

Making the Absent Subject Present in Organizational Research

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Abstract

This study explores how researchers engage with research subjects. Specifically, it examines the struggle to account for the lived experience of subjects under study while producing knowledge about and for them. Drawing on psychoanalytic, specifically Lacanian, theorizing, the study suggests that such struggles are even more complex when real subjects are absent and impossible to account for. It advances the idea that by articulating the research subject through four different discourses, researchers may take different positions toward this absence. In the first, researchers produce research subjects and put them to work. In the second, subjects are subsumed through systematic knowledge production. In the third, the subject serves the production of knowledge as a function of the split subject's enjoyment. In the fourth discourse the researcher becomes the object of desire so as to empower subjects in their becoming. It is suggested that each discourse allows researchers to take a different stance toward their research subjects. While discourses one and two are quite commonly adopted, discourses three and four may be alternatives for reflection that facilitate the creative expression of subjectivity, ethical choice and transformational, frame-breaking textual practices. Implications of this perspective for organizational research are discussed.

Key Words: Research, Subject, Reflexivity, Discourse, Psychoanalysis, Lacan

Introduction

The question of how to account for the subject has haunted organizational research longer than the paradigm wars that brought it to the fore in organization science (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). How to be an objective science while making sense of subjective experiences and staying “as close as possible to the life-world of the people that [are studied]” (Cornelissen, et al., 2008: 16) has been dealt with differently in a number of paradigms and modes of knowledge production (Jarzabkowski, Mohrman and Scherer, 2010). Yet researchers still face difficulties in showing “deference to ‘objective’ scientific methods [while] research is expected to be reflexive and dialogical, involving ‘an intense (and perhaps endless) ‘conversation’ between research actors and research subjects’ (Bresnen and Burrell, 2012: 27).

As ever organizational researchers, as research actors, struggle with how to engage ethically with research subjects while producing rigorous and relevant knowledge (Kieser, Nicolai and Seidl, 2015) that remains radically open (Rhodes, 2009) avoiding objectification (Fotaki and Harding, 2012) and the reductionist treatment of subjects (Parker, 2005). As such, researchers seem to be caught up in the contradiction of developing knowledge that somehow “speaks for” research subjects and thereby necessarily produces them in various ways while also accounting for the lived experience of real and “untainted” subjects under study (Hardy and Clegg, 1997; Hardy, Phillips and Clegg, 2001).

To make matters worse, some have even suggested that when struggling with how to account for the subject under study, researchers need to contemplate the possibility that such subjects may not be real at all or rather that the real subject may be missing altogether from organizational research. For example, Hardy et al. claim:

First, there is no real subject. The social subject is as equally contrived and constructed as the research subject. Arguments about getting close to the social subject are simply alternative ways of constructing a research subject (2001: 552).

By claiming there is not a real subject, the authors refer to the absence of a subject that is real or exists outside of how it is constructed either as a social or a research subject, pointing to an absence of the real as an independently existing reality or person whose truth or true existence we could eventually find and compare to our constructions.

In this sense, the absence of the real subject, or the claim that there is no real subject refers to “post-representational” (Rhodes, 2009: 654) organizational studies in which research “is no longer to be judged on its adequacy in representing the reality of organizations” (Rhodes, 2009: 654). That is, the idea about there not being a real subject seems to be taken up in the context of ontology and epistemology. Consequently, the struggles researchers face seem to become ever more complex extending to the farthest reaches of seeking to resolve whether or not there is an exterior reality to which we can refer or know.

This study does not seek to reduce these struggles to simplistic solutions but rather to move forward such debates by bringing to light some of its underlying dynamics. In particular, it draws on psychoanalytical, especially Lacanian, theorizing to redirect such debates toward how we might take different positions toward research subjects by articulating their presence or absence through different discourses. As I will explain in greater detail below, I draw on Lacanian ideas because they have been advanced in prior research as highly relevant for understanding subjectivity in organizations today (Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010) but also because they may be crucial for comprehending what drives organizational science in the first place (Wozniak, 2010). I will draw on Lacanian psychoanalysis here to explore how organizational research articulates the subject through four, structurally separate, discourses that capture radically different ways of how researchers relate to and write about research subjects.

Lacan developed the four discourses to illustrate how human beings are constructed in and through discourse emphasizing that there is no way to ever step out of, or rise above, discourse. “One is always operating within a particular discourse, even as one talks about discourse in general terms” (Fink, 1995: 137).

Therefore, crucial to Lacanian thought is the idea that while we cannot step out of discourse, we can learn to understand what kind of discourse we are employing or what kind of discourse is being employed by others and how each discourse provides various positions toward lack and commensurate losses of jouissance (Fink, 1995: 137). Jouissance (Lacan, 1988: 223) refers to one of the key ideas of Lacanian psychoanalysis, namely to the idea that real desire is what individuals unconsciously desire but can never obtain. All they can ever obtain is some gratification or bittersweet pleasure from experiencing this impossibility and the surplus value of all objects of desire as placeholders for unconscious desire. Especially, what has been referred to as phallic jouissance comes from maintaining fantasies of recovering lost objects, while feminine jouissance is related to foregoing such fantasies and experiencing an ephemeral and inarticulable enjoyment of sublimation (Cederstroem and Spicer, 2014: 192). The point is that Lacanian psychoanalysis allows us to examine how we can articulate and write about research subjects by using different discourses. In so doing we may understand not how we can retrieve the absent real subject from organizational research but rather how we can take different positions toward this absence and obtain different kinds of jouissance in the process.

The contribution I hope to make with this analysis is threefold. First, I would like to open up discussions about who we are researching, i.e. how we produce research subjects and variously account for their lived experience (Hardy et al., 2001), and how all of this might be driven by different experiences of jouissance on the part of researchers. Second, I would like to

contribute to different conceptualizations about what it means to engage ethically and reflexively with research subjects (Cunliffe, 2003) by articulating different researcher desires, power asymmetries and relational research practices (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008). Third, my aim is to contribute to discussions about different and perhaps more radically open textual practices (Hardy et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2009) that arise from articulating research subjects through movement between different discourses.

In Search of the Subject

Seeking to account for the research subject, while minimizing the researcher's position of power over research participants to dominate and speak for them, has a long tradition in the social sciences, especially in organizational ethnography (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 59). Generally, researchers are asked to engage with research subjects in an ethical and self-reflexive manner with reflexivity referring to efforts at being aware of one's own position from which one is writing about research subjects and taking care to honor the efforts of research participants (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 57). Reflexive research and textual practices that have resulted from such demands have been criticized as being simplistic at best and instrumental at worst. It has been pointed out that many reflexive practices are formulaic and only add to the researcher's power by either capitalizing representational spaces or manipulating readers and participants into trusting authors more than is warranted (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 58). As a result, it has been suggested that researchers should be more focused on accounting for power dynamics as well as affect and desire and the myriad ways in which subjectivity is co-constructed between researchers and research participants (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 59).

This may involve "revealing the hidden mechanisms of domination" (Golsorkhi, Leca, Lounsbury and Ramirez, 2009: 789) and more democratic collaboration between researchers and

researched not by way of searching for the truth but by honoring “a moral imperative to engender democratic social relationships” (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1295). Specifically, such democratic collaborations may require denaturalizing and defying hegemonic structures and social practices that condition how researchers think and write to open up the possibility for transformative alternatives (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1291). In a similar vein, it has been suggested that authorial power should be de-centered and rooted in “alternative forms of knowing” (Putnam, 1996: 386) arising from multiple interpretations and complex co-constructions of authorial and participant voices (Putnam, 1996: 386). Dialogic and even carnivalesque writing practices have been recommended in which the undecidability and phantasmic qualities of narratives, authority and interpretation are highlighted as researchers continue to seek truth and closure even as they come to realize their impossibility (Jeffcut, 1994).

These same practices however have been criticized for derailing into the dramatic in which authors stage research participants’ voices and “engage with the subject mainly in terms of their own subjectivity” (Hardy and Clegg, 1997: S12). Consequently, it has been suggested that we may need to abandon altogether the idea that there is a real subject (Hardy et al., 2001: 552), which we can account for in more or less truthful theoretical ways, and instead strive for theoretical positions that can account for their own theorizing, i.e. knowledge that can account for the conditions of its own existence (Hardy and Clegg, 1997: S13). Such knowledge may be produced by engaging in what has been labeled D-reflexivity and R-reflexivity (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008). D-reflexivity refers to reflective practices that deconstruct and destabilize our writing, in a sense taking a text apart. R-reflexivity instead allows for alternative readings and the reconstruction of novel avenues of knowledge production by building something new (Alvesson et al., 2008: 494). The interplay of both is suggested to lead to improved research and

research practices with potentially emancipatory effects for research subjects (Alvesson et al., 2008: 495).

Heeding this call, some ethnographic researchers have suggested that we may need to continue to move between understanding the self as continuously in tension between humanist confessionals and post-humanist testimonials so that we are able to give “voice and face to an absent subject” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495). While the authors here refer to the self of the author in, for instance, auto-ethnographic writing, it is nonetheless instructive to consider how they suggest dealing with the absent subject in research by underlining that it may best be considered as being in the contradiction between a humanist attempt at constructing, centering as well as congealing the subject and its post-humanist decentering and deconstruction. This is why they suggest it may best be articulated in the reflexive textual practice of confessing to self-construction while also testifying to defacement and disfiguration of the self that inevitably disrupts such constructions.

Through such practices, in turn, it may be possible to uncover in the many contradictions of lack of transparency of images and the longing for those very images, that one can give voice “to an absent subject” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 496). In pointing to the value of including testimony in writing through dialog with others, the authors incidentally refer to psychoanalysis and Lacan to suggest that such writing is similar to the analytic relationship as “the naming of truths that were not known” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495). Therefore, they suggest that giving voice to the absent subject in research may involve abandoning the search for direct access and instead looking for “testimonial eruptions” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495) when the absent self unsettles narratives in “moments of resistance, contradiction and hesitation” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495).

In short, it seems that accounting for the absent real subject in organizational research cannot be reduced to codified practices but rather demands an ethical alternative in which researchers engage in ongoing deliberation and experimentation with regard to the relation of researcher to researched (Rhodes, 2009). Specifically, it requires an appreciation of research subjects as an Other who is both unknowable and “the source of one’s own becoming” (Rhodes, 2009: 665) as a researcher. This also requires a “radical openness” (Rhodes, 2009: 665) in which researchers move continuously between here, there and in between (Cunliffe, 2003: 998). That is, researchers may not only move between experiences in the worlds of researchers and researched but also in between such worlds by not seeking to claim or possess (Tuck and Yang, 2014: 814) research subjects and instead advancing a radically open stance that allows real subjects to appear in the spaces left intentionally open not for being but mutual becomingness (Harding, 2007).

How we might move to such radical openness is what I aim to explore in more detail in this study. Specifically, my aim is to examine how we may articulate the research subject in ways that allow us to move between different positions toward the absence of a real subject and therefore engage in radically open research practices. Such practices are not advanced here as an alternate discourse of codified practices but rather as a discursive movement that builds and expands on what prior research has outlined without falling prey to the illusion that there is ever an “absence of illusion” (Golsorkhi et al., 2009: 788).

Lacanian Subjects

I will do all this by drawing on a theoretical framework that is highly appropriate for understanding subjects in organizations today, namely Lacanian psychoanalysis (Contu et al., 2010; Stavrakakis, 2008). I will draw on this psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1977a;b;1988a;b; 1991;

2001) not as a novel paradigm or metaphor, as it has been introduced in the paradigm framework (Morgan, 1980). Nor will I draw on it “as an ‘alternative’ or a ‘rival’ to scientific discourse” (Wozniak, 2010: 408). Rather I will draw on it here “as the real of science” (Wozniak, 2010: 408), i.e. that which is always absent from scientific symbolization, and a framework for rethinking organizational research and the scientific enterprise it represents.

I draw on Lacan for two reasons. One, he theorized that science as a human endeavor can be understood more effectively from a psychoanalytic perspective. Specifically, he offers important insights on how the question of the subject can be understood as driving the entire enterprise of research: “For the notion of subject is indispensable even to the operation of a science...whose calculations exclude all ‘subjectivism’” (Lacan, 1977a: 165). It should be noted here that Lacanian psychoanalysis does not reduce the notion of subject to an individual phenomenon. Rather it accounts for the interpersonal dimension which indeed is at the heart of subjectivity, as the subject can only be born in and through language (Stavarakakis, 2008: 1044) which in turn represents the symbolic order of generations of others (Lacan, 1977b). Hence if we are concerned with how to account for the subject in organizational research, Lacan is an excellent starting point.

Second, Lacanian theorizing offers us a way to understand research and subjectivity through language and discourse and is therefore highly relevant if we explore organizational research as a linguistic phenomenon and textual practice (Hardy et al., 2001). Specifically, Lacan advanced not only the idea that “the unconscious is the whole structure of language” (1977a: 147) but that language is all that individuals have at their disposal to articulate who they are and importantly to fulfill their desires, including their desire for knowledge. As Glynos and Stavarakakis put it: “Signifiers determine the symbolic reality in which we live. They do not only

contain knowledge about our world, they are our world. The symbolic apparatus – be it a private phantasm or a scientific theory – is our royal road to the real...The symbolic wrappings around the real are ever defensive ones and permit the subject to cope with it” (2002: 135). As I will explain further below, a Lacanian framework allows us to understand organizational research as a discourse through which its participants seek to address a fundamental problem, namely “the division of the subject and the attempt to cope with the underlying lack [of the real]” (Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2002: 134).

It should be noted that for Lacan the real subject is the subject of the unconscious and only appears as fleeting interruptions of discourse remaining forever external and foreign (Fink, 1995: 41). The “I” one commonly thinks of as the human subject, what we might refer to as who the speaker identifies as him/herself, is only an illusion, an alienated imaginary construction (Lacan, 1977b: 245) that seems whole while indeed it is split between desire and lack. While this construction is unavoidable (Lacan, 1988b: 177) as part of the ordinary fantasy that all human beings have of knowing who they are and importantly of being able to define and fulfill desire, it also inevitably fails. The human self or “I” is always a linguistic construction and thereby mediated by the symbolic order (Lacan, 1988b: 210).

The symbolic in turn is an otherness or as Lacan describes it the big Other (1977b). It contains the social conventions given to individuals through which they then have to articulate self and desire. The symbolic itself is constrained by the order of the real (Lacan, 1988b: 219). From every symbol, or signifier, there is something missing, namely the real that individuals desire. Real desire however is unconscious and therefore impossible to know or fulfill. The real is lost as the price to pay for being born into the symbolic (Stavrakakis, 2008: 1044). We are left with signifiers, which lack a direct connection to the signified, and the subject is always divided

between what is symbolized and what is desired. While we try forever to fix meaning and make signifiers real by bridging the lost connection to the real/signified, signifiers slide around in our signifying chains and we are left searching for their surplus value, the enjoyment we long for in the objects we desire, which Lacan calls objet a (1977b: 239), but that forever eludes us.

Consequently, all that remains to do is to articulate lack or rather to take different positions toward our lost objects. This can be thought about usefully, according to Lacan, by reflecting on different discursive structures (Lacan, 1991) that offer such distinct positions and how we may move between them; keeping in mind that in any of the discourses it is never possible to return to the lost object or to account for the real subject. The real subject, like the real in general, is always missing from imaginary and symbolic constructions. According to Lacan, loss of jouissance (Lacan, 1988b: 223) structures every discourse. Or more precisely each discourse allows us to take a different position to our loss and has a different driving force and truth (Fink, 1995: 137). We can move from one discourse to another but we can never step out of discourse or overcome this loss (Fink, 1995: 137). All one can do is variously reiterate “impossible enjoyment” (Skoeld, 2010: 365).

Lacan identified four major and historically significant discourses starting with the master discourse (Fink, 1995: 130). The master discourse is the discourse of power that needs no justification. The master speaks from a position of knowing but in truth does not know who he is as a real subject (Parker, 2010: 169). The master addresses him or herself to an other who is to obey and work for the master in order to produce surplus value or surplus jouissance, enjoyment of some kind (Fink, 1995: 131). The master’s hidden truth in this discourse is that he or she, like all subjects, is split between conscious and unconscious desire and the surplus jouissance produced does not fulfill real or unconscious desire. The lost object, or initial castration, cannot

be retrieved or repaired and the master is left only with the bittersweet pleasure of finding repeatedly that the object that was sought turns out not to be fulfilling. This is the essence of phallic jouissance making the master continue to chase this surplus while experiencing the loss of fulfillment that is unconsciously sought.

The university discourse by contrast places systematic knowledge production front and center. Knowledge replaces the master as the ultimate authority (Fink, 1995: 132) but nonetheless serves a master and hence has also been described by Lacan as not being the discourse of true science. What is lost or excluded in the university discourse is the divided real subject of the unconscious, which it seeks to subsume in systematic knowledge that does not rely on and claims to eliminate subjectivity altogether (Fink, 1995: 132). University discourse in this sense represents a particular fantasy about how we can leave the divided real subject behind and overcome our loss of enjoyment by gaining encyclopedic knowledge about our field instead. Yet, precisely because the real subject is excluded in this discourse, one never gets what one truly desires from it and there continue to be tensions each time the subject reappears as a disturbance. The driving force in this discourse is in a sense that it “produces a barred subject” (Parker, 2010: 169), “one that is alienated from the knowledge apparatus that attempts to pin it down, always in need of further narrations and confirmations of its being in order to reach completion” (Skoeld, 2010: 370). Hence university discourse is also driven by a kind of phallic jouissance in which the lost object is chased and the only bittersweet pleasure that remains is to encounter that the object is only a placeholder for real underlying but impossible desire.

By contrast, what Lacan (1991) referred to as the discourse of the hysteric, puts this barred or split subject at its center. This discourse is labeled as “hysterical because it is articulated through a desire to take up those very subject positions it refuses” (Fotaki and

Harding, 2012: 164). The hysteric, qua split subject, demands knowledge from the master only to point to its lack again and again (Verhaeghe, 2001: 28) because the desire that drives his/her demand is impossible to fulfill (Parker, 2005: 173). Specifically, the hysterical subject keeps asking for answers about whom he/she is and what he/she desires and when given those answers cannot find the real and therefore rejects them. In the discourse of the hysteric (Verhaeghe, 2001: 28) the unconscious desire of the split subject is the driving force generating ever more knowledge only to deconstruct this knowledge by pointing to its lack (Fink, 1995: 134): “the hysteric operation thereby consists in demanding the impossible from the Other, but only getting yet another symbolic mandate in return” (Skoeld, 2010: 372). Knowledge in this sense is produced for phallic jouissance or the bittersweet enjoyment of not finding the wholeness and lost objects one is really looking for. In the discourse of the hysteric knowledge is therefore not only eroticized but produced incessantly only to be found lacking and therefore always unsettled, which is why Lacan also described the hysteric’s discourse as an appropriate discourse for true science (Fink, 1995: 133).

The fourth discourse described by Lacan is the discourse of the analyst (Fink, 1995: 135). In this discourse the lost object, or real, unconscious desire, is the driving force. The goal of psychoanalysis, from this perspective, is to underline how the subject driven by real desire, or the real subject, appears in speech as that which interrupts and unsettles conscious imaginary constructions of the self. The analyst in this discourse addresses him or herself to the split subject who is to generate more and more signifiers that can come to be understood as symptoms. The key in this discourse is not to determine the symptom or to create analytic knowledge revealing the real subject. Rather it is for the person being analyzed, or the analysand, to take responsibility for the signifiers produced and to experience his or her own split. Through the analyst’s

discourse the analyst becomes the object of desire of the analysand so that the latter can experience just how impossible it is to return to the lost object and fulfill real desire.

As an object of desire the analyst can highlight that “the analysand [is] divided between conscious speaking subject and some other (subject) speaking at the same time through the same mouthpiece” (Fink, 1995: 136). In the analyst’s discourse therefore knowledge functions only as a necessary supposition (Skoeld, 2010: 372). The analysand comes to the analyst expecting him/her to know about what is wrong or to know the subject’s truth only to find that the analyst refuses to produce any such knowledge instead making the subject do the work or rather getting the analysand to take a different position toward his/her traumatic loss. The analyst’s discourse can therefore also lead to a different kind of enjoyment (Verhaeghe, 1999: 145), one in which phallic jouissance is abandoned and replaced by the pleasure of sublimation or feminine jouissance. That is, any expectation of retrieving the lost object is given up and instead replaced by an ephemeral, bodily and almost mystical enjoyment (Cederstroem and Spicer, 2014: 192) of assuming responsibility for one’s traumatic loss (Verhaeghe, 1999: 146). Through this an other enjoyment becomes possible in which desire is maintained for desire’s sake (Verhaeghe, 1999: 142).

Articulating the Research Subject through the Four Discourses

Keeping in mind that organizational researchers need to engage in reflexive research practices that account for power, desire and affect (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 59) as well as the ethical demand to give voice to the absent real subject of research (De Freitas and Paton, 2009; Hardy et al., 2001; Rhodes, 2009), Lacan’s four discourses seem to be an excellent starting point for exploring how this may be done. Specifically, they may be used to variously articulate whom organizational researchers research, the desire that drives them to take different stances toward

this relationship and the power that affects it. Of course, this will not solve the problem of the absent real subject but may offer instead novel transformative relational research and textual practices (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008; Hardy et al., 2011; Johnson and Duberley, 2003; Rhodes, 2009).

For example, researchers can articulate the research subject through the master discourse. Keeping in mind that the master discourse addresses itself to an other to make the other work and deliver value to the master, this way of articulating research subjects might involve instrumental relational practices designed to obtain phallic jouissance, i.e. a bittersweet enjoyment obtained from chasing the lost object of desire on the part of the researcher. The research subject here is to deliver value to the researcher by helping him/her to accomplish various goals in service of the fantasy that the lost object can be retrieved. This might include various research translation strategies aimed at attaining access, legitimacy and “producing” research subjects (Hardy et al., 2009) who fit neatly into the theorized world of the researcher and validate the researcher’s imaginary self (Harding, 2007) as well as allowing him/her to speak for the researched (Golsorkhi et al., 2009).

Adopting the master discourse might not only be a product of the mechanisms of domination (Golsorkhi et al., 2009), i.e. the hegemonic structures and social practices that condition how researchers think and write (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1291), but also provide some way of denuding such structures. That is, if used reflexively and as a counterpoint to other discourses, the master discourse might be viewed as one of several research translation strategies that researchers use to interact with research participants (Hardy et al., 2009). Such strategies might serve instrumental purposes such as legitimacy and attendant rewards (Hardy et al., 2009) but they might also serve to open up potentially alternative relational practices.

In the analytic relationship, the analyst might for instance adopt a master discourse (Fink, 1995: 136) to validate the necessary assumption on the part of the analysand that he/she is the subject-supposed-to-know (Lacan, 2001). That is, at least at the very start of the relationship, the analyst by the mere status conferred through professional credentials that underline the efficacy and legitimacy of psychoanalysis as a science may at least not contradict the analysand in believing in the possibility of the analyst “knowing” what is wrong and who the analysand is as a real subject (Fink, 1995: 136). This of course is an imaginary construction that the analyst will go to great length to disprove, but its initial presupposition serves a crucial role in making the analytic situation possible in the first place. Similarly, organizational researchers adopt or are maneuvered into adopting a master discourse when research subjects expect them to have knowledge about them or demand such knowledge in return for their cooperation (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015: 67). This then forces or enables the researcher to relate to research subjects as the subject-supposed-to-know, a position which might also make it possible to adopt other discourses later and develop a more empowering and transformative relationship (Ramis, Martin and Iniguez, 2014: 877).

The point is that the master discourse may serve a useful role in creating more ethical and empowering engagements with research subjects that enhance their already existing agency (Wray-Bliss, 2003: 320) if it is used as a transitional discourse. If the master discourse is used exclusively it may indeed produce rather unethical and unreflexive research at best. To the extent that the master discourse is not interested in knowledge generation about the other and is driven by the desire to get to one’s lost objects by putting the other to work, this discourse cannot make space for the absent real subject, neither for the researched nor the researcher. Indeed the split real subject remains a hidden truth in this discourse and cannot be acknowledged by the master,

lest he/she shows any weakness (Fink, 1995: 131). As such, articulating the research subject through the master discourse is of necessity designed to enhance the researcher's power and in this sense serves instrumental ends at worst, especially if its underlying desire to assert the master's will is hidden in quasi-reflexive practices that are, for example, designed to engender trust by manipulating research participants (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 58).

So the master discourse can be used both for ethical as well as unethical purposes (Wray-Bliss, 2003) but in and of itself, it does not make space for the absent real subject. Or rather only as it is unsettled does the real ever disrupt this discourse to make space for the real subject but against the intentions of the master. However, examining the disruptions of this discourse, as seen from other discursive positions, might again open up alternative spaces. Harding (2007) for example illustrates how imaginary positions articulated presumably through the master discourse adopted by both the researcher and the researched to validate imaginary selves can also provide fruitful insights into the relationship if examined from other discursive positions, as I will explain further below.

Another discourse through which research subjects are often articulated, especially in view of the post-representational turn of organization and management studies (Rhodes, 2009: 654), is the university discourse. In this discourse, we recall, knowledge is in the driving position, or more precisely systematic knowledge production is to subsume the split subject and cover over its loss (Fink, 1995: 132). Phallic jouissance is therefore derived every time the real subject unsettles systematic knowledge production and it is experienced that one is still serving a master (Fink, 1995: 132) rather than obtaining the truth that could explain away or somehow render whole again the split subject. University discourse is adopted quite frequently in post-representational organization studies. It is adopted as reflexive textual practices that are to

balance out the asymmetry of power between researchers and researched by giving more voice to research subjects and acknowledging the researcher's biases and desires (Cunliffe, 2003; Putnam, 1996; Gilmore and Kenny, 2015; Rhodes, 2009).

While such practices are to make space for the absent real subject, they must function within the constraints of systematic knowledge production. As such any kind of reflexivity, no matter how far it may be pushed (Rhodes, 2009), must of necessity reduce subjectivity to publishable findings (Parker, 2005) or at least to make claims about how subjectivity can be circumscribed in the relationship between researcher and researched. Whether this is articulated as a monologic confessional or dialogic testimonial (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495), the researcher must produce something worth saying about the researched and in fact operate on the supposition that subjects exist and a relationship between subjects is possible. Even if, as is often the case, the researcher engages with research subjects mostly from within his/her own subjectivity (Hardy et al., 2001), subjectivity must be subsumed under knowledge production. Hence all that university discourse can do is to exclude subjects while producing phallic jouissance when the lost objects, both externally validated truth and the split subject, are found to be only placeholders for real, unconscious desire.

However, like the master discourse, university discourse may also serve an empowering, transitional function. University discourse reinforces the fantasy of objective, scientific knowledge that can solve our problems. For psychoanalysis, this reinforces the legitimacy of the analytic relationship and the belief in the power of psychoanalysis whose efficacy can be articulated in this discourse (Fink, 1995:136). Therefore, it might serve a number of both instrumental and empowering purposes. It can serve instrumental purposes by promising to fulfill the fantasy of research participants to cover over the split subject. It can facilitate access to

research participants who hope to obtain instrumental knowledge from the researcher (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015: 67) and of course help to legitimize the whole research project fitting with expected research translation strategies for various stakeholders, such as gatekeepers of organizational knowledge production (Hardy et al., 2001).

But it can also serve more empowering purposes if used only transitionally, i.e. at the start of the relationship for example, providing socially acceptable reasons for legitimating research interactions and also making it possible for research participants to be moved into other discursive positions. For example in Harding's interview with a manager (2007), one reason that both interviewer and interviewee sought to validate each other's imaginary identity was that organizational research can be articulated as systematic knowledge production so that the role of researcher and researched is instrumental in facilitating the scientific project. As research subjects frequently expect to converse with researchers through university discourse, it may be a good starting point for such interactions. To be clear, however, it can only be a starting point. If another discourse is not also adopted, the university discourse is always at risk of falling prey to the illusion that it can rise above illusion (Golsorkhi et al., 2009: 788). As such it can be instrumental in hiding and further cementing mechanisms of domination (Golsorkhi et al., 2009) and advance organizational research as an objectifying and exclusionary science (Fotaki and Harding, 2012; Wozniak, 2010).

The possibility of avoiding such pitfalls may open up if the research subject is articulated through the discourse of the hysteric. As outlined earlier, the discourse of the hysteric serves phallic jouissance by denuding knowledge as lacking and irrelevant to the split real subject and yet deriving enjoyment from experiencing this (Fink, 1995: 133). When researchers articulate knowledge about subjects through this discourse, they are driven by the desire to produce

knowledge which subjects find lacking. In this sense, researchers might not only expect but demand that knowledge is continuously unsettled by its failed promise to tell subjects anything of value about themselves, i.e. the failure to capture the real subject. They can then adopt this discourse to advance what Lacan called true science (Fink, 1995: 133) as the ongoing production of knowledge for hysterical research subjects. The purpose of such knowledge is to be prolific but meaningless, or rather to be produced for the phallic jouissance of others, such as research participants. This would fit perhaps with recent calls for hystericizing organizational research continuously at work to leave ideas open and even laughing at its own fantastic qualities (Fotaki and Harding, 2012).

The discourse of the hysteric may also allow researchers to hystericize research participants by moving them to question both master and university discourses. An analyst may at times adopt the master's position or unsettle the analysand's position when they are in the master discourse by pointing to failures of imaginary constructions. The analyst may also adopt the university discourse or listen to the analysand while in the university discourse, elaborating at length some theory on what could be wrong (Fink, 1995: 136). The researcher may similarly move research participants into the hysteric's position by allowing research subjects to uncover the inability of the master and university discourses to uncover the real. So for example researchers can share with research participants some of their research translation strategies (Hardy et al., 2001) and point to underlying rules of the writing game (Putnam, 1996). They could also simply amplify instances in which tensions and contradictions indicate that research subjects struggle with the meaning of what the researcher is asking or sharing with them. When for instance subjects are given an opportunity to give feedback on research (Rhodes, 2009), the researcher could ask whether or not the participant finds his or her write-up to resonate with their

own lived experience focusing on personal questions that may remain unanswered. Such feedback could then be reported as a novel textual practice allowing for D-reflexivity, i.e. reflexivity on why the knowledge generated is lacking or can be deconstructed in various ways (Alvesson et al., 2008: 494). This feedback could also be used to move into an entirely different discursive position, namely that of the analyst.

In the analyst's discourse, the driving force is the analyst's desire to become the object of the analysand's desire so that the analysand can take a different position toward his/her lack and indeed assume responsibility for the loss of his/her objects of desire and resulting symptoms (Fink, 1995: 136). This discourse produces knowledge only in the sense of producing a singular truth for the analysand and hence would not enable the production of generalizable findings or systematic knowledge for publication. As such, it may not be suitable for more democratic research relationships (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1295), but rather for a stance of refusal (Tuck and Yang, 2014). This stance of refusal has been advocated previously for qualitative researchers as an ethical choice not to publish research in certain instances (Tuck and Yang, 2014). Specifically, it has been recommended as a choice for refusing to claim the other as a means toward self-advancement by showcasing the suffering of particular research subjects and gaining from this claim rewards for one's career.

Such a stance of refusal can inform research as articulated through the analytic discourse not by way of suggesting that organizational researchers should engage in clinical psychoanalysis, which is done at times raising its own ethical dilemmas and potentially exclusionary practices (Driver, 2003). Rather it is the adoption of analytic discourse merely as one form of interaction with research subjects that may avail itself at times. For example in ongoing interactions with research participants, researchers may develop close relationships in

which they move not only between but in the worlds of their research subjects (Cunliffe, 2003). As a result they may have opportunities for various exchanges including when research participants demand knowledge from the researcher and the researcher experiences tensions around what role to play in the research setting (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015: 67). At such moments it may become possible to move toward an analytic position in which the researcher listens to the researched not for instrumental purposes but merely to empower.

That is, it may be possible at times not only to hystericize the discourse of research subjects but also to facilitate the experience of taking responsibility for one's traumatic loss (Verhaeghe, 1999: 146). In a recent article, Dashtipour (2014) suggests for example that individuals can take responsibility for their affective suffering at work. This refers to instances when their expectations are not being met and the real disrupts imaginary constructions. Taking responsibility for such disruptions may be similar to adopting a more symbolic rather than imaginary response to stressful situations at work (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003), in essence owning the idea that it is not a question of preventable loss but unavoidable structural lack (Driver, 2009). It may be possible to allow research participants to move toward such a position by refusing to give them any kind of interpretation of imaginary knowledge about their problems even when they demand such knowledge. It may also be possible to move them toward such a position by refusing at times to continue the imaginary relationship one might have with them (Harding, 2007) and giving up any claims on their "case" and explicitly refusing to instrumentalize the relationship (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

Instead, time could be set aside for a different researcher's desire, namely to only be a sounding board so that the participant can experience that any of the objects he or she is searching for are only placeholders for real desire. This could be in the form of an arresting

moment (Cunliffe, 2002), a “testimonial eruption” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495) or in a dialog between researchers and researched in which desire and affect are allowed to surface (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015). This can be done to reiterate moments of affective suffering perhaps creating a natural preserve of some kind in which subjects are free to articulate the nothingness of work, self and organization (Arnaud, and Vanheule, 2007). In any event, this would start by the researcher momentarily giving up the desire to “claim” the real and instead to become desired by the researched in such a way as to show the impossibility of any object of desire to ever fulfill real desire (Fink, 1995: 135). It requires the vacating of any position in this sense and is therefore a pure act of service to empower research subjects. It may serve as a kind of “narrative therapy” (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1288) to at least avoid the hegemonic imposition of certain discourses and engage in joint transformational reflection by thinking through a discourse in view of one’s own experiences (Ramis et al., 2014: 877).

This might also inform R-reflexivity (Alvesson et al., 2008: 494), not as a publishable textual practice, but in the construction of alternatives. Specifically, it offers alternative ways of honoring research participants (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 57) and a new way to get closer to their lived experience (Hardy et al., 2001) as making a space for the absent real subject by engaging in an inquiry of discomfort that can unsettle imaginary selfhood and unglue subjects from fixed positions (Wolgemuth and Donohue, 2006: 1024). In moving toward analytic discourse, it may also become possible at times to experience feminine jouissance as the abandonment of phallic jouissance from chasing the lost object and as the more ephemeral enjoyment of desire for desire’s sake. In analytically inspired interactions with research participants it may be possible to, at least momentarily, appreciate that taking responsibility for affective suffering and traumatic loss is a very empowering experience and includes potentially

the researcher adopting a stance of refusal as the enjoyment of not desiring to claim or possess anything (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

Discussion

The point I would like to underline here is that the articulation of research subjects through the four different discourses can lead to more dialog and reflexivity by moving between them rather than by adopting only one, such as the commonly reiterated university discourse. Specifically, the value of using these discourses as transitional positions may be to allow researchers not to finally find the missing real subject but to experiment and play with different spaces in which the real subject is at least not reduced to objective findings or excluded entirely. By experimenting with the different discourses, researchers can reflect also on their own desires and what kind of jouissance is enabled by various ways of engaging with research subjects. Particularly, through the four different discourses, researchers may have at their disposal a number of different microethical practices (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 265), or nuances in which they engage with subjectivity and writing that provide movement toward more openness and transformational alternatives (Rhodes, 2009: 665). That is, it might enable both novel textual practices as well as radical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2003: 984) not by way of capturing complex social experiences (Cunliffe, 2003: 984) but by way of playing with “the inherent instability of knowledge” (Cunliffe, 2003: 984) to make spaces for subjectivity not to be captured but simply to be attested to in whatever form.

Each discourse may invite different reflexive positions and therefore different movements between them. For example, the master discourse invites reflexivity about the researcher’s desire to fix identities and therefore ignore indicators pointing to the unsettling of such identities and the impossibility of uncovering real subjects. The desire to claim the other by the researcher may

lead to monologic reflection, narcissistic navel-gazing (Alvesson et al., 2008: 495) and textual practices that speak for the researched (Gilmore and Kenny, 2014: 59). However, even if these further cement the humanist position by inviting confessional reflections (De Freitas and Paton, 2009), they also always unsettle this position by the absence of dialogical affirmation of the master's power. As the master hides any weaknesses by constantly needing validation from the other, so confessional reflexivity will not suffice in affirming what the master really desires, namely to attain the lost object by making an other work. In the very surplus of the master's objects of desire lies the potential for unsettling this discourse.

Hence, more dialogical reflexivity and a post-humanist position (De Freitas and Paton, 2009) are always latent in this discourse. This dialogical reflexivity may be articulated through the university discourse in which the driving researcher's desire is to eradicate the real subject through systematic knowledge production. As we have seen this can produce various forms of D-Reflexivity (Alvesson et al., 2008) by deconstructing positions adopted toward the researched commonly done in current textual practices through attempts at giving voice to subjects. However, this kind of reflexivity is often solipsistic and results in never ending circular conversations that often fall into the unbridgeable chasm left by the difference between research subjects and social subjects (Hardy et al., 2001: 552). This then may invite a hystericization of discourse and reflexivity in which the attempted dialog as endless conversations between researchers and researched (Bresnen and Burrell, 2012: 27) points to phallic jouissance as a result of knowledge being produced to be found lacking by the split subject of the researched. That is, dialogic reflexivity also always points toward hysterical reflexivity in which research subjects can ask why the knowledge produced by organizational researchers does not tell them much about themselves (Verhaeghe, 2001: 29). This, in turn, has the potential to invite an

analytic reflexivity in which the desire of the researcher to uncover the real subject is replaced with the desire to desire giving up phallic jouissance for feminine jouissance. Analytic reflexivity then opens up the potential for alternative ways of engaging with the researched as, for example, an act of service and empowerment.

In short, by articulating research subjects through the different discourses, a movement becomes possible from monologic toward dialogic and hysterical as well as analytic reflexivity simply by following the surplus value of each of the desired objects of the researchers. This facilitates both D and R-reflexivities as the absent real subject continues to unsettle any knowledge produced but also informs new alternative forms of knowing and writing. Each discourse then also facilitates various microethical practices. For example, in the master discourse the imaginary self of research participants is honored and validated. Meanwhile in the university discourse the safety of the fundamental fantasy, that research subjects can find their answers, is maintained enhancing phallic jouissance for research subjects that the lost object is just out of reach but can be attained.

The hysteric's discourse by contrast facilitates microethical practices around producing knowledge for research subjects that they are not only allowed but invited to find lacking, while analytic discourse supports empowering research subjects by refusing to produce any knowledge. The hysteric's discourse, therefore, can facilitate phallic jouissance for research subjects as they experience that knowledge does not reflect who they really are, while the analyst's discourse can facilitate feminine jouissance by placing both the researcher and the researched in a desiring position, one in which the maintenance of desire replaces the failed fantasy of phallic jouissance to define and erase desire (Verhaeghe, 1999: 142).

Alternative and perhaps “box-breaking” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014: 967) textual practices that may be supported by the four discourses and their accompanying reflexivities and microethical practices are as follows. As the master discourse is unsettled when the fixed imaginary identities of research subjects fail around various tensions, contradictions and ambiguities in how research subjects are spoken for, the real subject may at least leave a trace. That is, the researcher gets to write about the research subject through oppositional textual practices in which his/her imaginary self is pitted against that of the researched. This provides for textual practices in which the research subject is chased around as a kind of prey to be captured with the researcher emerging as victor hiding his/her weakness. If this weakness, as is commonly the case, is then covered over by textual practices related to the university discourse in which the researcher gets to confess to various forms of domination, textual practices emerge around the elusiveness of the research subject and difficulties around adopting more democratic approaches. The latter is well illustrated in much of current post-representational qualitative research and its hyper-reflexive stance toward dynamics driven by power and desire (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015).

Taken further, this hyper-reflexivity may also support hystericized textual practices in which the researcher can articulate research subjects as remaining an unanswerable question (Jones and Spicer, 2005). That is, in the movement toward hysterical discourse, researchers get to explore the questioning subject who relentlessly demands answers to which the researcher responds by producing ever more complex but vacuous symbolic structures pointing to the subject as the impossible object whose function is to defy definition (Jones and Spicer, 2005). This in turn may prompt some researchers to also experiment with analytic textual practices in which the research subject is related to but not claimed. In particular, researchers may experiment with various forms of silencing the relentless claim to know and rather articulate

aesthetic forms of relating inarticulable encounters with research subjects they refuse to write about (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

What may be transformational about all of the above textual practices is that they keep texts in movement and thereby facilitate more radical openness (Hardy et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2009). Specifically, the interplay of textual practices arising from the movement between the four discourses facilitates that the lines drawn by researchers remain in motion. The latter supports celebrating not the mystery and richness of the social subjects under study but “the mystery and richness of our understanding of organizational [subjects]” (Holt and Mueller, 2011: 68), which is all that can be attained. Such interplay also moves researchers from writing about organizational subjects as the ever elusive lost object toward writing as subjects who can only ever take different positions toward the absence of the real and perhaps in doing so finally get closer to the lived experience of research participants.

This is a radical redirection of what some have called for as more democratic (Johnson and Duberley, 2003: 1295) and relevant textual practices such as mode 2 knowledge as a “co-production of knowledge between multiple groups” (Jarzabkowski, Mohrman and Scherer, 2010: 1190). The textual practices I am describing here are not co-productions. They are not rooted in the belief that we can know about an other or that an other can help us know about him/herself or about ourselves. Instead they are rooted in the belief that any distinction between self and other is illusory in the first place. Therefore, an effective way to experience otherness is simply to experience the absence of the real in as many different forms as possible. This takes organizational research past the often lamented instrumental relevance (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010: 1277) and helps researchers in breaking rather than following rules (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010: 1278) where to be relevant may mean to provide discursive resources to research participants for

remaining on the move, i.e. for illustrating how to move around different subject positions toward the lacking real. If, as some have suggested, movement in science is about revisions transparent to itself, a kind of continual “crisis in its basic concepts” (Zundel and Kokkalis, 2010: 1222), then textual practices that remain radically open may be most suitable to such a project.

Some have suggested that one way to move toward more transformational alternatives in organizational research involves moving toward “poetic research” (Cunliffe, 2002: 143) with aesthetic, art-based textual practices and interactions with research subjects that are more holistic and empathetic (Keroscuo, 2007). While others have suggested fictionalizing research practices and moving closer to the humanities (Hardy and Clegg, 1997: S12). The movement between discourses I have described here may include such practices but not as an end in itself nor an exclusive strategy. If by poetic research one refers to the experience of astonishment arising from both a love for and distrust of language (Hughes, 2006: 293), then perhaps it captures what I am trying to outline here. The key is that movement is essential but not a movement toward something. Textual practices that offer truly transformational alternatives may need to remain on the move because all else is an illusionary fixing or solving of problems. Lacan suggested that there can be no subject without imaginary and alienating constructions of the self (Lacan, 1988b: 177). The real subject can ever only appear momentarily as an absence made present when it unsettles imaginary constructions. Imaginary constructions are required and it is impossible to move beyond them, even with Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1977b: 218).

As a result it is not a question of ever moving beyond any discourse but rather to use the movement between discourses to experience the making present of the absent real subject from different positions and perhaps in the process to experience different forms of *jouissance*. If

poetry is about celebrating tensions, contradictions and vacuity without dictating what to do about them or how to resolve them, then it could be an apt descriptor of the project I outlined here. Poetry as the playing with different discursive positions toward the subject of research may come closest to the lived experience of subjects. This is not because it seeks to circumscribe them through knowledge but because it models the empowering and creative struggle that everyone faces as subjects split between the traumatic loss of the real and the real but unfulfillable unconscious desire to overcome such loss.

Conclusion

The starting point for this study has been that post-representational organizational research is grounded in reflexive and ethical research practices in which researcher power, desire as well as hegemonic structures and social practices are made transparent and in which research subjects are related to in reflexive and ethical ways (Cunliffe, 2003; Gilmore and Kenny, 2014; Hardy et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2009). Its aim has been to explore how this might be done in light of recent suggestions that the real research subject may not even exist or at least may be impossible to obtain direct access to (Hardy et al., 2001: 552). With this in mind, the study drew on psychoanalytic, particularly Lacanian, theorizing to develop a framework with which to move around different discursive positions enabling researchers to articulate who they are researching and how to engage with research subjects reflexively and ethically in the context of four structurally different discourses. These discourses are the master, university, hysteric and analyst discourses and it was explored how each discourse articulates different positions toward research subjects and how all of them can be used reflexively and ethically by moving between them. This in turn facilitates alternative and transformative textual practices in which continuous

movement supports radical openness and a redirection from pinning the subject down and claiming it toward empowering new positions.

Before I describe what I see as the study's contributions, I would like to underline that the term conclusion needs to be problematized somewhat from a Lacanian perspective (e.g. Driver, 2015: 906). First, it should be kept in mind that Lacan did not think that university discourse is appropriate for true science and that his writing was marked by its own stance of refusal, namely to reduce subjectivity to objective findings (Parker, 2005). As a result writing here within the university discourse I am trying to navigate this tension and to avoid phallogentric and closed-down interpretations (Kenny, 2009) by for example providing generalizable findings or objectifying universal recommendations. Rather, I am trying to engage in textual practices that keep discourse in motion while keeping alive the Lacanian aim of writing to make subjects work without moving entirely toward the kind of open-ended and even cryptic carnivalesque writing style that is attributed to Lacan (Bowie, 1991: 200).

With this in mind I now outline what I believe to be the study's contributions. First, the study provides new directions for grappling with the issue of how research subjects are produced in organization and management studies especially in view of not only our limited ability to account for or directly access social subjects and their lived experience but also in view of the idea that real research subjects may not exist in the first place (Hardy et al., 2001). Building on psychoanalytic theorizing suggesting that the real subject, as subject of the unconscious, is always missing from any discourse, the study advances the notion that through the movement between different discursive positions it becomes possible to at least avoid seeking to possess subjects by claiming them (Tuck and Yang, 2014) and celebrating the absence of the subject not by way of giving up on a futile project but by way of engaging in a more empowering one. In

turn, this does not mean that researchers now abandon the desire to engage with research subjects, by, for example refusing to do empirical research and instead retreating into fictional settings (Hardy and Clegg, 1997: S12). Rather it is to suggest that post-representational (Rhodes, 2009: 654) organizational researchers have entirely new possibilities for engaging with the absent real subject of research.

Not only phallic but also feminine jouissance becomes available to researchers and researched alike when they stop being disappointed that the fundamental fantasy of returning to the real (Muller and Richardson, 1982: 373) is not only reiterated but at times abandoned. The message is that the absence of the real subject is not a temporary loss which we can overcome no matter how creatively we try to triangulate research strategies - see for example recent attempts to do so in ethnographic research (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015). Nor do we need to feel guilty or sad about it. Rather it is a permanent condition of human existence (Stavrakakis, 2008: 1044) toward which researchers can take different as well as creative and empowering positions (Muller and Richardson, 1982: 80). In so doing they cannot provide answers to research subjects about how to get to the real, rather they can model different ways of dealing with its absence.

This points also to the second contribution I would like to make here, namely to provide new directions for debates on how to engage reflexively and ethically with research participants (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008; Cunliffe, 2002; 2003; Rhodes, 2009). As there is no way to step outside of discourse (Fink, 1995: 137), researchers' engagements with research participants is necessarily constrained by the limits of any discourse. However, within the framework I develop in this study I hope to underline that reflexivity and ethics can both be advanced by moving between various discursive positions. Each position, as a counterpoint to another, offers new avenues for reflecting on researchers' desires and novel microethical relational practices (Brewis

and Wray-Bliss, 2008; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) that shift power between various forms of *jouissance* and how loss is attempted to be compensated for. Therefore, the most democratic practice available to researchers is likely the acknowledgement that researchers and researched are equally faced with a lack of the real and neither the master, nor the university, hysteric or analyst are inherently better positions from which to cope with it. However, researchers can invite research participants to join their language games (Putnam, 1996) and in so doing experiment with different positions, some of which may be more empowering than others. As such, reflexivity is not only about transparency but also about how much movement a given interaction inspires. It is not about who can outdo whom with respect to reflexivity (Hardy and Clegg, 1997: S12) but rather about a fundamental ethical commitment toward radical openness as a stance of refusal to claim and possess anything or anyone (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

This stance of refusal may sometimes include refusing to engage in any textual practice or writing about the researched (Tuck and Yang, 2014), which points also to the third contribution I hope to make with this study. Through the framework developed here alternative and transformational textual practices (Rhodes, 2009: 665) are made possible not as a set of codified rules but rather as a continual defacement (De Freitas and Paton, 2009) of imaginary fixations of subjects. At times this may include silence or the absence of a textual practice and at other times include a number of practices that are not only radically open but transformational in the sense that they empower through movement. As they unsettle any given position, they allow participants to experience that we can celebrate becoming-ness (Harding, 2007) and retain the little *jouissance* that remains when we forget to measure what we get against what our fundamental fantasies promise (Fink, 2004: 156). These are practices that give voice to the

absent real subject not by finally getting to the real but by amplifying the spaces left necessarily open by any discourse.

Amplification of such spaces is an important tool in Lacanian analysis (Lacan, 1988b: 241) where analysands hear powerful echoes of their own lacking constructions. Similarly, amplification is one avenue by which the alternative textual and relational research practices outlined here may empower research participants to be liberated from the victimhood of traumatic loss. Engaging in organizational research from this perspective is not about creating the illusion of an “absence of illusion” (Golsorkhi et al., 2009: 788) but rather about the recognition that all there can ever be is illusion. Therefore the key is not to desire to rise above it but to watch carefully for “moments of resistance, contradiction and hesitation” (De Freitas and Paton, 2009: 495). Such moments inevitably disrupt our illusions. Even as we seek to cover them over from the position of the master, through systems of university knowledge, or through hysterical questioning and the occasional analytic detachment, we are reminded that all we can do is to stay in motion as we encounter the singular truth of each subject circling the ever missing real.

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