management studies. By acknowledging this performative intent, where concepts, theories and language use create effects (rethinking, other values and priorities, new practices) we hope that critical management studies will be able to overcome its often hypocritical and/or unproductive claims that its' output have no performative intent whatsoever. This will allow critical researchers to carefully consider the kinds of perfromative effects that they hope to produce in particular managerial technologies.

The second contribution we make is affirming some of the connections that have already developed between critical management studies and attempts to create social change (eg. Böhm, 2005; Spicer and Böhm, 2007). We have claimed that active intervention is central to CMS. This does not necessarily have to take the form of laying down the books and throwing oneself in radical political struggle or 'enlightened consultancy'. Rather, attempts to create social change involve a range of more pragmatic encounters that might take place through the research process as well as political activity. The binding thread that runs throughout these engagements is the difficult and ongoing work of crafting and creating social change through committed practice of performative research. This will hopefully push critical studies to

systematically consider the kinds of social change that they hope to champion and how the development of new managerial technologies may be central to this.

The final contribution this paper makes is to dispelling the cynical poise that pervades much critical management studies. We have sought to overcome this poise by introducing the idea that CMS cannot only seek to undermine, question, and perhaps destroy given theoretical edifices. Instead, we suggest that the task of CMS should be asserting quite clearly what it wants. This would transform CMS from a profoundly negative enterprise into one which seeks to rearticulate and re-present new ways of managing and organizing. This would hopefully empower CMS researchers to not only engage in systematic dismantling of existing managerial approaches, but also try to construct new and hopefully more liberating ways of organizing.

Table One: An Overview of Performative CMS

Characteristic	Achieved through	Methodological Tactic	Example
Affirmative Stance	Location at close proximity to object of critique in order to identify potential points revision	Affirming ambiguous and mixed metaphors found in organizational discourse	Czarniawska (2005) Alvesson (2008)
Ethic of Care	Providing space for respondents views, but also seeking to subtly challenge them	Working with mysteries	Alvesson and Kärreman (2007)
Pragmatism	Working with particular aspects of an organization	Applied communicative action	Forester (1993, 1999, 2003) Scherer and Palazzo (2007)
Potentialities	Creation a sense of what could be by engaging latent possibilities in an organization	Exploration of hetrotopias	Meyerson (2001) Alder and Hecksher (2006)
Normative	Systematic assertion of criteria used to judge good forms of organization	Engaging micro-emancipations	Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) Gibson-Graham (1996)

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