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This article analyzes a CEO's use of extended epic metaphor in building corporate culture. Whereas much of the research on management's use of narrative has examined shorter stories and anecdotes, here the authors analyze the text of a speech written by a newly hired CEO for his upper management team. The speech, which was never delivered but was instead sent out in a leadership manual to managers in the conglomerate, begins with a narrative history of the CEO's first five months in office. In his description of events, the metaphoric language suggesting heroes and competition contradicts the principles of team management that the CEO intends to implement throughout the company. These heroic metaphors valorize individual achievement, agency, and action— values more likely to be familiar to the business culture than the cooperative values of teams. Drawn from war and sports metaphors common in the language of the popular American lexicon, the images generate more excitement and appeal than those of cooperative planning inherent in team management systems.

Conflicting Values
Team Management Portrayed in Epic Metaphors

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S cholars in organizational communication have studied how managers use symbolic language to promote values and build corporate culture. Because stories and metaphors communicate on an emotional level, they are apt to be more compelling and memorable than messages transmitted directly (Martin). John Meyer contends that stories can "serve to encapsulate and entrench the values which are key to an organization's culture" (210).

Through communications such as newsletters, memos, and speeches, managers can disseminate anecdotes and stories that pre-

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sent the company and its leaders in a favorable light. By noting that management shapes culture and values through the information revealed and concealed, Jeffrey Pfeffer points to the political nature of symbolic language. In one example of corporate politics, Joanne Martin relates a story that portrays IBM board chair Thomas Watson as open and generous with employees. Both Nancy Roundy Blyler and Dennis Mumby analyze the politics of the company's intentions in disseminating this story. Other stories describe company achievements and model values of hard work and loyalty. According to Alan Wilkins, frequently stories will demonstrate "the social prescriptions concerning how things are to be done, and the consequences of compliance or deviance" (82). Ian Mitroff and Ralph Kilmann address stories that detail a company's founding and development, which are often described "in heroic terms, more dramatic than life itself" (18). These stories may be "recounted at formal occasions and at coffee break bull sessions" (19) and, like other metaphors common to business, evoke images of war and adventure (Clancy; Hirsch and Andrews; Jeffcutt).

Most of these company stories are transmitted orally. Analyzing them can be problematic for researchers because as myths or folklore, they are integrated into a company's basic assumptions about the reality of work life (Schein). Asking employees to recall and interpret these cultural stories, according to Mitroff and Kilmann, "makes as much sense as asking someone to sit down and talk about his unconscious" (20). Furthermore, with oral narratives, "embellishments will differ with each recounting" (Mumby 122). For this reason, oral narratives do not allow a close analysis of the actual language managers choose to convey their values. Also, because they are told at a variety of occasions, they do not elucidate the original rhetorical situation.

A more useful source for a study of symbolic language in company stories is a written text—for example, an executive speech constructed by a particular manager for a specific purpose and audience. A speech produces an extended text that might include metaphor and myth, which have been noted to contribute to culture building (Pondy). For instance, recent research has found new perspectives on presidential inaugural speeches (e.g., Daughton; Blankenship; Gronbeck; Hart). Speeches can produce an extended and focused text that explains the manager's and company's values (Sussman, Ricchio, and Belohlav). Yet, while the language of speeches delivered by political figures has received considerable analysis, surprisingly little attention has gone to the speeches of CEOs (Myers and Kessler; Sussman, Ricchio, and

Belohlav). One notable exception to the dearth of research on corpo-
rate speeches is Matthew Seeger's *I Gotta Tell You*, a collection of
scholarly analyses of Iacocca's internal and external speeches deliv-
ered while he was CEO of Chrysler. Although the analyses cover the
rhetorical situations of the speeches and reveal especially the personal
and political values of the speaker, they are not directed at his attempts
to build company culture, nor do they analyze the symbolic language.
Iacocca used the podium as an opportunity to lobby against interna-
tional trade policies. He and countless other managers have crossed
borders between corporate organizations and government, dissemi-
nating their ideas and values throughout the general culture. Thus
their discourse is important for the study of how they exercise power
and promulgate values (Joslyn).

In this study, we will examine the symbolic language in the text of
a CEO's speech prepared for the first formal meeting with his man-
agement team. We will look primarily at the values inherent in the
metaphorical language and contrast them with the values of the team
management philosophy described in the surface level of the text.
First, we will examine the speech and its rhetorical situation, including
some background on the CEO who authored it. Second, we will
analyze the metaphoric language, commenting on the possible epic
intertexts. As other researchers have done, we use the term *epic* for
clusters of metaphors that depict war, sports, or adventure, glorifying
the actors or events described. We suggest that the story told about
the financial turnaround of the company evokes in readers familiar
epic tales or modern spy or detective stories, providing an intertext
that captures readers' imaginations and ultimately overshadows the
actual events of the narrative. Finally, we point out some of the
oppositions in the value systems of the surface and symbolic levels of
the story and suggest that the metaphors are drawn from the lexicon
of public language. Members of the culture both admire and share the
vigorous images of adventure that clusters of metaphors can produce.
However, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have shown, these
metaphors are more than ornaments. They form interrelated and
coherent systems that pervade the language and influence how com-
munities perceive reality, what they value, and how they behave.

In its use of epic metaphors, this speech reinforces values of indi-
vidual achievement that are more traditional in American culture than
are the collaborative values of horizontal management systems. The
vivid images of war and sports, more familiar and compelling than
the collective values of total quality management (TQM),send an

ambiguous message to readers. Whereas the direct message extols the democracy of teams, the symbolism creates heroes and battle charges. Thus the symbolism actually undermines the teamwork and negotiations stressed in the speech, which chronicles a company history .The oppositions created by the story level and symbolism may reflect the contradictions inherent in American-based team management systems.

The research methods we use here fall under a rubric that Stephen North calls hermeneutic analysis. North points out that this method has not been widely used in composition studies, possibly, he speculates, because it is drawn from literature, which has traditionally judged belletristic writing as more valuable than the texts of business and the professions (117-19). However, we believe that business texts affect the behavior and beliefs of not only their own corporate culture but the wider society they operate within, and, as we have illustrated, their authors play a role in the political and public language of the culture. Specifically, we use a sociolinguistic view of metaphor constructed by Lakoff and Johnson, which looks at the way metaphoric systems shape the behaviors and attitudes of a culture. In addition, we apply techniques of intertextuality to speculate on the interpretations that readers might bring to the text. We also examine newspaper articles commenting on the CEO's performance and include information about the rhetorical setting of the speech taken from conversations with two communications directors of the company as well as two informants in middle management.

RHETORICAL BACKGROUND

The text we analyze is a speech written by Michael Walsh—who at the time was the new CEO of Tenneco—for his first meeting with his upper management team. (Throughout this study, quotations from the narrative portion of the speech are followed by the number corresponding to the paragraph in the Appendix that contains the quotation.) The meetings convening the executives of the subsidiaries of Tenneco, a Fortune 500 corporation, were scheduled to allow Walsh to enunciate his vision. Because he had already served for five months, the inner circle of managers knew him and had taken part in the events he describes.

The speech was never delivered because ultimately the leadership conference was postponed. Instead of becoming an oral presentation,

the speech was bound in a collection made up of speeches and interviews, given previously by Walsh, and pertinent articles from newspapers and business magazines that detailed the CEO's management style and values (Tenneco). The collection was then distributed to the primary audience of individual executives in the conglomerate to read before the leadership conference, scheduled for a later date, and eventually sent to all middle management. This speech, boxed in wide margins, is clearly the centerpiece of the collection—a company artifact, a symbol of the new order. The manual was distributed to employees with some fanfare, and subsidiary top managers encouraged middle managers to read it.

The CEO

Michael Walsh was one of a growing number of CEOs hired to bring about a turnaround in the corporations' financial futures. Like Lee Iacocca 10 years before him, he was brought into a company to rescue it from financial distress, but unlike the Chrysler executive, who remained a "benevolent dictator" at a time when other companies were testing more participative management (Gordon 15), Walsh chose to institute a new, horizontal management system as the basis for the changes he wished to make. Walsh was hired to revitalize Tenneco at a point where he was receiving high praise for his success in turning around the financial status of Union Pacific Railroad. His new job presented him the task of reorganizing the company, and at the time of this speech he had eliminated 10,000 jobs and started the company on an uphill turn. He admitted to knowing little about the firm ("At the time, I didn't know what PERCS was. For all I knew, it could be a test for a septic tank on a piece of property in California" [8]). But his energy and drive allowed him to plunge into the task of making the unwieldy conglomerate more efficient (Johnson A14).

The Text of the Speech

The explicit purpose of the speech is to introduce Walsh's management style and to describe a new operating system consisting of principles of team management, most prominently W. Edwards Deming's model of total quality management (although Walsh never mentions this term directly). His intentions to change to this system were widely known among both primary and secondary audiences when the collection arrived. CEOs of the subsidiary companies had

reinforced the principles in Christmas letters and in motivational memos; however, no structural changes had taken place. The CEO's implicit purpose of the speech is to build management's confidence in himself as a leader and in the accomplishments he has made during his first five months in office. The speech, meant to be his first formal introduction of himself and his management style, conforms to features mentioned by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson in their work on presidential inaugurals. In brief, this genre, a subcategory of epideictic rhetoric, attempts to reassure the audience, at a time of change, that traditional values will endure. According to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, the epideictic speech encourages contemplation rather than action and invites a display of literary tropes. The values of competition portrayed in the metaphors of this speech would be more familiar to a business audience than the cooperative values of team management the literal level explains. Thus the metaphoric system reinforces the traditional values and mitigates any controversy created by introducing the new system and its unfamiliar values.

The text of the speech is divided into three sections. The first section contains a narrative describing the events that took place in the first five months of the CEO's tenure and constitutes about one-half of the entire manuscript (see Appendix). The second section of the text addresses the CEO's management style. The last section summarizes the production values of cost cutting and quality. Some of the operating principles, such as cutting costs by "eliminating failures" and "focusing on accurate data" are detailed in the final section of the text, but the overall emphasis throughout the text is on human relationships and behavior.

The first line of the speech announces Walsh's purported goal: "Let's clearly set out what we have to do this year." In the brief prologue, the CEO explains that the speech will be a portrayal of the values and standards of behavior that they are to obtain: "I'll start by taking a look back at the last five months [he often refers to this time period as 100 days, an obvious echo of presidential status and leadership]: Why we did what we did; how we did it; and what it means for Tenneco and for you." The CEO announces that "while this is not a strategic conference with a big 'S,' we will set the direction for our work for this year, and the standards for our performance. I call that strategy with a small 's.'" In other words, the speech will model standards for work behavior and underscore cultural values implicit in the CEO's management philosophy.

After the prologue reminding the inner circle of managers of the intense work they have just finished, the narrative portion of the speech details the three financial operations key to the turnaround of the company's assets (selling a subsidiary company, issuing stock equity, cutting the dividend), mentioning specific names of the actors, financial agencies, and other companies involved. The story retells what is already known to the primary readers of the text, many of whom took an active part in the events. What they are reading is an account of five months of detached events compacted into a cohesive history. In the narrative, the actors achieve success through risk taking and determination to finish the job. The narrative lists seven accomplishments of the 100 days and sets them up as symbols for the work behavior required in the company: "Think about it in terms of what it says about how we will work at Tenneco." The accomplishments are "about action. About teamwork. And most of all, about results" (Tenneco 6).

THE SYMBOLIC LEVEL OF MEANING

Although the values of "action," "teamwork," and "results" might underlie both the literal history and the epic symbolism of the text, images of war and adventure are more salient than boardroom planning. The CEO portrays the events of the history as if they were continuous victories in battle, and the speech exhibits conflict and combat.

War Metaphors

The literal level of the narrative depicting the details of financial actions and the tedium of negotiating business transactions—while chronicled in some detail—becomes overshadowed by the grander, and to some readers more exciting, war scenario. Although seven accomplishments are listed, only three are detailed. (Not surprisingly, the elimination of countless jobs as the company scaled back is left out.) These events are framed in larger-than-life terms. Identifying a "crisis" demanding "immediate, decisive and sweeping action" (Tenneco 2) and personifying the company and its antagonists as victim and villains, the narrative sets up a scenario where the company heroes can save the business community.

According to Michael Riffaterre, when readers encounter a text, remembered traces of other texts join the current one to expand and direct their interpretations. Even in short passages or single words, the reader may construct images drawn from other memories. If the symbolic level continues and forms a coherent system, it may become another level of text that is as real as the actual events portrayed in the text. Traces of heroic stories drawn from the reader's personal experience (the idiolect) and cultural experience (the sociolect) influence the interpretations the reader makes. These traces repeat "unannounced sources and influences, cliches, phrases in the air, and traditions" that readers have stored in memory (Porter 35). With heroic stories of adventure, classical epics such as the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* would offer a storehouse of such traces because many characters, themes, events, and even passages in these epics are familiar in American culture. But a number of tales of war and adventure, including myths and folklore, could also serve as intertexts to specific readers. The themes of leadership, courage, and risk taking, so important to the founding of the new Tenneco, are strong in Shakespeare. Some readers might find echoes of modern war, spy, detective, or other adventure stories present in the text. In this section, we first explain the action of the story and discuss the episodic structure that suggests heroic trials. We then point out metaphoric clusters that reinforce the epic themes of war, sports, and adventure.

Walsh begins the story of the first 100 days with a familiar scene that George Lakoff labels the rescue scenario, one occurring frequently in political language, especially to justify military intervention. In an analysis of the recent Gulf War, Lakoff shows how the press and government language—which depicted Kuwait as victim, Saddam Hussein as villain, and the United States as rescuer and hero—blurred the actual details and allowed readers to interpret events consistently within their understanding of this drama. For instance, once readers understood the war through the rescue scenario, they could see it as just. "What metaphor does is limit what we notice, highlight what we do see, and provide part of the inferential structure that we reason with" (G. Lakoff 71). Because metaphor both highlights and hides certain characteristics of the items compared, it presents a limited picture of reality. The highlighted details of the rescue and epic metaphors in the CEO's text hide the tedious and mundane details of financial business negotiations and create a more noble and heroic appearing work life. The rescue scene propels the narrative:

> Last September, we faced a crisis that demanded immediate, decisive and sweeping action—and we took it. Let's review the bidding on what we did and why. (Tenneco 2)
>
> The driving force for our actions was the fact that our balance sheet was in trouble, and the banks, the rating agencies and Wall Street were getting nervous. They wanted to know what we were going to do, and when. Our response was to announce an . . . action plan to be completed by the end of the year. (3)

Placing the business history into a human context creates a personal and emotional story. The text introduces the characters, all personifications: The protagonist is the balance sheet, a metonymy for the company, who is weakened and upsetting the natural order of the financial world. The antagonists—the banks, the rating agencies, and Wall Street (another metonymy)—are introduced and described as "nervous." That the company is causing the giants of finance to worry suggests its importance. The antagonists are depicted as formidable opponents, more stubbornly passive than actively aggressive. But the business audience would recognize their unyielding power. The company earnestly pleads its case ("we told our story—over and over again" [Tenneco 7]). The heroes and their weapon, the "action plan," will fight the giants, who together constitute a commanding force. The job was "impossible" (10), but they "did it anyway" (11) with "great pressure and harsh deadlines" (20) and "real-life courage to take these difficult steps—to commit to actions that seemed impossible" (28).

The structure of the narrative, dividing the action into three episodes, echoes the *Odyssey* or, as George Dionisopoulos has labeled Iacocca's similar rescue of Chrysler, the "Herculean Task[s]" (230). The surface narrative tells the events of the three transactions: A company is sold, new stock is issued, and the dividend is cut. The episodes reify the characteristics the company values, traits needed to accomplish the feats—teamwork, financial savvy, commitment, and willingness to take risks. The goal is saving the company by reducing overhead and raising cash. However, with echoes of superhuman accomplishments, the events take on epic proportions.

Elevating an adventure story to mythic or epic proportions requires the readers to accept several assumptions. Dionisopoulos, in his account of the Iacocca myth, suggests that the hero must not only accomplish a superhuman task, similar to the one created in the Tenneco narrative, but the events must tie in with populist appeals and underscore American values. Iacocca's relationship to the auto-

mobile industry, which has played an important role in American history, gave him a credible position. The Tenneco narrative, without a company so closely allied to American history, draws on American holidays to create the background for an American epic: "7 a.m., just before Thanksgiving" and "a New Year's Eve closing" (Tenneco 13). With mention of the holidays of Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, the tale is larger than the business day; it is played out in ceremonies of national and personal significance. Additionally, it touches the cosmic when the heroes "moved heaven and earth to get the job done" (12). The victory comes with a tragic climax, the death of a hero in the battle fray. In the final paragraph of this episode are these lines:

> On the signature line of the agreement are the initials CKM—for Carl Madison—put there by Anthony Sordo. . . . He [Carl] died 36 hours before the agreement was signed, but his leadership and wisdom were felt to the end, and have been missed ever since. (14)

The death seemingly in the line of duty suggests a soldier dying in battle. The CEO narrator recognizes the contributions of the team member who died during the efforts to save the company, a touch that shows readers that the narrator is a sensitive and moral person in asking the team to honor its fallen comrade. Although Walsh gives considerable credit to his team in this episode, the characteristics of heroes and war, "discipline, courage, and skill" (Clancy 68), are salient, intensified by the epic framework.

The next episode, the issuing of stock equity, contains all of those characteristics. The event is again described as a trial requiring superhuman powers. Battling the economic climate, the banks, and the legal system, all of which receive specific names in this example, the team seems to fight giants. Ogrelike government agencies were "eating up precious time and energy" (Tenneco 19). This episode emphasizes the risk taking of the actors in the drama. George Lakoff explains that risk taking in the Gulf War was portrayed as "gambling," with win or lose consequences, "stakes," and "strategic moves" (63). In the Tenneco text, the scene is chaotic, a time of "uncertainty and anxiety" (19). The leaders were willing to take risks and stand resolutely with their decision to issue equity. The effect would be to reduce the value of their common stock, and the decision would bring the uncertainty of not knowing how low it would dip. But the team, as in a poker game, raised the number of offered shares twice, even in the face of a negative climate. They won the game (or war) by securing the needed capital

("there was enough demand to meet our objective of raising [$ mil-lion]" [25]) and providing reassuring evidence to the rating agencies that they were solvent ("another piece of critical evidence that we would do what we said we would do" [25]).

On the surface level, the text refers to frequent planning ("we were on conference calls" [Tenneco 21]; "Jim Reed, Derrick Butler, and I talked well into the night" [24]), but the symbolic level, driven by action and suspense, suggests they had little control over the fast-moving events. The episode builds suspense as time runs out, marked by specific dates of the approaching deadline ("December 10 and 11, Kenyon Company announced lower than expected earnings" [22]; "December 11 was decision day" [24]; "December 16, there was enough demand to meet our objective" [25]) and the unbridled thrills of the amusement park ("It was a roller coaster ride" [15] that "wasn't a lot of fun" [18]). The roller coaster buffets the team from being "confronted with shareowner suits" and a "drumbeat of other nega-tive media" (18) to "things were looking a little better" (21) and then to "new concerns" and "a negative story in the *New York Times*" (22). The leaders fight for their company against the barbarians at the gates, reminiscent of the heroes in the *Iliad* defending Troy. The epic echoes continue, overshadowing the less visceral and more mundane finan-cial negotiations taking place in the history.

The last episode is compacted into just one paragraph and de-scribes cutting the dividend to raise more cash. The leaders show the ultimate in stoic courage by sacrificing their own family—the share-holders. The image is dire: "We looked down the gun barrel and took a step that hurt a lot of shareowners who want and need the dividend yield." Some shareholders responded with "angry telephone calls" and "tears." The decision makers "simply did what [they] had to do" (Tenneco 27). They looked to the greater good of the community.

The scenario comes to a close with the CEO's summary of the events. The vogue language in the summary—"gut-check time," "real-life courage," "actions that seemed impossible, especially in 100 days and in an economy that said 'no way' " (Tenneco 28)—resonates the scenario to a modern-day reader more as an adventure than as an illustration of the reasoned TQM philosophy.

Sports Metaphors

Frequent use of sports metaphors aids in framing the events as competitive and adventuresome. George Lakoff believes that "we

understand war as a competitive game like chess, or as a sport, like football or boxing. It is a metaphor in which there is a clear winner and loser, and a clear end to the game" (65). In the CEO's text, the early reference to "review[ing] the bidding on what we did and why" (2) imports the game theme. The CEO announces in the prologue that "ours is a team sport." The dead metaphor "driving force" (3) becomes almost a master trope, evoking as it does the action and power of the financial moves the CEO commands. A common business metaphor (referring to one who sees projects through to the finish), it recalls associations of adventure, power, and propulsion. The "driving force" is pervasive in athletics: The golfer drives the ball, the fullback leads the drive, the batter hits a line drive, drivers propel bobsleds and racing cars. In this narrative Carl Madison is the "driver for the sale" (14).

Echoing cadences of the sports column, one sentence uses four verbs to compress the action of some months into a single statement: "All totaled, they contacted 140 companies, signed confidentiality agreements with 70, ran 40 through their first-class data room and got bids from 16" (Tenneco 13). In that sentence, the excitement of sports is superimposed on the organized business world of round numbers. Knowing how many companies were involved, at what time, and on what day is essential for running a smooth, controlled business operation. But the scene of fast-moving action described here suggests race cars, contact games, and a world of speed and adventure, and the numbers might become scores, wins, and stats.

THE VALUES INHERENT IN EPIC LANGUAGE

Traditionally, American culture has valued the individual achievement rewarded in hierarchical management systems. By stressing the heroism and courage of the actors in the epic drama, the speech can assure the audience of managers that, at a time of change, familiar values will endure. At the same time, the speech encourages employees to recognize teamwork and cooperation. The oppositions created by the contrasting values may serve to create an all-encompassing and harmonious environment for establishing a new culture. The ambiguity of the narrative will probably go unnoticed. On the other hand, the contrasting values may also illustrate the contradictions inherent in horizontal management systems.

War and Sports Games

Many people hearing and speaking the language of war and sports, which extols competition, would enjoy the playful images that the speech evokes. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes that the game analogy is increasingly popular in our culture. He sees society as a collection of games that carry with them "little universes of meaning" (25). War games suggest unpredictability, struggle, and risk (Clancy). Also, the metaphors evoking noble deeds allow participants to feel that their daily actions are meaningful.

The values of war and sports may be more compatible with traditional American values than are values of cooperation. Inherent in the action of both the surface and symbolic levels of the text are the deeply entrenched values of the work ethic. The history Walsh tells supports hard work as the basis for individual achievement. The many references—in the text—to the long hours, weekends, and holidays devoted to the job illustrate the kind of commitment the CEO asks for. In his prologue, Walsh explains how he has devoted his time to accomplishing the turnaround for the company. He sets a rapid pace that models what he expects of his teams: "We have to continue to move, and we have to continue to move fast." He reminds his audience in the prologue that they have only a "short time together" at the conference. Then they will return to their respective companies, where they will be "moving on again—as I said, fast." The recital of dates— "November came and went" (Tenneco 17) and "December 11 was decision day" (24)—adds to the perception of continual action and hammers out the pace.

The action images invoke competition and not the collaborative decision making TQM proposes. Furthermore, military metaphors reinforce images not of democratic rule but of strong leaders and heroes. As Suzanne Daughton explains, war metaphors suggest a win or lose situation. They also can be dangerous, she asserts, by invoking heavy-handed images. In fact, some readers may object to the images of sports and war, even though in this speech they invoke adventure rather than violence. Gareth Morgan writes:

> Corporations and nation states seem to be gripped by an image of the world as an elaborate competitive game where there are winners and losers, and where the ultimate aim is to be on the winning side, or at least to end up with a reasonable scorecard. (269)

Robin Lakoff calls the metaphors of action and power a male language. Certainly, women are excluded from both the story and symbolic levels of the speech. The decidedly male language could be offensive to women, but the images are so widely used in the general culture that the literal meanings may go unnoticed or may be read uncritically.

A value system that might portray the team management concept of TQM is collectivism, which has traditionally been a part of the American culture, especially in rural and neighborhood cooperative efforts. Terms associated with collectivist values, such as "cooperation, unity, social good, equality" (Rieke and Sillars 124), are not evident in this speech nor are they prominent in public language, although they may be associated with service organizations. Although leaders talk about "the team" (Rieke and Sillars 123), they may be thinking more about the competition and achievement of winning the game than the cooperative efforts of team members, and the image they wish to project is more the commander than the coach.

The metaphors of this narrative seem to be drawn from the oral language popular in American culture. As we have shown, such images are common in the current lexicon. Like other popular metaphors, they are so deeply embedded in the language that members of this culture may be little aware of their metaphorical sense and the values the metaphors import. At best, the language valorizes competition and victory as goals for interactions in business and politics. Negotiation and common ground are omitted in the action scenes. Furthermore, the cooperative decision making of professional life is supplanted by a vision of visceral excitement and drama, an attractive but fictionalized account of most everyday professional life.

Leaders and Teams

Although teamwork receives far more direct mention and praise than leadership, the intertext of heroes and their conquests contrasts with, and at times even overshadows, the behavior of teams. The narrator voice relating the story reinforces traces of the hero, an image advocates of TQM warn against. John Ryan explains that managers must act as facilitators in TQM systems and accept that their authority may be threatened. They must also be willing to turn over the role of leader to other members (88-89). As narrator, the CEO does praise the

team effort, but not without signaling his own presence in the action: "If any other company has accomplished as much in 100 days as we did between September and December last year, I don't know which one it would be" (1). Here he uses first-person plural to ensure that the accomplishments include himself and first-person singular to highlight his position to make judgments. More often he uses *we*, including himself in the action and demonstrating the solidarity of the group: "We've proved to ourselves and others what we can do when we really put our minds to it" (30). The comments allow him to receive the praise and still maintain humility, enhancing his heroic ethos.

One of the most important tenets of the TQM system is the authority of the team, and proponents of the system believe that managers must learn to overcome their need for authority and recognition (Ryan). Walsh, as newly appointed leader, seems to be assuring the legitimacy of his position by indicating that he is in control. Because the audience is not yet familiar with his management style, he may at this time wish to make his authority clear. Walsh directly addresses his ideas on leadership in the second section of the speech, which is devoted to explaining the CEO's management style: "Working as a team doesn't mean there isn't a leader. There is; it's me in my job and you in yours, and it's our responsibility to achieve consistent, superior results." One extended metaphor associating communication with mechanization occurs in the second portion of the speech and illustrates the CEO's attempt to emphasize teamwork while the symbolism strengthens authority.

> Those executive meetings include a lot of details, but I need it in order to get my hands around this company. I intend to get a clear, groundlevel understanding of what's going on. That demands facts and quick answers to tough questions. To get there, we're forging tighter connections between Houston and the divisions so that there are no surprises or misunderstandings. It's what I call being "bolted together." It's something I urge you to think about with your colleagues and clients and customers.

The image resonates paradox: The human element of the company—the colleagues, clients, and customers—are trussed in metal bonds ("bolted together"). The metaphors of work ("hands around," "forging tighter connections," "bolted together") elicit the factory floor ("groundlevel"). Yet "Houston" and "colleagues and clients and customers" suggest upper levels of management. But most tellingly, the metaphor implies control as well as teamwork. The speaker has been brought into the group as hero to save the group members, but the

primary audience, who holds some power, must wonder just how much control the speaker will exert over their lives. The implicit force of "get my hands around" could suggest a grip on their necks. The leader, unlike the workers who have their hands *in* their work, shows his power and control by making it clear that he will have his hands *around* the company. Furthermore, the word *intend*, as opposed to *hope* or *plan*, shows that he is going to be taking a hard look. Thus, while "what's going on" may have a friendly, colloquial ring, it may also suggest an accusatory question. His next sentence, beginning with an ambiguous "That," allows him to avoid agency in the "demands" to be made.

Collaboration and Authority

Walsh was reputed to be forceful. The *Wall Street Journal* describes his initial meetings with Tenneco management as taking control before he was officially on board (Johnson A1). On the other hand, the media praised him for his openness in sharing his health problems with employees and the public in 1992 when he first discovered he had cancer (Myerson). His speech announcing his illness, delivered by video, shows a personal and sensitive side to his character as he shared his health problem with his workplace family (Locker). This contradiction between the camaraderie of teams and the authority of leaders may be inherent in team management systems. Critics of TQM have pointed out that such systems are not democratic but indirectly coercive by effecting employees' commitment to management's needs and values (Deetz; Boje and Winsor; Steingard and Fitzgibbons). By demanding continuous improvements, the system requires the team members to police themselves as "unwilling abetters of the TQM ideology" (Steingard and Fitzgibbons 32). Many companies changing to team concepts have asked their employees to devote to the job hours once thought to be personal time. David Steingard and Dale Fitzgibbons observe that "once the worker is put on the TQM treadmill there is never an idle moment" (33).

THE EXECUTIVE INAUGURAL

As a convention of the epideictic genre, this speech has emphasized traditional values of hard work and individual achievement, which readers would find familiar. Emphasizing these values reassures the

audience that the new management will not institute unfamiliar changes. Louis Pondy has shown that metaphor can offer a dual function by operating "at two levels at the same time." He explains that "this capacity of metaphor to carry several meanings at once suits it ideally to express the simultaneous facilitation of change and continuity" (165). Daughton shows how the 1933 inaugural speech of Franklin Delano Roosevelt combined metaphors of religion and war, both to calm the fears caused by the depression and to move the people to accept his new policies.

However, the symbolic language choices this CEO makes juxtapose a number of principles of team management (cooperation and negotiation) and epic action (competition and risk taking). The choices of language are not necessarily deliberate, nor can we assume that Walsh intended more than, as he states in the prologue, to "set the direction" and "standards for performance" for the company. Daughton reinforces the notion that metaphors in public speeches are not always conscious or deliberate (430). In fact, Walsh frequently stresses that he is concerned with reality. The narrative offers first of all a company history. The CEO states at the beginning of the speech that the purpose of the conference is not ceremonial ("not here to celebrate" but "to build"). At other points of the speech he refers to "hard-nosed reality," "real-life courage," and being "focused on the real world."

It is possible that Walsh's language is drawn from the general vocabulary he and other public figures use in their work life. He seems to be skilled in his command of popular metaphors, using them with some frequency. Walsh shows considerable facility with sports language and includes similar metaphors in spontaneous discussions with employees and interviews with the press. For example, in "Town Hall Meetings," a summary of his interchange with employees, he complains, "There's always someone in the next lane, straining just as hard as you to break the winner's tape." At another point in the "Town Hall" text he writes, "We have pushed the companies to very tough, stretch targets, but we have to call this game as we go" (Tenneco). James Suchan has suggested in his study of root metaphors that other terms, such as "benchmarking," "customers," "process actions," and "empowerment" (13), convey the concepts of new management systems. Morgan describes the metaphor of the spider plant as appropriate for horizontal management systems. These images do not, however, lend themselves to personalized narrative as compellingly as epic language.

It is also possible that Walsh's language is based on his desire to appear in charge in his new position and to deliver a vigorous and entertaining speech. The text is more polished and sophisticated than the speeches Iacocca gave during the time he was CEO of Chrysler, and it contains more figures of speech. Iacocca's style, with its polemic and mild profanity, seemed directed to the workforce more than to the boardroom. However, the effectiveness of any speech with its audience is difficult to measure. The meaning of the speech is created neither by the writer, the text, nor the reader alone but by their interaction. We suggest possible intertexts readers might bring to this speech, but, of course, individuals will create their own readings based on their personal and social experience. This manuscript is only one of many ways Walsh communicated with his employees. Letters and videos, as well as informal contacts, contribute to the context of a message. Thus the effect of a communication on an audience must be judged in the continuing communication situation (David and Baker).

CONCLUSION

Linguists and scholars investigating the symbols of business and public language have noted that epic metaphors are commonly used in business and politics because they suggest heroic and superhuman actions that members of the community can admire and emulate. However, little analysis of executives' texts has been done. Analyzing an extended text has allowed us to examine how management disseminates values and exercises power and influence in a specific context, and provides an opportunity for a rhetorical study of a specific author, time, and event. In this case, the text was the first formal presentation of a CEO's philosophy of team management, prepared for his upper management circle. This CEO showed considerable skill in the use of metaphor for creating a fast-moving and motivating speech, but the salient images created in the epic symbolism are not those of the collaboration and negotiation we might expect of teams. Instead, the clusters of metaphors create a subtext, which in this case unfolds a story of action and adventure. The audience, as CEOs of their own subsidiary companies, could probably identify with these epic values—values they may find more familiar than those of collectivism, which team management concepts invoke.

We hope that this study will suggest to other researchers the possibilities of continuing research on executive speeches. Because we have used a single example, new questions arise for further study. Some suggestions for new areas of research follow:

1. *The language of TQM and other horizontal management systems.* Walsh's speech uses language that displays the CEO's power and agency. Although Walsh states that he wishes to promote a team management system, he uses an extended metaphoric system evoking epic competition and conflict to describe it. Do other executives use extended metaphors to depict cooperative systems? What metaphors stress teams? Do female executives use different metaphors?

2. *The language of epics.* Research has pointed to the epic language of war and games as extolling human values of individual achievement, courage, and power (R. Lakoff) and workplace values of conflict and unpredictability (Clancy). This study confirms these previous findings. In this text, risk taking and agency are salient values shown by the leaders—who appear to gamble more than to plan—and once they begin the action, they do not back down. The image of the driving force suggests the energy and resolve of the male actors in the drama. Overall, the emphasis is on activity, not strategy. The countdown of dates, indicating that time is running out, creates a feeling of fast motion and suspense. The heroes are competitors who operate with tough determination. In the workplace, values of action, competition, and excitement predominate in the epic conflict. Although metaphors of force and war can create savage images (Ivie), these metaphors are more suggestive of games. Games are a popular image in this culture. Do other CEOs emphasize games? If so, is the emphasis on the strategies of games or on physical action? What are the values depicted by other epic histories?

3. *Company histories.* This text specifically recounts the financial turnaround of a corporation and contains the actual events of selling a company, issuing stock, and cutting the dividend. It also includes mention of the death of one of the leaders who played a major role in the actions. What are the specific events illustrated by epic histories that are created for other companies?

4. *Power and authority.* This speech indirectly suggests that despite instituting team management, the CEO still holds the power and authority. Also, it models the excessive demands on employees' time that critics have identified in TQM systems. What are other political messages hidden in executive speeches?

5. *Metaphors of cooperation.* We have suggested that the language is drawn from the American business and political lexicon that valorizes metaphors of war and games. We might expect the metaphors that describe a team management system to represent cooperation and negotiation. What are the metaphors in speeches given by executives who work in

nonprofit service organizations? Do they create more nurturing and cooperative images? Do cooperative metaphors have popular appeal?

6. *Executive speech genres.* What are the genres of executive speeches? We have identified a specific genre of epideictic speech we label the executive inaugural. We find that it follows the conventions of the presidential inaugural, which reinforces traditional values. Ronald Lee identifies the graduation speech as an executive speech genre, and other categories include the stockholders' meeting speech, retirement speeches, and policy speeches. What are the features of the symbolic language of these speeches? What are other common genres?

The metaphoric systems of speeches are important for studies of how managers can indirectly communicate values to their employees; however, their language choices influence more than the business community. Lakoff and Johnson have found that concealed metaphoric systems are pervasive in our language and influence the speakers' beliefs and behaviors. CEOs in positions of power draw from these systems, and because their voices are widely heard, they modify and reinforce them. Their speeches reveal clues for uncovering our hidden cultural values and how those values shape business communication.

APPENDIX

Most of the quotations in our study are taken from the narrative section of the speech, which is reproduced below. Omitted text includes a short prologue, which precedes this section, a short section ending the narrative, and two expository sections. To maintain confidentiality, we have changed or omitted all names and numbers. Corresponding paragraph numbers are given in the text.

1. If any other company has accomplished as much in 100 days as we did between September and December last year, I don't know which one it would be. We should take confidence from what we've done. But we're not here to celebrate. We're here to build.
2. Last September, we faced a crisis that demanded immediate, decisive and sweeping action—and we took it. Let's review the bidding on what we did and why.
3. The driving force for our actions was the fact that our balance sheet was in trouble, and the banks, the rating agencies and Wall Street were getting nervous. They wanted to know what we were going to do, and when. Our response was to announce a [$ billion] action plan to be completed by the end of the year.
4. By New Year's day, we had:

(continued)

APPENDIX Continued

5. Sold almost [$ million] in non-core assets.
   Issued [$ million] in new equity.
   Cut expenses by [$ million].
   Reduced capital spending by another [$ million].
   Halved the dividend.
   Taken major steps to address the pressing problems at Conglom.
   And, announced a [$ million] write-off.
6. I'm sure you can all recite that list by now. But don't focus just on that. Think about it in terms of what it says about how we will work at Tenneco. It's about the courage to make commitments—even before you fully understand what those commitments mean. About action. About teamwork. And most of all, about results.
7. The action plan came together in a tense 72 hours—in Chicago, before I was even formally on the payroll—drawing together pieces of work and analysis from around the company. We went public on September 11 and started a 100-day campaign to sell the plan—and our commitment to achieving it. We talked to banks, rating agencies, Wall Street, investors, employees. As we told our story—over and over again—they heard us and understood the depth of our commitment.
8. There was a lot of trust involved in all this. At the time, I didn't know what PERCS was. For all I knew, it could be a test for a septic tank on a piece of property in California. But we all locked arms and did what had to be done amazingly quickly.
9. I say "we" because that's what I mean. Did I do all the work? No way. To be sure, I led and orchestrated the process—which was demanding and intense, to say the least—but the detail work largely got done by other people. It was an integrated effort by all of you and your people.
10. Some tough decisions tell the story. The sale of the [subsidiary] business was a cornerstone of the action plan. But if there was ever an impossible job to get done in 90 days, it was that sale. Think about it . . .
11. Bill Young, Anthony Sordo, Jim Kopec—backed by the Finance and Legal staffs in Tenneco and Hank Koenig and his folks in Tenneco Inc.—did it anyway. No excuses. And, the value to us was [$ million]. . . . That deal went a long way towards earning us credibility with Wall Street.
12. Remember, the company didn't want to sell the [subsidiary]. They came to me during those 72 hours. . . . Their logic was good, but our corporate need was greater. And once the decision was made, Bill, Tony, Jim and their colleagues moved heaven and earth to get the job done.
13. The day after the announcement, they called 50 potential buyers. All totaled, they contacted 140 companies, signed confidentiality agreements with 70, ran 40 through their first-class data room and got bids from 16. Companies that couldn't keep the pace missed the

opportunity. And at 7 a.m., just before Thanksgiving, they signed the letter of agreement with Multiglom, just allowing time for the Hart-Scott-Rodino anti-trust review and a New Year's Eve closing.

14. On the signature line of the agreement are the initials CKM—for Carl Madison—put there by Anthony Sordo. Carl was the driver for the sale—the one who kept it on course when the process got wobbly. He died 36 hours before the agreement was signed, but his leadership and wisdom were felt to the end, and have been missed ever since.

15. The equity offering was just as tough. Think back. We filed our registration statements for the PERCS on October 29. The stock was at $40 a share. It was a roller coaster ride after that.

16. That same day, we announced weak Third Quarter earnings and outlined a [$ million] restructuring charge to get our major problems behind us. By the end of the day, the stock was $38 and a fraction.

17. As November came and went, . . . other equity offerings were postponed because of market conditions, including [several banks].

18. Also during that time, we were confronted with shareowner suits, . . . and a drumbeat of other negative media. It wasn't a lot of fun.

19. And to complicate the picture further, the SEC asked tough detailed questions about the registration statement, eating up precious time and energy as we prepared answers and dealt with the uncertainty and anxiety all this involved.

20. Despite the full review, we received clearance from the SEC in record time. It was an outstanding job by the Inc. Finance and Legal departments under great pressure and harsh deadlines. On December 3 we began testing the market.

21. Over the next few days, we were on conference calls with more than . . . investors, and met privately with others. Things were looking a little better.

22. But then, on consecutive days, December 10 and 11, Kenyon Company announced lower than expected earnings for their fiscal year and Bower cut its dividend, creating new concerns about equipment makers. In addition, a negative story in *The New York Times* hurt natural gas stocks as well.

23. The pressure on our stock was intense—fueled not just by the poor market but also by year-end tax selling, some switching out of the common, and the ever-present fear of more unexpected bad news. . . . The stock drifted down, testing $35 dollars, then $30. We amended the registration statement to increase the number of shares once, and then again later, as well.

24. December 11 was decision day. Should we pull the offering or proceed? Jim Reed, Derrick Butler, and I talked well into the night. We agreed to press ahead, knowing that pushing the offering through the retail channels would further depress the price of the common stock.

(continued)

APPENDIX Continued

25. By December 16, there was enough demand to meet our objective of raising at least [$ million]. We didn't like the price we paid, but it calmed down our lenders, rating agencies and commercial . . . dealers, and was another piece of critical evidence that we would do what we said we would do.

26. Again, this was a team effort. I didn't write the registration statement, answer the SEC's questions, single-handedly manage our bankers, or prepare for the offering. A lot of people in this room did, as well as still more all around the company.

27. Cutting the dividend fits the same mold. We looked down the gun barrel and took a step that hurt a lot of shareowners who want and need the dividend yield. There were angry telephone calls, and some tears from people who lost substantial income. But we couldn't afford to pay the dividend at the old rate, and it was another credibility issue with debt and equity markets. We simply did what we had to do.

28. The action plan challenged every part of this company. It was gut-check time for everyone in this room and hundreds—probably thousands—of other people. It took real-life courage to take these difficult steps—to commit to actions that seemed impossible, especially in 100 days and in an economy that said "no way."

29. The first 100 days were a defining moment for us at Tenneco—a time that set the standard for how we will work from now on. Courageous. Committed. Relentless. Trusting and relying on each other. Focused on results.

30. There wasn't any other way. In my mind, that bodes well for the future. We've proved to ourselves and others what we can do when we really put our minds to it.

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