Sideshadowing Appreciative Inquiry: One Storytellers' Commentary
By David M. Boje

The article, "Appreciative inquiry as a shadow process" (Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey, 2009) triggered many experiences, thoughts about its relations to storytelling, and most of all, and ideas about sideshadowing. I think the article does an excellent job in looking for a richer, more complex understanding of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) shadow practices.

Above all I want to change the habit of sensemaking our organizational lives as representing some sort of conventional narrative. There are several kinds of shadows that Saul Morson (1991) reads in the work of Bakhtin (1981), in ways of shadowing by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Let me summarize them, and then apply them to AI.

As Fitzgerald, Oliver, and Hoxsey tell it AI creates a kind of shadow, one that comes back to haunt the AI desire for what I will call a positivity narrative. I would agree that as Fineman (2006: 275, cited by the authors), puts it AI constructs 'positive narratives' that fail to take advantage of 'ambiguous circumstances' and 'competing possibilities and differing voices.'   I would like to apply several kinds of Morson (1991) shadows: backshadowing, foreshadowing, and sideshadowing.

Backshadowing is a retrospective sensemaking, a narrative that privileges selective events into a more linear order, usually one with beginning, middle, and end (BME). This backshadowing of past, narrowing its field of possibilities, can be accompanied by a foreshadowing.

Foreshadowing may be defined as "an attempt to give a first reading important characteristics of rereading" (Morson, 1991: 103). As with backshadowing it is a sort of sensemaking that narrows the field of possibilities.

Sideshadowing had links to deepest backshadows and foreshadows, not as any one sideshadow but "by an ever changing kaleidoscope of sideshadows" (172) of what might have been, and what could emerge still.

There are two methods of sideshadowing, typified by the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. In Tolstoy, sideshadowing had more duration, and we humans have smaller degrees of freedom to choose alternative or to escape. For Dostoevsky, sideshadowing method is a more open field of possibilities, triggered by small events, little wow moments that are like what we now call Butterfly Effects in complexity.

Bakhtin, as well ad Derrida, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, are suspicious of linear (BME) narratives that tie all the loose ends, or erase them, to deliver closure.

Sideshadowing AI There is for AI a demand that narrative have a positivity, not only a happy ending, but a rereading of the past for happy beginnings, and the present for happy

middles. AI becomes a vortex, growing stronger as it approaches.

> In the vortex, all forces, all theories, no mater what their initial
> trajectories, are redirected to point toward the catastrophe ahead (Morson,
> 1991: 164).

In Dostoevsky's sideshadowing, vortices have fated coincidents, and at a singular wee moment, combine into a vortex of "rapidly intensifying frenzy" (p. 164). Tolstoy, by contract, sideshadows something with duration, and ignores the small moments.

It would seem that AI uses its own method of sideshadowing. From my reading, and experience, AI banishes critical theory, deconstruction, and any words of a deficit vocabulary, along with original sin to the margins.

My own experience working with narrative deconstruction has let me into several close encounters with AI enthusiasts. For example, I chaired a debate between deconstructionist storytellers and appreciative inquirers at the 1997 Academy of Management meetings, in Boston (Boje & Luhman, 1997). Joanne Martin was discussant, and rightly chastised me for dualizing deconstruction and appreciative inquiry. One of here slides said, "Pollyanna Meets Professor Nietzsche" and she concluded with" Why accept the dichotomies?" Here critique when on to suggest, Use both, sequentially
- First build, then justify by critique
- First critique, then build
- Revolutionary leaders offer detailed critiques of status quo, but are vague, but inspirational about future plans

In my experience, there continues to be a distinct distrust in AI circles of deconstruction, critical theory, disenchantment, and all things cynical as belonging to 'deficit discourse.' For example, in Cooperrider's (2001: slide 14) presentation, "Deficit Theory of Change … and Cultural Consequences of Deficit Discourse", lists:

- Professional Vocabularies of Deficit
- Bureaucratic Disenchantment
- Original Sin
- Critical Theory
- Deconstruction
- Critical-Cynical Media

A Positive Role for Critical Inquiry Let me backshadow for a moment, back in time to the 1997 Academy session. John Luhman and I had suggested that there are ways of using deconstruction in conjunction with cultivating positive stories, such as in the work of White and Epson (1990). Along with Grace Ann Rosile (1999), we always shadow a rather positive role for Critical Inquiry (CI) in facilitating change, one that is linked both to Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of dialogical action, and to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical polyphony.

I was suggesting a bridge, an alliance between CI and AI. CI could begin by helping clients to deconstruct the embedded, dominant narratives, ones that oppresses individual's or organization's life can be deconstructed in order to open a space for AI to coalesce a new 'positive' story to be constructed out of all the acts of resistance marginalized or outright erased by the dominant narrative order.

Without CI, AI just does not have enough D's. AI's five D model (define, discover, dream, design, destiny) needs at least three more:

1. Deconstruction of narratives of dominance for monologism and linearity

2. Differences in the play of embodied standpoints, each of which is an ethical answerability

3. Dialogical processes that bring people from the sideshadows into meaningful conversation with those crafting the more official narrative orders

Such an alliance with CI, would enliven AI, and give both more critical reflexivity.

CI could focus on its liberatory potential. It seems to me CI, like Tolstoy sideshadows long currents of duration in material conditions, trends that counter the happy endings AI otherwise projects. At the same time, AI disallows CI any positive role in change, such as its liberatory participative opposition to oppressive work conditions.

There is of course, a more Dostoevskean sideshadowing method. Here CI and AI could focus on the small wow moments, where small events, unnoticed or erased in the official narrative order, haunt from the sideshadows. This suggests a return of organizational development to the more "hidden process of change" (Morson, 1991: 161), and attention to more polyphonic sorts of dialogical processes.

Fitzgerald et al.'s article for JMI has developed some shadow examples of how AI might well benefit from an alliance with CI processes such as deconstruction, standpoint feminism, and labor process. Simple events marginalized in narrative positivity of just one future, can intensify into an assemblage that creates multiple futures. Without CI, the density of the assemblage, its more Deleuzian rhizomatic networking, goes unnoticed.

From a storytelling theory perspective (Boje, 2001, 2008a), there is important interplay of BME narrative retrospection, living story presentness, and antenarratives shaping the future. If as Fitzgerald et al, suggest, AI's positivity narratives create sideshadows, then perhaps an analysis of living story spaces, and antenarrative alternatives to positive links of past to future can be explored by AI and by CI, working more together. If AI has an "aesthetic necessity" (Morson, 1991: 160), perhaps it is to read history for positive accounts, to only see positive in presentness, and only foreshadow a positive futurity. Such narrative order closes off time by erasing the plots of the backshadows, and disallow sideshadows that would offer a fabric of alternative foreshadows.

There is a danger for AI in socially constructing closed temporality narrative orders. The clouds of living stories along with some potentially awesome antenarrative futures are sidelined. The CI into material actualities goes unexplored as AI narrows what Morson

(1991: 120) calls the *"field of possibilities."* AI proceeds by leaving strange narrative messages in the sideshadows, a kind of ghosting presence of what might have been. Happy desires end up displacing unhappy actualities. Sometimes the self-fulfilling prophecy of positivity narrative wins the day, but as the case stories of Fitzgerald et al, exemplify, sometimes the unintended consequences rule the day.

By incorporating a CI into sideshadowing, AI is able to look at hypothetical histories, in contrast to actualized ones, and to official ones that are more fantasy than real. Living storied spaces (as my colleague Ken Baskin terms them) can be explored in the sideshadows of the dominant narrative positivity, or the dominant narrative skepticism (as both are likely interplay). CI comes from the sideshadows, and less often from the mainstream or contemporary narrative order.

It is possible for AI and CI, together, to create safe spaces for those in the sideshadows and the main light, to be dialogical, to fully embody their respective standpoints, and in that to achieve the co-generativity that AI explicitly desires. The main obstacle, something that CI points out, is that dialogical gets derailed and a search for closure, for consensus, dominates the conversation, closing off the sought after generativity, as well as the exploration of one another's standpoints (Smith, 1997; Myers, 2008).

There is a danger in AI, that as the vortex of positivity grows in its facilitated strength, 'all resistance is futile!' Resistance for CI is almost sacred, and even when doomed, it's a matter of ethical answerability to point out ones complicity, and not be a silent onlooker (Boje, 2008b). It is just this ethical purchase that AI risks marginalizing by declaring all vocabularies of deficit, as akin to original sin, and of no value to change and development.

A major opportunity for AI and CI is together to link storytelling processes to complexity. When narrative is fossilized into a linear (BME) order or into a recurring cycle of unchanging stages, there is much about complexity that gets ignored. Specifically, those suddenlys, of which Dostoevsky was so, keen on storytelling, that play havoc with tidy narrative closure. And for Tolstoy the more durational trends keep unraveling all attempts to tie up the loose ends.

In my experience, organizing does not move from one adapted finality to another. Rather, as Bakhtin's (1973, 1987, 1991, 1993) work suggests, organizing is ripe with unfinalizability, and an eventness that makes monological narratives, be they full of positivity or negativity, just too simplistic a way of sensemaking.

AI uses a chronotope that makes events conform to a concrete narrative, while giving them flesh by selected storytelling that conforms to the views of positive science, positive organizational behavior, positive leadership, and positive thinking so popular in Americana, as Fitzgerald et al have reviewed such movements.[1] AI has an idyllic chronotope (defined as relativity of time and space) that takes on flesh:

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[1] For more on this, see, Michigan School of Business has a Center for Positive Scholarship http://www.bus.umich.edu/positive/POS-Research/Past-Related-

Tiny as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes changed and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history (Bakhtin, 1981: 84).

However, there are multiple chronotopes, such as the Dostoevskean preference for biographical meeting suddenlys to whisk a person into a whirlwind of catastrophes.

Finally, there is in AI a need to return to kinds of social construction that make power a centerpiece (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Power replays backwards and recollects forwards to combine narrative retrospection backshadowing with prospective foreshadowing. The main resistance of power is from the sideshadows.

I congratulate Fitzgerald et al for an article that invites even greater exploration of sideshadowing and gives CI a positive role for AI to explore authentic eventness in the fullness of time allowing participants in change to talk of what might have been, and what is yet-to-come in a fuller field of possibilities.

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