Heroic/Anti-Heroic Narratives: The Quests of Sherron Watkins

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ABSTRACT

With the recent collapse of Enron and the need for sense-making, opinions of Sherron Watkins' status in the Enron spectacle abound. Competing narratives portray her as both heroic whistleblower and anti-hero of corporate greed. Was she a hero or not? Rather than add to this dialectic controversy, we first define the classical typology of a hero as originally set forth by Homer and later detailed by Joseph Campbell. We next analyze the texts of Watkins' quest chronology in order to elucidate the complex circumstances surrounding the creation of both narratives. The textual analysis then leads to a clarification of the anti-hero typology, followed by a new prototype, the quasi-hero, which possesses some classical hero attributes, yet is devoid of other essential qualities. Our contribution extends the current hero typology, thereby providing a necessary expanse of classification for understanding today's corporate spectacles.

I. INTRODUCTION

The social notion and academic typology of a "hero" can be traced to the prototype hero's quest presented in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. In the search for a hero of the Enron spectacle, some have wholeheartedly ascribed heroic attributes to Sherron Watkins (McNulty & Spiegel, 2002). Others have asserted that her self-serving motives clearly define her as neither a hero nor a whistleblower (Sunday Times, 2002). How can such opposite characterizations be ascribed to the same person in the same circumstances? Our contribution is twofold. The primary contribution is the resolution of the false dichotomy of epic versus tragic hero via the theoretical development of the anti-hero typology. Our secondary contribution provides an extension of the hero/anti-hero quest literature to current relevant applications in the case of Enron.

From Alford (1994), we may surmise that when a collection of related texts lacks a clear leader or hero, narratives will attempt to organize the recorded events around the missing leadership functions. In the Enron narratives, we definitely see creative constructions – most often by simply inserting a real Enron character – to fill the hero role. The result-ing stories vary in effectiveness, with some achieving the appearance and near popular satisfaction of a heroic narrative, while others are downright implausible. Sherron Watkins is an intriguing figure in the Enron texts because she emerges in the lead role of two distinct, yet highly divergent heroic quest narratives: as hero and anti-hero.

II. HEROS – FROM HOMER TO HOFSTEDE

Homer provided, in the first two works of western literature, a form that has endured to the present day. The Iliad and Odyssey detailed the heroic quest narrative of Odysseus, and thereby established an ideal leadership proto-type as a model for society. Alford (1994, p.155) observes that

Classical writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Xenophon, elevate leadership... because they are primarily concerned with what leadership does for the leader. It enobles him, granting everlasting fame and glory to the ambitious....Good leaders also enoble those who follow if those who follow pride themselves on choosing and demanding good leaders. For a number of years the Athenians under Themistocles and Pericles did so, according to Thucydides, turning to demagogues only when they became demoralized and discouraged.

Although psychologists and management researchers have disagreed on the definition of leadership, the general public seems to have little trouble with the term. People have their own ideas about the nature of leaders and are able to determine the boundaries and characteristics of leadership (Offermann, Kenedy, & Wirtz, 1994). In other words, the leadership factors are in the mind of the follower (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). According to the cognitive categorization perspective, people have prototypical conceptions of leaders that act as filters through which information about real leaders flows (Bryman, 1987). These prototypes arise because of people's tendency to simplify and categorize their environment, thereby forming implicit individualized leadership theories (Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2001).

Lord and his associates (Lord, Foti & de Vader, 1984) have found that implicit leadership theories reflect the structure and content of cognitive categories used to distinguish leaders from non-leaders. These notions will not only influence the values that individuals place on selected leader behaviors and attributes, but will also be reflected in the expectations that followers bring to the leader/follower relationship. This is because individuals are perceived as good leaders if there is a match between the follower's tacit conception of leadership qualities and the qualities expressed by their potential leaders (Dorfman, Hanges, & Brodbeck, 2001). However, expectations and leadership theories do not simply appear, fully formed, out of nowhere. Rather, they are generated and refined over time as a result of people's experiences (Offermann, Kenedy, & Wirtz, 1994). In like fashion, Americans have developed general expectations and needs for heroes and their quest narratives. Enron presents a prime example of drama appealing to the popular need for hero creation by would-be followers.

The existing styles of organizational interpretation appear to have been dominated by the representational style of the quest (Turner, 1990), which contains a crucial struggle for success resulting in the exultation of the hero (Campbell, 1973). The quest narrative may also involve obstacles posed by opponents in a restrictive society which are overcome, thereby enabling passage into a new and integrated state of society (Jeffcutt, 1994). Regardless of the impetus and outcome of the quest narrative, the central figure undertakes a great and complicated journey towards a compelling but forbidding objective (Bordwell, 1985). It is a journey of transformation and discovery in three parts: the departure, the initiation, and the return (Campbell, 1973).

In the Iliad, Odysseus reluctantly leaves his wife Penelope, his newborn son Telemachus, and his regal life in Ithaca. It is the outward call to duty and perhaps, an inner desire for adventure that draws him away to the battle at Troy. Many fight and fall, heroes are made and transformed, and the hard-won victory after ten years signals the return, the turn of Odysseus' quest toward home. Thus, the Iliad brings Odysseus halfway through the classical quest model. His epic narrative continues in the Odyssey and his home proves to be an illusive destination, as the battle lines of the return lack the clarity and objectivity of Troy. The return helps to define not only the hero, but the nature of the entire quest and arguably provides the only substantive opportunity for our hero's transformative change.

In the first stage, the hero is called to embark on an adventure. He may be unwilling to leave the safety of a life that he understands and controls, thus the hero will often refuse, but later accept the call. Although he may still have doubts, he will be lured or carried away into the adventure of the unknown. At the start of the adventure, the hero will encounter a protective figure who gives him specific knowledge or an amulet to protect him throughout his journey into the unknown. Campbell (1973) calls this unknown the "darkness" which envelops the hero after he crosses the first threshold, often by taking his first public action as a hero.

The second stage of the quest is a time

of initiation and transformation in which the hero travels through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces which threaten, test, or help the hero. After many battles and strange encounters, the hero arrives at the "nadir of the mythological round" (Campbell, 1973) where his great ordeal yields the reward, or object of the quest.

In the early stages of the journey, the challenges are relatively easy. By meeting them successfully, the hero builds maturity, skill, and confidence. As the quest continues, the challenges increase in difficulty and the hero must rely on his own sense of judgment and the advice of mentors to pass these tests. Eventually, the hero must face the greatest challenge of the journey, alone. The challenge is so great that he must surrender completely to the adventure and become one with it, but still the outcome is in doubt. Depending on the hero and the challenge, it is possible for him to be beaten. In this case, unless he sets off to try again, his life becomes a bitter shadow of what it could have been (Harris & Thompson, 1995). If the hero succeeds, he gets his reward and the transformation is complete. The hero is at one with his new self, he has achieved a greater understanding of life, and he has corrected the imbalance which sent him on the journey (Harris & Thompson, 1995).

In the final stage of the quest, the hero is ready to return home to his everyday life, but he must again go through tests and challenges before crossing the return threshold. Campbell (1973) refers to this as the "rescue from without." He explains that, "society is jealous of those who remain away from it" and will try to entice them back into the fold (Campbell, 1973, p. 207). As with the first threshold, the final one takes him from one world to another, from the transcendental back to the real world. With a superior awareness of both worlds, the hero returns to renew his community, nation, or religion. However, he may discover that the message he brings is rejected, bringing a threat to his own life.

III. QUEST 1: WATKINS AS HERO

We will now consider the heroic quest of Sherron Watkins, a central figure in the Enron spectacle. According to Campbell (1973), in the first stage of the quest the hero is called to embark on an adventure. Although the hero may initially refuse, he will ultimately succumb and accept the call. The call to quest for Sherron Watkins was the allegation of accounting fraud perpetrated by former Enron CFO Andrew Fastow and former CEO Jeff Skilling. We will begin the quest of Sherron Watkins in June 2001 when she was assigned to work directly for Mr. Fastow, assisting him in corporate development work. It was during this time, according to Watkins, that she became aware of accounting irregularities. Her concern for proper accounting seems evident in her continual pursuit of explanations to appropriately address the irregularities she was encountering. She stated in her Congressional testimony (US House of Representatives, 2002):

It was my understanding that the Raptor special purpose entities were owned by LJM, the partnership run by Mr. Fastow showed certain hedged losses incurred by Raptor were actually coming back to Enron....I was highly alarmed by the information I was receiving. My understanding as an accountant is that a company could never use its own stock to generate a gain or avoid a loss on its income statement. I continued to ask questions and seek answers...I never heard reassuring explanations.

It was here that Watkins became concerned and thus heeded the call to embark on an adventure. In line with Campbell's model, the hero may be reluctant at first, but will encounter a protective figure and thus continue on in the quest. Watkins stated in her Congressional testimony (US House of Representatives, 2002):

I was not comfortable confronting either Mr. Skilling of Mr. Fastow with my concerns. To do so, I believed would have been a job terminating move. On August 14, 2001, I was informed of Mr. Skilling's sudden resignation and felt compelled to inform Mr. Lay of the accounting problems that faces Enron.

To continue, Campbell (1973) refers to

the second stage of the quest as a time where the hero faces numerous tests and battles that gradually increase in difficulty. The hero may initially receive help in the fight, but eventually must rely on his own sense of judgment and the advice of mentors to pass these tests. Watkins crossed the threshold of the second stage when she met with Enron manager Cindy Olsen on August 16, 2001 and was encouraged to come forward and meet with CEO Kenneth Lay. She also met with Rex Rogers, Enron's Associate General Council on August 17 and then on August 20, she discussed her concerns with her former Arthur Andersen mentor, James Hecker and long time friend and co-worker Jeffrey McMahon. As a hero, Watkins' quest initially found support from friends and mentors prior to her meeting with protective figure Kenneth Lay. In her Congressional testimony (US House of Representatives, 2002), Watkins described her meeting with Lay in part as follows:

I urged Mr. Lay to find out who lost that money. If he discovered that this loss would be borne by Enron shareholders via an issuance of stock in the future, then I thought we had a large problem on our hands. At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Lay assured me that he would look into my concerns. I also requested a transfer as I was uncomfortable remaining as a direct report to Mr. Fastow.

Watkins's confidence in her protective figure allowed her to continue on in her quest and thus face more difficult challenges. In her Congressional testimony, Watkins stated that eight days after her August 22 meeting with Mr. Lay, she learned that Mr. Fastow wanted her fired and her computer seized. Pursuant to her request, she was transferred to another department, thus removing her from her job and out of harm's way. As Watkins ventured further in her quest, she experienced greater challenges and thus had to rely more on her own sense of judgment. In the September 10 investigation by Enron's outside legal council Vinson and Elkins, Watkins was questioned for more than three hours. In the eight page confidential results of investigation letter to Enron, Vinson and Elkins stated:

When questioned about her basis for these two allegations in her anonymous letter and supplemental materials, Ms. Watkins acknowledged that she had no personal first hand knowledge of either allegation. Both were based solely on rumors that she heard during the two months she was working in Enron Global Finance...

Watkins conveyed to Lay her knowledge and related concerns of the various accounting irregularities she was aware of, yet she cunningly told the investigating attorneys, whom she did not trust, that her knowledge was essentially hearsay. In her congressional testimony, Watkins identified the culprits as Skilling, Fastow, Glisson, and Causey, as well as Arthur Andersen and Vinson and Elkins. In addition, she also testified that she kept copies of the memos in a lockbox. Following Campbell's (1973) second stage, the hero Watkins faced greater challenges and relied upon her own sense of judgment and the end of this second stage finds the hero alone, facing the greatest challenge of the journey. In the opening comments prior to Watkins' Congressional testimony (US House of Representatives, 2002), Representative Greenwood stated:

What is the truth behind Enron's precipitous collapse? This morning we have before us as our sole witness Ms. Sherron Watkins, Enron's vice president of corporate development. Ms. Watkins has become known as the lone voice who sought to warn Enron chairman and CEO Ken Lay that Enron was in danger of imploding, quote, "in a wave of accounting scandals."

Not only was Watkins alone in the journey, but also the outcome was still in doubt. She was testifying under subpoena and was uncertain as to her future, but was unwavering in her resolve.

In the final stage of the quest, the hero is ready to return home to his everyday life (Campbell, 1973). While Sherron Watkins' fate is still unknown, after successfully testifying before Congress she will forever be remembered as the lone voice against the corporate Goliath. True to form with Campbell (1973), with a superior awareness of both worlds, the hero returns to renew his community, nation,

or religion. Currently, Watkins is actively giving speeches to numerous organizations. Just recently, she was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the American Accounting Association and she continues to demonstrate a will to serve by sharing her experiences with others.

IV. THE ANTI-HERO

The attributes of the epic hero have been well established from classical literature to management leadership research. The dialectic form requires thesis and antithesis, hero and anti-hero. A tragic narrative is often offered as antithesis to the epic frame; however, the tragic hero offers neither dialectic completion nor a viable contrasting role to the epic form. The plots are scripted for the epic hero to win and the tragic hero to lose. A worthy dialectic counterpart must have a fighting chance, as in Watkins' case, to win.

The term anti-hero has been mistakenly proffered through literary and popular culture sources, not as a genuine dialectic, but merely as a synonym for a tragic hero. A major contribution of our paper is to redefine the anti-hero to escape this common misunderstanding. The two forms can be easily confused; thus, for insight we look to Aristotle (350 BCE/1941, p.1467) who describes the tragic hero as a prosperous man of good reputation, an "intermediate kind of personage…whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment." Aristotle (350 BCE/1941, p. 1467) continues, the tragic plot "must have a single issue, and not a double issue; the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part." Thus, the epic and tragic heroes differ not in traits, but in situation. This definition is wholly inappropriate for describing Watkins. As we will demonstrate in the next section, her personal situation was ultimately improved as a result of her quest. We will show that Watkins operated under multiple complex issues and motives, both personal

and attributed, and unlike the tragic hero typology, she was not brought down by an error in judgment. Quite the contrary, she was exalted and gained overnight fame and recognition. However, the tremendous personal success of her quest may be attributed to the anti-heroic character traits that gave rise to deceptive and self-serving moves throughout the theatrical production of Enron's implosion, rather than to the media-ascribed heroic character traits.

Two further dramaturgical distinctions are necessary before we continue. First, the anti-hero has occasionally been conflated with the role of antagonist or villain, yet by definition the antagonist's limited role is clearly intended as an ultimately inferior opposing force to the hero's quest (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). Second, the anti-hero is not merely modeled as a character with mirror-opposite to heroic traits, such as in Dostoyevsky's Notes from Underground, as this form of "hero" is simply a protagonist with extremely antisocial traits (Barash, 2003). By contrast, the character we propose is a rather complex anti-hero with more independence of will and control over her own destiny. The anti-heroic narrative finds life and voice in the trait of will to power rather than a will to serve. As a parody of the epic hero, Watkins' anti-hero role much more closely resembles the model of West's (2001) mythological trickster, social bandit, or heroic criminal whose will to power runs counter to that of lawful authorities. In Watkins' case, her actions to save Enron were directed not against the internal perpetrators of the misdeeds, but against the legitimate regulatory authorities and trusting general public investors.

V. QUEST 2: WATKINS AS ANTI-HERO

We now will examine Sherron Watkins as an anti-hero. In the hero setting, Watkins was seen embarking upon a quest to address alleged accounting irregularities and thus "do the right thing." However, was this hero really concerned about Enron or rather her own personal agenda? In her infamous seven-page August 15, 2001 memo (US House of Representatives, 2002), she stated:

I am incredibly nervous that we will implode in a wave of accounting scandals. My 8 years of Enron work history will be worth nothing on my resume, the business world will consider the past successes as nothing but an elaborate hoax. (Emphasis added)

Was Watkins truly concerned about accounting irregularities and ready to embark upon a quest to benefit her community, or rather was she concerned about her future career opportunities? Watkins expressed her reluctance to come forward fearing both Jeff Skilling and Andrew Fastow and the possibility of losing her job. McNulty & Spiegel (2002) quoted a characterization of Ms. Watkins by Wilma Williams, Watkins' administrative assistant as follows:

Sherron is a woman who is very confident. She [Watkins] can hold her own with anyone, no matter if it is a senior administrative assistant or a copy person or the president or CEO of a company. She is not afraid of stating her mind.

This portrayal of Watkins by a close associate seems in opposition to the timidity and fear she expressed with respect to confronting Mr. Skilling and Mr. Fastow. It is certainly not characteristic of someone who is afraid of losing their job.

To continue, Campbell (1973) refers to the second stage of the quest as a time when the hero faces numerous tests and battles that gradually increase in difficulty. After her infamous August 22 meeting with Ken Lay, Watkins took a weeklong vacation whereupon returning August 30 began her new position as a vice president, even though she had heard that Andrew Fastow wanted her fired. With her new promotion and awareness of potential problems, Watkins took advantage of a temporary price increase to sell some of her Enron stock in early October 2001. According to the Congressional testimony (US House of Representatives, 2002), Representative Ganske confirmed:

So you sold $31,000 at one time and $17,000 at another time….So $47,000….Did you ever think about, you know, going to Treasury, Justice, the SEC, blowing the whistle on this? This is--you know, you have outlined potentially criminal behavior.

Rather than facing more difficult challenges requiring the hero to rely on her own sense of judgment, Watkins was promoted and took advantage of her inside knowledge to exercise her stock options. She did however maintain confidentiality by not alerting fellow employees to sell their stock and certainly not informing the investing public by alerting the SEC or other regulatory body. At the end of the second stage, the hero is alone. While Watkins did testify before Congress, it was under a subpoena that she had the foresight to request, and she was not alone at this point in the journey but in the company of her attorneys, Hilder and Associates, who provided Watkins with crucial advice.

In the final stage of Watkins' anti-heroic quest, we see her returning triumphant. While she managed to withstand Congressional testimony and avoid any potential criminal repercussions, she also scored some personal gains. Berger (2002, May 16) reports:

Enron will immediately pay about 80 percent of the $259,000 legal bill for six months' work by Hilder & Associates, who advised Watkins after her memos to former Enron Chairman Ken Lay became public. The rest of the bill won't be paid until it is reviewed by a fee committee….Watkins is also working on a book, Power Failure, which Doubleday bought the rights to for $500,000 earlier this year. In March, she reached a deal with film and television studio Artisan Entertainment to turn the book into a television movie.

VI. THE CREATION MYTH OF HEROS AND ANTI-HEROS

"There is no pure myth except the idea of a science that is pure of all myth" (Serres & Latour, 1990/1995, p. 162) and thus the heroic narratives of our leaders intertwine fact with fiction in an attempt to purify one myth while excluding another. The social creation of a hero or anti-hero follows much the same path as an ordinary leader. Although heroes may belong to many genres, Bass (1981, p.26) [in reference to Jennings (1960)] delineates two types of

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heroic leaders: supermen "who are dedicated to great and noble causes" and princes who "may maximize the use of their raw power, or they may be great manipulators." Thus, we may conclude that heroes are generally motivated by an inner will to serve humanity or by a self-serving will to power. Burns (1978) extends these traits to shape the relational space between leader and follower, while Etzioni (1961) implies that a heroic leader exists as a public persona, created in large part by media visibility and exposure. In Watkins' narratives, the media greatly helped to create a hero to fill the role expected by the general public. Alford (2001, p.37-38) found that:

the problem of a whistleblower is that he can't give birth to his story. The whistleblower is unable to give her story a narrative frame and form that allows it to be successfully endured…. Narrative is best framed and formed as it enters into discourse. In the absence of a discursive frame, narrative tends to turn in on itself, like a snake biting its tail….Transformed into text, whistleblowers' narratives read more coherently than they sound.

The whistleblower is a stereotype, a type of folk hero in which a large following may find affirmation of their distrust of government agencies and corporations. Yet, few desire to look beneath the facade of a stereotypical narrative in search of deeper and more substantial meaning (Alford, 2001). There is little controversy surrounding the factual events of Sherron Watkins' life, as her chronology has become an accepted part of the public record. That is to say, situation may not be the primary issue for debate in assessing her status as hero or anti-hero, but rather the various traits that she exhibited throughout her quests. It is the dichotomous public perception of Watkins' character and motives that has shaped the events of her life into two distinct social networks of meaning.

Echoing Machiavelli, Bass (1981, p.134) observes that as people are self-serving, "political calculation is required to control events rather than be victimized by them….To obtain and maintain power, [the prince] needs a calculating attitude without any sense of shame

or guilt." Nietzsche (1911/1967) notes that the will to power may appear in disguised form. For instance, Watkins sought to make herself indispensable to Lay in the plan to save Enron, perhaps a subtle attempt to dominate the more powerful. Throughout the media spectacle of Enron's downfall, Watkins always supported her former boss with praise and honor, another of Nietzsche's subtleties. Finally, herself celebrated as whistleblower, Watkins achieved Machiavellian power, "self-sacrifice…as instinctive self-involvement with a great quantum of power to which one is able to give direction: the hero, the prophet, the Caesar, the savior, the shepherd" (Nietzsche, 1911/1967, p.407). Although inherently self-serving in the desire for power, Machiavelli's (1513/1962) prince viewed his actions as necessary and justified for the greater welfare of his people. To Nietzsche (1886/1967, p.23), morality is a denial of life, "a secret instinct for annihilation, a principle of decay…the beginning of the end" and perhaps, the origin of catastrophic error that will befall the tragic hero. For Machiavelli (1513/1962), an amoral and pragmatic approach to leadership was essential to success, yet was ironically dependent upon public perceptions – or misperceptions – of the leader's upstanding character and dignity. Hence, active efforts to mold and influence a grand public persona must complement the will to power.

Prior thought would see the anti-hero as a loser, a failure, or as a sacrificial offering to preserve social order. Yet, with Watkins the end result from a self-serving will to power and the conclusion of the anti-hero's quest is the same as that of the hero's quest – both are victorious. However, the traits of the two exhibit a substantial difference. The hero is altruistic, the anti-hero is self-serving. Regardless of whether we perceive Watkins as having will to power or will to serve, she triumphed. This seems to present an intractable opposition with one same heroic leader acting from two divergent traits at the same time. In an effort to remedy this conundrum, we find that the current theoretical paradigms fall short and thus cannot adequately explain this paradox.

VII. QUEST OF THE THIRD: THE QUASI-HEROIC NARRATIVE

In order to move beyond the hero/anti-hero dialectic controversy surrounding Sherron Watkins' quest, it is instructive to explore Serres' (1983/1991) philosophical resolution to the issue in his treatise on the subject/object conundrum and the excluded third. Serres begins his thesis with the fall of Troy by contrasting the ancient dialectic laws of hospitality and hostility. In the abduction of Helen their guest, the Trojans violated the paramount law of hospitality and thus invoked the Greek hostility responsible for their eventual destruction. Yet, Serres points out that the horse full of Greeks was a deceptive hostility intended to appeal to the Trojans overriding sense of hospitality. Only in breaking one law were the Greeks able to attain victory via hostility, thus both hero and anti-hero were manifest in the same body. Serres (1983/1991, p.144-146) expands this line of reasoning with the birth of Rome in that the rape of the Sabine women, a gross violation of hospitality, was an act that enabled Rome to grow and prosper:

On the Sabine side, Mettius Curtius attacks the Roman army as it flees across the future forum. Two heroes are face-to-face, not two kings but two heroes. Hostius Hostilius [Rome] falls before Curtius who…cries out….If you choose the law of war, make war; if you decide for the law of hospitality, keep the faith…. Hostius is the name of the host, Hostilius that of the enemy. Two assonant and related names on the same head, two breaths from the same mouth, or two men in one. In one word, the strategy of Rome….Romulus attacks and the Sabines are routed…. Amid this doubtful combat between in-laws and in the name of blurry principles, the women throw themselves with loosened hair, half-naked, between the lines. Spectacle. The hostesses stop the hostilities. They were the object of the violation of hospitality, they were the reason for the war….They introduce themselves into the warrior system; they upset it, divide it. Emotion wins; both parties fall silent, are appeased, and negotiate a treaty. The Sabines are invited to join the Romans; the two states will make one, governed by two kings. Indeed – hospitality turns at first into hostility, and by the same operator hostility turns into hospitality. But for this to happen, there must be an element that can take on many values: the Sabine women.

From Campbell (1973) we see that a hero is caught up in a role-defining quest, he is the subject of its narrative. Yet, he is not strictly a subject, as his meaning emerges from the dynamic network of social relations surrounding his deeds. The subject or main actor in the plot of the quest narrative is sent forth on behalf of someone or something of value to him – the object. Subject quests for object. However, in the whistleblower narrative, the character and values of the hero serve as the call to action, thus the subject and object of the quest narrative merge into one (Alford, 2001). Watkins and her motives in both heroic and anti-heroic narratives blend subject and object together and we are thus in need of a new a narrative space between or beyond the existing typologies. "Thirdness is the space between two entities. It is a place where relationships are constituted, the medium through which an identity with regard to another can be taken up. Not quite one nor the other, but the in-between which has to be negotiated" (Brown and Lightfoot, 1999, p. 5). This quality of thirdness is the essence of the quasi-object, which allows us to venture beyond the hero/anti-hero duality. A quasi object dynamically "traces or makes visible the relations that constitute the group through which it passes" (Serres & Latour, 1990/1995, p. 161), thereby constantly generating new networks of meaning. In order for Watkins to adequately portray roles of both hero and anti-hero, she must be perceived to be imbued with multiple conflicting values, with both will to power and will to serve. In essence, her narratives require a new typology, the quasi-hero.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Every story has a time, a place, and a life of its own (Boje, 2001) and the static symmetry of opposition that we have shown in the hero/anti-hero duality could crystallize into narrative

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order if only the roles were not bound up in the same character's chronology. Rather than be constrained by inadequate convention, we propose to transcend this impasse of narrative schizophrenia with a new quasi-heroic narrative form. Serres' (1983/1991) journey into thirdness is a quest into the unknown, into an indefinite space between dichotomous object and subject, hero and anti-hero. Interpreting Serres (1991/1997) in the context of leadership, the hero or anti-hero is incapable of a singular understanding of his own power and reason. Narrators and listeners shape the form and meaning of a quest, thereby writing the hero's story as it unfolds within their perceptive field. Although the narrative portrays a hero transformed by the quest, the hero may only be unconsciously aware that her power and knowledge grow as challenges fall before her. Thus, she neither questions nor reflects upon her will to lead, to serve, or to power after crossing the first threshold and accepting the quest. In the leader's personal chronology, the temporal sequence merely records events before and after the hero status was claimed or conveyed. Alford (2001) recognizes the hero's personal sense of a static chronology as a substitute for meaning in an incoherent, yet ordered series of fragmented events. So it is that meaning and genuine coherence must be imparted or implied to the quest narrative by the authors and listeners.

Our historical construct of the hero lends itself easily to treatment as a quasi-object, for heroes create social networks of meaning that would not otherwise exist, and these impromptu networks in turn redefine their heroes. For example, the oral poetry that has coalesced as The Odyssey, "has been handed down – with epic subject-matter too – over many generations. The result of this is that the poems as we have them do not faithfully reflect the cultural and social conditions of any particular time, but rather an amalgam of such conditions, spread over hundreds of years" (Homer, 700 BCE/1991, p.xxx). In the Odyssey, Homer (700 BCE/1991) literally doubled his characters, providing two of each type with inherent dualities. By contrast in the Enron scripts, Watkins – as

only a single character – is herself doubled as both hero and anti-hero. Neither Homer nor Aristotle foresaw such a paradoxical dramatic creation and accordingly, to explain it we are in need of an additional narrative device, the quasi-hero, which is capable of generating two distinct, co-existent, and divergent social networks of meaning. Conflicting perceptions of Sherron Watkins as a hero and anti-hero from her quest narrative can now be reconciled and transcended as a dynamic character in a state of continual flux; a quasi-hero.

IX. CONCLUSION

The role of theater to society has moved far and away from the Greek ideal of imparting moral lessons through tragedy. Nietzsche (1911/1967) cautions that morality is a manifestation of the human instinct for annihilation, that theater has long lost its usefulness for the moral education of the populace, and that by and large we have become "critical barbarians." So, what purpose does heroic narrative serve toward explaining organizational phenomena in our morally ambiguous and socially irresponsible world of corporate spectacle?

Before we could answer this question, it was necessary to explore the typologies currently in use across a disparate array of disciplines in order to define the boundaries of the heroic spectrum. Extending our previous work on heroic quest as situational (Smith, Hillon, & Isaacs, 2003) and trait-based (Hillon, Smith, & Isaacs, 2003), we considered the possibility of opposition found in a hero/anti-hero duality, polar ends of the heroic spectrum. While there was little ambiguity surrounding the traits of the classic hero typology, we found that the anti-hero did not share the same clarity of definition. As anti-hero models, the tragic hero of Aristotle, the antisocial protagonist of Dostoyevsky, and the Prince of Machiavelli all failed to capture the schizophrenic or simultaneous multi-trait perspective exhibited in Watkins' anti-heroic quest narrative. Accordingly, a viable antecedent anti-hero typology was needed for the opposite end of the heroic spectrum in order to understand Watkins as an anti-hero. Thus,

our development and application of this needed typology proved to be extremely useful for sensemaking of quest narratives.

The contingency approach of Machiavelli's Prince allowed him to display different traits in different situations – either a heroic will-to-serve or an anti-heroic will-to-power. However, in Watkins' case the situation of her two quests was unambiguously composed of the same chronology of events. Thus, her narratives were trapped by paradigm in a paradox until we released them from the confines of a linear heroic spectrum. In the thirdness of the quasi-hero we found conceptual integration, a complex mental space in which both real and imaginary elements were allowed to mingle in search of meaning and understanding (Fauconnier & Turner, 2001). Our quasi-heroic typology thus affords a richer understanding of the thirdness in Watkins' quest narratives without strictly confining her to one end or the other of the heroic trait spectrum.

The purpose behind developing heroic, anti-heroic, and quasi-heroic typologies for quest narratives is that they can serve as a useful means to facilitate understanding and to demarcate the uncertain bounds of organizational behavior in a complex world. Given the current proliferation and uninformed mass acceptance of unethical behavior in corporate spectacle, we see the quest narrative as a timely and useful tool for sensemaking and analogical reasoning. This device can perhaps serve as the missing currency of commerce that Alford (2001, p.35) finds so lacking in our society:

Organizations are the enemy of individual morality....Until there is room for the ethical individual in these organizations – until, that is, there is ethical commerce between the organization and civil society – the associations that make up civil society will have the quality of a hobby.

Our endeavor to provide definition and clarity of the heroic spectrum is a first step in developing the quest narrative as a currency for sensemaking of corporate spectacle. Towards that end, the quasi-hero typology and its

relationship within the hero/anti-hero dialectic should be elaborated further to fill the void in our current understanding. Finally, research is also needed on the theoretical and generalizability implications that arise when applying these tools to reconcile conflicting organizational narratives.

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