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Feeling the Reel of the Real: Framing the Play of Critically Affective Organizational Research between Art and the Everyday

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Abstract:	This paper considers a number of issues hampering the application of arts-based "playful" methods in organization studies once the close relationships between ethnography and aesthetic research, and the connections between art and everyday experience, are recognised. Drawing particularly from the creative ethnographies of Kathleen Stewart, Dwight Conquergood and H. L. Goodall Jr it suggests that the performative nature of artistic cultural texts lies in their intention to move their audience towards new sensitivities, awareness, and even learning. Critique is not oppositional to such development, being essential for fully creative movement. The paper therefore suggests that what is needed are critically affective performative texts. For such texts to be socially, politically and epistemologically defensible, and thus a viable form for researchers to consider adopting, it is necessary to understand how they work to generate critical momentum, and what possible lines are available for justifying and evaluating creative approaches that challenge orthodox organizational research in being neither objective, representational nor expressive. The paper outlines four "moments" of critical leverage – aesthetic, poetic, ethical and political - that work in play with each other to create powerful artistic texts, and illustrates them by drawing on work-related literature, music, poetry and art, including workplace ethnographies. This framework enables the location or artistic and "playful" methods epistemologically and ontologically relative to other modes of research and offers a robust justification for their further use in the field of organization studies.

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Feeling the Reel of the Real: Framing the Play of Critically Affective Organizational Research Between Art and the Everyday

I have flown to star-stained heights

On bent and battered wings

In search of mythical kings, mythical kings,

Thinking everything of worth

Was in the sky and not the earth

And I never learned to make my way

Down, down, down

Where the iguanas play.

(Dory Previn, *Mythical Kings and Iguanas*, 1971)

While organizational aesthetics can be seen to be established and healthy in real organizations (Taylor & Hansen 2005, p. 1227), and recognition of the advantages of using artistic form to explore everyday organizational issues continues to grow within the field of organization studies, the irony remains that there are few examples of the actual employment of artistic forms in the presentation and analysis of 'aesthetic' organizational research. The separation between the abstracted intellect of Previn's mythical kings and the earthy playfulness of iguanas remains stubbornly persistent, although this is the very space in which organization emerges into being. Intuition and affect as everyday sources of creativity, when reported, are presented in accounts that typically suppress their *own* intuition and affect, and indeed, may well be suspicious of expressing them. As Taylor and Hansen put it:

the use of artistic forms to look at aesthetic issues offers a medium that can capture

and communicate the felt experience, the affect, and something of the tacit knowledge

of the day-to-day, moment-to-moment reality of organizations… [n]ot just the

cleaned-   up, instrumental concerns of "the business", but the messy, unordered side as

well   (Taylor & Hansen 2005, p. 1224)

Yet despite this promise there is only a 'small amount of work that *uses* artistic form to look

at aesthetic issues' and intellectually enframes, analyses and reflects upon what emerges

(Taylor & Hansen 2005, p. 1227 *emphasis added*).

This paper addresses the important deeper issue of *why* artistic methods are so

infrequently used and what can be done about it. It does not attempt to correct the lack by

exemplifying an alternative approach and deploying an artistic form, because in order to

prepare the ground for such varied efforts there is a need for more unifying conceptual work

to be done. It is this ground-clearing and tool-cleaning task the paper undertakes. It does this

by enframing, analysing and reflecting on the creative outputs of others – sometimes from

within organization studies, but, because of the endemic and hermetic nature of the problem,

frequently from without. Whilst it employs radical ideas, it does not advocate a radical

replacement of established ("classical" or "traditional") methods by aesthetic methods - we

need both, and whilst they may positively complement each other they may also generate

fruitful conflict and constructive critique if they are made reflexively available for processual

rethinking. As Crapanzano (2010, p. 4) argues

I am not opposed to scientific approaches to society, culture, and the psyche, provided that (1) they meet appropriate epistemological and methodological standards and (2) they acknowledge, as best they can, their moral and political implications.

Of course, it is also necessary for aesthetic approaches to meet these twin standards and this paper attempts to identify what landmarks of "appropriate" criteria might be identified for these types of non-linear, non-representational, often multimodal "text". The paper's critical method is therefore inductive, in deriving its criteria from existing creative work as well as critical commentary; but it is also abductive in that it draws and translates from a wider sphere of artistic creation than organization studies. It takes a middle range or "bridge" position in identifying some basic criteria – the four moments (aesthetic, poetic, ethical and political) - that can be applied in the soft evaluation of what it terms "critically affective performative texts". The objective here is not to displace established methods, nor solely to challenge them: neither is it merely to enhance them in any superficial manner, acknowledging art only as the pursuit of beauty (see for example Björkman, 2007). Rather it is to enable the full range of what artistic approaches can offer to come into play for organizational researchers, whether critical, creative or complementary, disturbing or affirming, in their encounters with the everyday 'mysteries' of organizing.

The practical problem that confronts organizational researchers wishing to adopt arts-based methods and modes is that there appears to be no accepted and robust means of evaluating them. This renders them intellectually degradable or dismissible as 'subjective', or politically indefensible as 'biased', and hence institutionally useless as an external indicator of 'quality' – none of which is good news for building a career in 'factories of knowledge' (Goodall 2008; Raunig, 2013). This paper's objective then is how to identify elements of

performance texts that can be located and used to legitimate, and where necessary evaluate, playful and experimental critical practice within the management and organization studies academy. What grounds could there be for qualitative differentiation between texts with a strong personal and subjective element, that depend considerably on how they are read and interpreted by their audiences for their credibility, yet seek to impose no authorial authority over those audiences? How could such texts be defended as a contribution to processes of inquiry, learning and change without quantizing impact via prescription?

In undertaking this task, it is, we argue, possible to avoid succumbing to the mysticism of 'artistic expertism' as engaged by Finley (2011, p 440) in citing Blumenfeld-Jones (2008, p. 184):

> The art needs to be practised…insights discovered through the practice of… an art form are only available through the practice, and the practice focuses on making art, not on coming to understand.

Brearley and Darso (2008), in an influential contribution in relation to business and management studies that addresses a variety of cases, reflect this problem by either ignoring it, or sidestepping it by working alongside arts practitioners, who cheerfully shoulder their burden. This is a step that Finley also advocates and is increasingly common in organizational interventions (see also Darso 2004, Ch 4). But this pragmatic strategy interposes another layer of translation and distance between researcher and field, and whilst adding expressive and interpretive possibilities disrupts any immediacy between the researcher's intellect and the contagious affect of the field. As literary critic Christopher Hicks (Toda, 2010) puts it, whilst research and scholarship are 'professional' they 'must not

become simply professionalised', and 'must keep in touch with amateur virtues without yielding to the amateurish'. *Augmentation* of their skills by those of professional artists must not interpose *between* the researcher and the field. So this paper seeks to preserve the continuity between everyday/researcher practice and expert aesthetic practice that ethnography (especially autoethnography) exposes, by developing a lens through which both become intelligible to each other, and may be related in practice.

Methodologically the paper draws on critical and analytic work, as well as fieldwork, that has been developed by the author over four decades (see Linstead 2000, 2006, 2007 a, b, 2010 a, b; Linstead & Höpfl 2000, Linstead & Brewis 2007, Kane, Linstead & McMurray 2007; Linstead & Thanem 2007; Maréchal & Linstead 2010; Linstead & Maréchal 2016), with doctoral students in the UK, Australia, Sweden, and the USA, but most intensively with doctoral students from the University for Humanistics, Utrecht, between 2003 and 2014 (Bruining, 2006; Kuyper, 2007; Letiche & Lightfoot 2014). It is informed by a movement that Crapanzano (2010) terms literary-philosophical anthropology, that informs field practice by drawing upon developments in the understanding of the social mind and combining them with poetic and fictional explorations of the same and similar issues – to expand the "imaginative horizons" of the field. Just as sociology since Schutz has recognised the interconnectedness of common *sense* and professionalised scientific thinking, more recently Jacques Rancière (2004) has argued for a common *sensibility* in a similar relation to professionalised aesthetic production and art criticism. Art, in this sense, is in the field as much as in the studio and the challenge for aesthetic research is to recognise the 'hierophanic spaces' of insight in the field (Poulos, 2009), and to translate and illuminate them with the skills of aesthetic practice and the tools of aesthetic theory. To develop this the paper presents an open and dynamic framework that identifies four *moments* of

experience that act as levers for critical creative research practice: the aesthetic, poetic, ethical and political moments. It offers examples from arts-based intervention research including story, abstract art, music and poetry and suggests how this framework has been used, and can be further used, to legitimate arts-based organizational research as a rigorous, experimental and deeply 'playful' practice.

Everyday Performance Texts

A 'playful' reality can be regarded not as passively reflected *by* representational processes, nor autonomously constructed *through* them, but relationally refracted *in* them (Mullarkey, 2009). Expressive processes similarly can be regarded as having no independently identifiable 'essence' that they express. Both sets of processes, fundamental to our understanding of art, are therefore performative, in that they have a creative effect on the 'reality' or 'experience' they purport to transmit – they bring a particular form of reality into being. But when this is recognised we are professionally no longer in possession of any easily deployed tools to finalise meaning and evaluate outputs: thinking of representation or expression in terms of accuracy or inaccuracy becomes problematic. Rather we are forced to adopt the more evocative perspective of what Thrift labels *non-representational theory* (Linstead, 1984; Thrift, 2008). Here the world as the context of action is increasingly recognised as being *in play*, neither being nor becoming in any specific directional way, and the practice of research attempts to respond to this relative fluidity. Research evaluation as a consequence struggles to cope with the more creative forms of research output that emerge. This is especially true of critical contributions that cannot point to their effect on improving some environmental capacity such as 'creativity', 'innovation' or even 'happiness' in the economy, or specific skills and capacity-building in the community – they often tend to open

up ambiguities, complexify questions, magnify mystery, and place demands on their reader to think and feel both differently and for themselves. But nevertheless within this seriously 'playful' inquiry there are some considerations that can and should be addressed in producing a critically reflective and creative research practice that is oriented toward action and implementation, that can embrace receptive negativity without rejecting positive possibility, and can respond to the inherent *mundane* creativity of everyday life.

This mundane creativity responds most emphatically to ethnographic methods, and Taylor and Hansen (2005) accordingly note the congruency between much ethnographic research and aesthetic approaches to organization. This observation resonates with the emergence of 'performance ethnography' since the 1970s in the work of sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1975) and anthropologist Victor Turner (1982), and most recently developed *inter alia* by Bryant Alexander (2005) Norman Denzin (2003), Judith Hamera (2011), Ronald Pelias (2008) and Tami Spry (2011 a, b). Cultural ethnographer Dwight Conquergood (2013) has developed the most sophisticated conceptualization, empirics and realization of performance ethnography in arguing that culture itself *is* performance, rather than being a product that can be acted out or expressed, and that ethnography constitutes a type of co-performance that is always in motion. Kathleen Stewart (2006, p.1027), who is one of the leading contemporary anthropologists of affect, considers this co-performance to rest upon a sensitivity to the 'jump or surge of affect' as distinct from the 'plane of finished representations' that much ethnographic research presents. Aesthetic practices are thus different from the textual practices of ethnographers in that they step *away* from the text, and recognise that culture is more than a text waiting to be 'read', even if over someone's shoulder (Geertz, 1988). Stewart (2006, p.1027) calls this aesthetic/ethnographic effort *cultural poeisis*. It consists in an attempt to track a moving object (everyday life) 'to

somehow record the state of emergence that animates things cultural' and 'to track some of the effects of this state of things – the proliferation of everyday practices that arise in the effort to know what is happening …. uncaptured by claimed meanings'. This resonates with Conquergood's rejection of the idea of culture as *text* in favour of culture as *performance* – the ethnographer doesn't read culture, observe it or participate in it, but is caught up in its dynamic interplay of action and tries to engage with it, to make sense of it, or find a way of living with the fact that although it can be clearly sensed we often can't make clear sense of it. In the process of research, both ethnographer and members willingly suspend belief to act in the gaze of others 'as if' the research situation were entirely natural[1], but both tacitly acknowledge that it isn't fully natural. Performance then in these circumstances is in (unnatural) motion, and ethnographic outputs, including ethnographic texts, themselves *perform* in dynamically engaging, arresting and directing the attentions of their audiences to context and identity. For Conquergood, performative texts, in contrast to the more common notion of performativity as a managerialist obsession with performance indicators and functionality, are *critically disruptive* in constituting "action that incessantly insinuates, interrupts, interrogates, antagonizes and decenters powerful master discourses" from their naturalised contexts (Bhabha, 1994, p.46-49). Performance is inseparable from power.

The idea of the performative text that is mobilized in this paper modifies Conquergood in two ways. The first centres on the idea of 'text', the second on the idea of the 'critical'. Conquergood rejects the obsession of poststructural anthropology with *text*, recognising that subaltern groups often manipulate the ethnographer by providing them with textual distractions whilst themselves operationalising resistance non-textually. This is an important point to which we must remain sensitive, but the poststructuralist concept of 'text' need not be narrowly verbal, nor even strictly symbolic, just as Derrida's (1967/1978a)

account of 'writing' is more about operations of ordering and organising than inscription. With a dynamic understanding of text as a multi-dimensional, open and polysemous symbolic weave that is always in 'play', it is possible to sustain Conquergood's focus on performance whilst working within textual materials, but also utilising materials that open out towards broader cultural experience (King & Vickery, 2013). Such a *performance text*, rather than seeking to *represent* the experience of the other, or *express* the feeling of encounter with the other, seeks to *involve* and *enmesh* the reader by evoking affective elements of those experiences and encounters, immersing them in the openness of the text, extending Barthes' idea of its "writerly" nature or scriptibility (Barthes, 1974). Barthes' scriptible text requires the reader to rethink it; our performative text builds out from this to *move* the reader to feeling, or action, as well as thought, rather than reception. As Höpfl & Linstead (1993, p.76) suggest the skill of text creation is attested by the extent to which the text itself performs – how it stimulates empathetic emotions by which its audience is *moved* or *transported.*

Second, we take the idea of criticality in Conquergood, following Bhabha (1994), to be distinguished by its disruptiveness to mainstream discourse. But we also see performance texts as experimental and exploratory systems (Fischer, 2007), rather than being defined by their representation or expression of opposition; opening up discourse to *disquiet* rather than *dissent*. Rather than being a form of inquiry that contains expressive and presentational ways of knowing, and combines them with intellectual framing, propositional and pragmatic ways of knowing (Taylor & Hansen, 2005, p. 1222), such texts blur and perforate the boundaries between these forms. In regard to management, they set up both the *critical* project and the *managerialist* project within each other's alterity – an altermodern move that goes beyond dialectics (Guillet de Monthoux, Gustafson, & Sjostrand 2007).

Play - from Performance to Mystery

The concept of play has in recent years become synonymous with a popular and superficial version of postmodernity, which has led to it unfairly being ascribed a depthless gloss that belies its significance for human experience and, crucially, learning and creativity. Recent political appeals for the knowledge economy to become the creative economy have forced the concept to bear unjustified and fantasised messianic weight, but this should not detract from the important work that has been done to recognise that play is of fundamental importance ontologically, aesthetically, ethically, poetically, politically, and interactively to human experience, idea-work and origination (Carlsen, Clegg & Gjersvik, 2012). Play is also ontologically important for Derrida (1967/1978a) as the condition of possibility of human representation systems – all meaning is fundamentally in play, and ultimately undecidable (though not practically indeterminate). For Deleuze and Guattari (1984; Linstead & Thanem, 2007), play is characteristic of the multiplicity of being and responding to life, and offers a means of emancipation from the gridlike striations of regulated social and epistemological spaces. In other words, play is not added to essentially stable experience, making it move in unaccustomed directions, but is always already *within* experience which is itself mobile. Rather than play being disruptively immanent within order, it is order that is immanent within play. Order is a reductive achievement resulting from play, that becomes retrospectively naturalised, such that play appears to be an exogenous insertion of the Other – disorder – into normal experience. Opening up to play opens up a creative route to alternatives, possibilities and otherness that is interior as well as connecting to new exteriorities. But this otherness frequently provokes a defensive reaction rather than a cooperative response.

For many people, when confronted with the mysterious, the other, the instinct is to

kill   it. Then it can be examined. (Joy Williams in Winner, 2014)

For 'many people' in Williams' individualistic formulation, we can more collectively

read 'institutions', where defensive reactions become ritualized, programmed and

paradigmatic. Normal science research has accordingly struggled to understand and engage

play as smooth (the fluid ontological position we have just described) rather than striated (as

subject to and examined in terms of an ordered epistemology). It effectively models

structures and causes, and seeks to 'capture' elements of action through immobilising

typifications, but 'slides over the surface of things .. obscures the way in which a *reeling*

present is composed out of heterogeneous and non-coherent singularities' (Stewart, 2007, p. 4

emphasis added).   Recognising this problem, in an attempt to break the strictures of

mainstream methodologies, some social science research (eg. Thrift, 2008) has attempted to

embrace experimental practice from the arts to explore the connections between everyday

experience and the avant-garde. Anthropologist Michael Fischer (2007) – one of the

architects of the "interpretive turn" in the social sciences in the 1980s - takes this further in

arguing that experimentation is characteristic of *both* the arts and the sciences, and field

sciences like anthropology can and should also be experimental but following an arts model

rather than that of a laboratory science (although again this is not an either/or choice).

Experiment in the sciences prioritizes control and the monitoring of variation; in the arts, it is

about enabling responses to variation in the field context. Following this turn, we will argue

that key moments that form the basis of 'events' – phenomenal experiences that change

understanding – provide the hinges between everyday experience and artistic practice

because they affect us, and call for a response in action or performance: we are in some way

moved, and *characterised by* that motion, which is thus per*form*ative. These moments in

everyday life Kathleen Stewart (2007) terms 'ordinary affects' that burst through the constant motion of experience, which she in the quote above calls its 'reel' - as in the spinning, swirling dance that may involve any number of people in any order. This apprehends culture differently from Geertz's (1973) idea of 'thick description' – it suggests that culture, as a dynamic means of dealing with common human problems, both congeals and evaporates, and as Poulos (2009) argues is sometimes stretched *thin*, producing 'hierophanic spaces' where the individually and collectively suppressed - trauma, ecstasy, fear, desire, and mystery – may break through and surprise us into insight, new knowledge and even healing. The polysemy of Stewart's metaphor also allows complementary interpretations: first, the idea of a fishing rod 'reel', with which we try to catch elements of a swirling reality, with the 'feel' of a fisherman (researcher) playing his fish (reality)-loaded line; and second, the idea of a film reel, that carries both arresting momentary images and unfolding diachronic narrative that we apprehend with a cinematic consciousness (Mullarkey, 2009). This sense of being on the edge of a shifting something I will call 'critical affectivity' as regards playful research practice. Goodall would regard it as an apprehension of *mystery*.

Mystery begins in a feeling, something deep, poetic and sweet.

You get caught up in it. You get caught up in it fast. Little raptures of being alive ripple down the back of your neck, trickle like ice crystals doing an unknown, familiar dance across the constant heat of your spine. This is what it is like, this is where it begins. Mystery is like a seductive voice deep into the way cool and hot of the music that you suddenly discover is singing to you, directly to you, only to you, breaking you away from what you thought you were, which until that very moment you thought was the whole and substance of your life.   Mystery changes all of that

because mystery changes you. Mystery defines you in the casting of its spell, in

something as simple as the enchantment of a voice, a voice inviting you to dance, a

dance that promises something you will always remember or, maybe, that you will

never forget. (Goodall, 1991, p. xi)

Goodall (1991, p. 22-46) may write like a rock guitarist taking a break between sets

in a smoky Southern swamp club (which he was) but as he retunes he brings a substantial

legacy of anthropological and literary thought into the hitherto less funky arena of

organizational research. His poetic solo flights are firmly grounded in the dynamics of the

everyday. He is emphatic that organizational ethnography requires a well-balanced concern

with the play between context, self and other as they thread themselves across the warp and

weft of communication. *Context* will emerge more fully in our discussions of the aesthetic

moment and the political moment; *self* is dramatically present in the poetic moment; the *other*

(as person/s) is encountered in the ethical moment, the *Other* (as the machinery of power) in

the political moment. But as Goodall argues the overridingly important issue is *connection* –

and the fact that as Deleuze and Guattari argue connections are not static but rhizomatic,

constantly *in play*, disconnecting, reconnecting, and finding new intersections. Responding to

this cultural dynamism requires the exercise of imagination, and as Henry James (in

Crapanzano. 2010. p.vi) observed 'when the mind is imaginative …. It takes to itself the

faintest hints of life, it converts the faintest pulses of the air into revelations'. For Goodall,

following Kenneth Burke, these everyday hints and pulses are intimations of mystery:

Mystery arises at the point where different kinds of beings are in communication. In

mystery there must be strangeness, but the estranged must also be thought of in some

way as capable of communication…. Even the story of relations between the petty

clerk   and the office manager, however realistically told, draws upon the wells of mystery

for   its appeal. (Burke, 1969, p.115 cited in Goodall, 1991, p.xiv)

Goodall is not merely repeating recent social constructionist arguments that the meaning of the social is intersubjective, and lies in the conversational space between subjects in which they co-create (eg Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, & Cunliffe, A.L 2014). He recognises that co-witnessing and co-production are key processes for Conquergood (2013, Kindle ed loc 805) but for Goodall they are not the whole story. He (Goodall, 1991, p. xiii-xiv) adopts the view of Gabriel Marcel, who sees mystery as encouraging us to see ourselves as 'integrally connected to others, as co-constructors of a developing narrative of life' in which these narratives become intertwined and entangled (without reducing them to 'intertextuality' [Conquergood, 2013, Kindle ed loc. 1054]). Marcel distinguishes mystery from *problem* – which 'encourages us to divorce our experiences and sense of self from others…. Not to engage or mingle with them on the level of narrative but create narratives that "solve the problem"'. This distinction has been made, in a somewhat reduced way, in management and organization studies by, inter alia, Alvesson and Karreman (2007). But Goodall's sense of mystery is deeper, more intense, potentially more expansive than this, and above all, *felt* in the field.

Goodall's impassioned account of mystery sets up manifestations of context, self and other as "clues" to something beyond themselves that is, precisely, *the* mystery embedded in any piece of field research – the mystery that does not succumb to any ready-made solutions. His reaction demonstrates an aesthetic moment, but also presages what we are about to discuss as the poetic moment: and at the same time his emphasis on change, and change that is unavoidable, recognises with Stewart those reeling "ordinary affects" that take us by

surprise as *events*, events after which we are not the same. We experience more fully, and see the world differently. Critically affective performative texts seek to engage this connection between the everyday and elusive mystery, bridging the aesthetic and poetic moments, the ethics and politics of context, self and other.

Playing with Mystery: The Four Moments

In the next section I will demonstrate how experience and creative insight can be linked and can inform "play-full" research practice. At the core of the thinking here is the concept of the "moment" in both of its common senses: as a point relative to other points that acts upon them either in *time*, as a sequence, or in *space* as a mechanical lever. Here, both of these senses can be simultaneous, and in complex texts several *moments* of leverage where art is grounded in the everyday may operate on each other.

The origins of the specific terms are diffuse. The *aesthetic moment* is perhaps quite familiar in practice although the term as such is not widely used. It denotes a moment of epistemological amnesia where what we know is displaced by what we sense. Here significance is sidelined in favour of appearance: superficial beauty makes us forgetful of self, and context. Whilst Rosalind Krauss and Jean-Paul Sartre are relevant sources, I modify and elaborate their work here. For this account, the aesthetic moment has two dimensions: the *aesthetics of (direct or recalled) experience* (sensuous experience, subjective affect, sensation, feeling, expression) and the *aesthetics of representation* (eg language, metaphor) that focus us on the sensuous form and texture of experience in a loss of "self"-consciousness. Alongside Antonio Strati (1999) and Nicolas Bourriaud (2009) I suggest that aesthetics is relational and the two nevertheless distinct dimensions interplay.

The usage "poetic moment" appears very widely in literary criticism, often without specification or amplification. The sense in which it is used here derives from the critical work of Christopher Ricks (Linstead 2000) and it refers to those moments, in life or text, in which significance bursts in to stop the flow of action, a moment of insight or trauma, and the importance of the moment of *incipience* as the creative impetus that opens up experience to art. As we have suggested, it is where the space of commonplace associations and habits of meaning is thinnest, and new significances break through from the context into the frame of action, occluding distinctions between self and other. Similar points can be found in the work of Jean-François Lyotard (1994) and organization theorist and former actor Iain Mangham (1996) who refers to the moment "when the breath stops". There is a less aesthetic use of the term to be found in Katz and Shotter (1996) and Cunliffe (2002) which refers to moments when, as a result of the use of metaphor, language becomes less forgetful of itself, less routine and taken-for-granted. They take the term "poetic" from Wittgenstein, but their sense seems closer to our account of the aesthetics of experience than the stronger sense of significance we are giving to the poetic moment.

The *ethical moment* has no direct antecedents in relation to art, referring as it does in which the other is encountered in a way that cannot be avoided - that may awake empathy, hostility or a sense of responsibility. It resonates particularly with the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, and with a thread that can be found throughout the work of Michel Foucault from as early as *Madness and Civilization* where art is the means responsible for keeping reason and unreason in touch with each other, mediating the excesses of either. The *political moment* is that revelatory point where the way in which issues have been foreclosed or are about to be foreclosed by power or ideology is exposed, and the challenge and possibility of alternatives

opened up. This understanding can be found in critical theory, throughout the Frankfurt School, and in the more recent work of Slavoj Žižek. I argue that these four moments interact to produce varieties of *critical momentum* which are disruptive of customary assumptions, and *affective* impact, which involves the senses and body, to create a critically affective work. This work can be considered *performative,* as it acts to move its audience in thought and feeling, and regarded as *text* in that it is a weave of voices, perspectives, images, techniques, materials and actions. It need not be primarily written, and illustrative examples given below involve music and painting. The interactions of the four moments constantly in play thus produce a *critically affective performative text* that engages the body and mind of its audience.

The Aesthetic Moment

The aesthetic moment, as we have noted, is a moment when we are drawn into the simple experiencing of a thing as given. Form, feeling, sensation, affect or appearance draw us out of ourselves and our immediate context and towards an object *as* object. It has two main variants - *the aesthetics of experience* (which can be *direct,* or *recalled*) and *the aesthetics of representation.*

Stewart (2007, p.29) argues that our *direct* experience of reality is fragmented, partial, and emergent but this does not necessarily mean that we need submit to the temptation to master it in narrative, however strong. Sometimes, this reality will appear to organise itself, and she quotes Wallace Stevens' poem*, July Mountain,* to make the point that

> We live in a constellation
>
> Of patches and pitches,
>
> Not in a single world.

We cannot always know when some sort of order will just throw 'itself together in a moment as an event and a sensation: a something both animated and inhabitable' out of the 'shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges' that is the partially assembled ordinary (Stewart, 2007, p. 1). These ad hoc *ordinary affects* are public and shareable, but are also 'what seemingly intimate lives are made of… an animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes and disjunctures' (Stewart, 2007, p. 2-3). These moving things that can affect us so deeply often aesthetically catch us unawares.

For example, Captain Keith Sholto Douglas (2009) was simply doing his job in WWII North Africa in 1941. He began the campaign as a camouflage officer, disguising vehicles, guns and other objects, and completed it as a tank commander. A poet and artist, he kept a vivid diary of his experiences. He reports looking up from his duties one day:

> Up above the clear blue sky, a solitary aeroplane moved, bright silver in the sunlight, a pale line of exhaust marking its unhurried course. The Bofors gunners on either side of us were running to their guns and soon opened a rapid thumping fire, like a titanic workman hammering. The silver body of the aeroplane was surrounded by hundreds of little grey smudges, through which it sailed on serenely. From it there fell away, slowly and gracefully, an isolated shower of rain, a succession of glistening drops. I watched them descend a hundred feet before it occurred to me to *consider their significance and forget their beauty*. (Douglas, 2009, Kindle loc. 263)

Douglas was, of course, being bombed by German Stukas, and his life was in danger from the moment he first glimpsed them. But such was the fascination of their aesthetic appearance that he was drawn towards them, unable to look away, forgetful of his own situation - he was in command of a tank; the context – they were in a column of tanks preparing for battle; and the hostile intentions of the other, signalled by the aggressive presence of enemy aircraft. Beauty is dramatically disconnected from truth and goodness. This voyeuristic self-forgetfulness is also noted by Rosalind Krauss (1994, p. 111-13) in her analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, *The Look*. Sartre, peeping through a keyhole, becomes so absorbed in what is before him that he forgets the body that is behind, that literally gives him away, and ultimately, if this body is discovered by others, will return him to its significance and his own voyeuristic guilt. But drawn aesthetically into the 'thickened' scene of conscious fascination with the observed, self and significance slip away, and he is hooked – vulnerable and exposed.

Another example of this type of aesthetics at work comes from the autobiography of dramatist, singer and award winning songwriter Ewan MacColl. MacColl worked with radio producer Charles Parker and musician Peggy Seeger between 1957-64 to produce a ground-breaking series of seven *Radio Ballads* that uniquely combine natural recorded speech without narration, and original song based on this 'actuality', which they collected using innovative methods of social inquiry (Linstead, 2007; McKenzie, 2008). The first four programmes dealt with occupational experiences – a railway disaster, building a motorway, North Sea fishing, and deep-mining of coal. Whilst recording for the third programme in the series, the award-winning *Singing the Fishing*, MacColl noted that contextual and background noise were as important for the ambience as individual speech was for content:

We kept [the tape recorders] running while we sat at meals in the galley and in the

wheelhouse, where a radio-receiving set kept up a continuous chatter of information

from every drifter within a fifty-mile radius….. We caught the marvellous burst of

excitement as the look-out sighted a shoal; "Herring on the port bow! Herring!

Herring!" We were there to hear the skipper, Frank West, cry out like a man in the

throes of religious ecstasy: "There they are, the silver darlings!" We recorded the

rhythmical clacking of the winch as the two-mile long nets were played out… we

waited on the blacked-out deck as the men pulled the herring-filled nets from the sea,

hour after hour, until it seemed that the world was a bottomless hole from which the

shimmering green fire of herring would never stop rising… (MacColl, 1999, p. 322)

Here the sounds combine with the lack of light to create an effect that is rhythmic,

hypnotic, almost delirious. The auditory sense is so foregrounded that when we read that the

green herring are tipped from the nets, and momentarily reflect the available light, it is almost

possible to *hear* them hitting the deck. So compelling were the sounds surrounding them as

they tried to follow the work that in their eagerness to record them they could become

spectacularly forgetful of their immediate circumstances:

I am sailing with them through the Northern Minch in a seven-point gale. The

Honeydew looks and feels like a toy boat lost in the grey wilderness of sea and sky. At

one moment she is lifted to the summit of a great peak and the next she's ploughing

through a deep trough ridged by banks of white-topped waves. I stand there on the

deck,   terrified, clinging desperately with one hand to a steel cable, while with the other I

hold   up a microphone in a vain effort to record the storm. (MacColl, 1990, p. 323)

Participant researchers are often similarly, if less perilously, drawn into the aesthetic and sensual frame of the physical experience, forgetting self and even the body, as they experience pure sensation as a 'body-without-organs' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). In these experiences we are returned to a heightened awareness of what the body senses, alerted to different dimensions of a no longer taken-for-granted context, and eventually survive them to resume our place in the world of significance with a renewed sense of self, others, and life at work.

The question of the capacity of aesthetics to return us to awareness of the capabilities of our body surfaces again in the consideration of *recalled experience*. MacColl, as an actor and playwright, was very familiar with Constantin Stanislavsky's (2013, esp ch. IX) influential 'Method' for acting with emotional authenticity and carried its influence into his research for the Radio Ballads. In interviewing Sam Larner, an eighty year-old retired fisherman from Winterton, Norfolk, MacColl and Parker found they had to develop their strategy as they went along in order to access their informant's exceptional narrative resources. Their in-depth biographical interviewing took over two and a half weeks, and after the first few days of the broad outlines of his life and work, they 'played back the recordings and noted carefully which type of question and method of questioning elicited the best response' (MacColl, 1990, p. 319). As the next period of recording unfolded

we probed and constantly changed the perspective of our questions, until his emotion-memory was in full flight and he began to relive and re-feel the experiences and emotions of three quarters of a century earlier… (MacColl, 1990, p. 319).

As they progressed, his energy and motivation would ebb and flow, but nevertheless

There were times when the force of memory was so strong in the old man that *he would forget we were present* and re-enact conversations with friends and neighbours dead these fifty years… in each successive recording session his eagerness to reveal the meaning of his life became more apparent. .. the more deeply he entered into his past the more rich and varied became his verbal imagery. (MacColl, 1990, p. 319 *emphasis added*).

MacColl's point here is that Larner's body memory of his experiences remained so strong that when connected with his narrative memory the experiences were not simply re-told, but re-*lived*, vitally and vividly (Johnson, 1987). The aesthetic moment here occurs through this connection to communicate this affect dramatically, giving the narrative a sense of lived reality beyond the storyline. Few if any interviewers in management and organization studies appear to have the time, or even the patience and inclination, to work with an interviewee so carefully and sensitively – and to achieve, in this case, unexpectedly moving results.

That Larner became more eloquent the more engaged his emotions were leads us to our next aesthetic consideration - of *representation*. The first Radio Ballad was the story of tragic hero John Axon, a railway train driver who sacrificed his life to save others by staying aboard to warn them when his brakes failed and the train became a runaway. MacColl began his research in order to collect what he thought was background material. The plan, following radio custom and practice, was to talk to people who had worked and lived with Axon and use the recordings as a guide for a dramatic reconstruction to be performed by actors and musicians. But on playing back the recordings, the speech was striking: as MacColl put it, at times

encapsulating a lifetime's experience in a simile….we had captured a remarkable

picture of a way of life. A picture in words charged with the special kind of vitality

and   excitement which derives from *involvement with a work-process*… the excitement of

an experience re-lived and communicated without additive and without dilution.

(MacColl, 1990, p. 312-3)

This vivid example from an old railwayman emphasises how the railway culture

permeates the railwayman's life and being:

The old [steam] railwaymen, it was a tradition…it was part of your life, it went

through… *railways went through the back of your spine like Blackpool went through*

rock (actuality from *The Ballad of John Axon* 1957; later misquoted in MacColl, 1990,

p. 312-3)[2]

Another example of a culturally compelling image came from a mechanic who

worked on earth-moving equipment, interviewed for the second in the series, *Song of a Road*

(1958), the story of the construction of England's first motorway. An ex-military engineer,

who after travelling the world during the war did not feel comfortable with a stationary role,

commented:

I didn't want to go back to work in a garage.. I mean a garage is all right *but it's a*

rusty old life.

Here the play between language, emotion and the object of the description dissolves

each into the other, immanent, as MacColl observed, with life, with vitality beyond reduction

to its elements. This growing awareness prompted MacColl and Parker to reflect further on

the *aesthetics of relationality*. MacColl noted that the near-obsession with technical

processes they had displayed in *Song of a Road* had remained impenetrable to most listeners.

But the listeners had learned from the qualities of the language that had emerged from those

most closely involved with the work. The point was one that many ethnographers would do

well to absorb, that

> [We] should not be primarily concerned with work processes, but with people's
>
> attitudes and responses to those processes; in other words, not with things, but with
>
> *the way people related to things and the way in which those relationships were*
>
> *expressed in words*. (MacColl, 1990, p. 318)

This marks a shift away from the 'social realism' of which they were often unjustly

accused and to which Parker took particular exception:

> "social realism"….means nothing to me in this work. I traffic in illusion, not in
>
> "realism"; my concern ….. is *to re-create*, in a work of radio art, *the deeply felt*
>
> *experience which derives from direct experience of a particular situation*…. I am not
>
> so arrogant as to assume that the tape recorder empowers me to purvey the "reality"
>
> direct. (Charles Parker, letter to *The Listener* 1959 in BBC archive *emphasis added*)

What is primary here is the relationship of self, context and other and how that shapes

the aesthetics of the everyday, and second, what matters in the creative performance text is its

affectivity – the way in which it produces a response in the listener or reader that may or may

not re-create the direct experience of a situation but can at least evoke it and trigger parallel

or overlapping emotion-memories in its audience. This is why MacColl and Parker's work

remains instructive, as it demonstrates a principle that was carried through to the highly successful revival of the form by producer John Leonard for the BBC in 2006, and its continuation in 2010 and 2012.

In the aesthetic moment, *play* is the constant shifting of perspectives. It may be contained in a sensitivity to qualitative changes in the flow of everyday experience, or in the experimental effort to see differently and change scene dramatically to see what emerges. It is phenomenal rather than phenomenological in that meaning is largely irrelevant, sense and affect paramount. But of course, textual aesthetic moments are also relational, and are most effective when they articulate with the other moments.

The Poetic Moment

The poetic moment is in some ways the opposite of the aesthetic moment. Rather than being drawn into the appearance of context, and forgetful of significance, it is a moment where *the realization of significance rushes in so powerfully and so quickly that the breath is often, literally, taken away*. Something is revealed, unconcealed, though not articulated (Mangham, 1996). Such a moment is found in the everyday life of a Welsh miner's wife in the fourth programme of the Radio Ballads, *The Big Hewer* -   a moment very similar to one that is captured by Alfred Lord Tennyson in his poem *In Memoriam,* that Ricks identified as definitively 'poetic'.

After the unexpected death of his friend, Tennyson is disconsolate, and finds himself walking the streets at night, unable to sleep. His feet lead him to the door of his friend, and as he is about to knock, the realization comes to him that this habit will no longer suffice. There

will be no answer: his friend is no longer there, and never will be. Tennyson pauses in the

moment of 'incipience' – the moment of awareness just before action resolves matters this

way or that – that has been regarded as the critical moment in artistic consciousness by

Lyotard (1994). His life-space, in Poulos' (2009) terms, has become stretched gossamer thin.

But just as the moment of eternal loss engulfs him, so the indifferent world reminds him,

from a distance, of its own inexorable continuation in change as 'far away the noise of life

begins again…. On the bald street breaks the blank day' (Tennyson, *In Memoriam* Section

VII; see Linstead, 2000, p. 81-2).

A century later, and more than a hundred miles away, every miner's wife knows that

when her husband goes to the pit, the hooter sounds for shift start and again at shift finish. If

ever it sounds between those appointed times, it means there has been an accident. All the

miner's wife can do is wait to see if her husband has been killed or injured. As she sits at

home, she listens for the footsteps approaching along the street, pausing, like Tennyson at the

door. If the door opens it is her husband, safe and well, bringing her life back. If there is a

knock, it is the deputy with news that he has been killed or injured and her life will never be

the same again. It is a terrible sound 'that knock on the door' as she relates it with a musical

sadness in her voice, but the poetic moment is in the pause just before it, when the terrible

awareness of possibility and not knowing fills it with incipience.

The space that the poetic moment inhabits is therefore just in advance of ordinary

affects, before the change, and is, as we have noted, what Poulos (2009) calls 'thin' or

'hierophanic': where some truth is about to be revealed, almost ready to break through to the

surface, quite the opposite of the thickly delineated spaces that Geertz (1973) describes. It is

the moment of mystery where art works, in trying to apprehend the mystery, not by

positioning itself in the undecided space *between* yes and no (BBC producers are often encouraged to do this) but by remaining and struggling in the undecidable space *before* yes and no, as possibilities, were delineated.

We stay in the leap *ahead* of any yes and no (Heidegger, 2006, p. 5 *emphasis added*)

Any event, even an ordinary one, that reveals 'truth' opens up 'the co-presence of the open and the closed that is at the heart of the truth-event' (Peters, 2013, p. 118). As Peters argues truth *events* are incomprehensible – indeed the more comprehensible and representable they seem the more elusive truth becomes, as 'the real issue here is the play of unconcealment and concealment'. Truth tends to withdraw secretively into itself the more we pursue it, and for Heidegger (1971, p. 59) it is the practical skill of the artist, or *technē*, that 'brings forth what is present as such *out of* concealedness and specifically into the unconcealedness of their appearance'. But here there is no coincidence of the world (that we, selves and others, construct) and the earth (that is our context). World tends to proceed as a 'self-opening openness of the broad paths of simple and essential decisions' whereas Earth tends towards the 'spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing'. The tension between world and earth is 'strife' – or the *play* - between knowing and not knowing, where the knowingness of art is that it knows it does not know, and not knowing is 'the ground from which creativity springs' (Atkinson , 2013, p. 136). This is the terrain of the poetic moment, where play inhabits the tension between knowing and not-knowing, rather like a coiled spring that releases poeisis as a creative, aesthetic and critical process. Whilst, in our ordinary affects,

Not knowing comes unannounced; still there are methods for increasing the likelihood of its occurrence, Moreover, what can be prepared is a capacity for recognising its advent, for noticing its arrival (Cocker, 2013, p. 128)

Or, as we are arguing in this paper, for recognising the poetic moments in which not-knowing is set to work, in play with the other moments, so that affect can be mobilised and aesthetics can allow the critical and creative to catalyse the event.

The Ethical Moment

The ethical moment **is** *the inescapable moment of contact with, connection with, response to and responsibility for, the experience of the other*. It may look backward in sympathy or empathy, but its reality is the present, the now, and its burden the future, what is to come. Another of the Radio Ballads, *The Body Blow*, demonstrates this empathic responsibility in shifting the focus of the series away from production and concentrating on the experiences of five recoverers from crippling poliomyelitis, which reached epidemic proportions in the 1950s. It focuses on specific moments in their experience of pain, and uses a montage technique of short quotes from each speaker on the same micro-topic to convey each experience powerfully. One such focus is on the returning of consciousness after the initial coma, where bodies that are otherwise numb and paralysed nevertheless feel agonies they can't communicate. One speaker, very matter-of-factly, describes the waves of sensation arriving and says 'you just have to let yourself get carried away on the pain'. This remarkable metaphor confronts the listener unforgettably with an experience that is probably quite alien to them, but in a way that takes them inside the experience, evokes the feeling, and changes forever their perspective on the illness. The programme proved so powerful that, although not

in any sense easy listening, it was used for training in the National Health Service for many

years.

Getting the listener inside the experience provides the punctum, the point of human contact around which the ethical moment turns. In Bob Dylan's tragic masterpiece *The Ballad of Hollis Brown*, a failing South Dakota farmer, faced with starvation, kills his wife and children and then commits suicide. Dylan strips the traditional ballad of refrain and chorus and hangs his narrative on the bleached bones of its rhythmic carcass. But what makes the ballad so powerful is its apostrophising directness. Dylan sets the scene briefly, but quickly shifts the perspective by dragging the listener into the scene – Brown becomes *you*, his situation is *yours*, his crying children are *your* children, his pitiful parched crops are *yours*, the burning torments in his brain are *yours*, his every desperate act of survival is *your own*, and the approaching inevitable decision that must be made is appallingly *yours*. The ballad is not satisfied merely to recount a real story – which it is – it makes that reality *ours*. We are returned from these echoes of Dostoevsky and Poe to our own lives only at the very end of this harrowing ordeal of a song when a distant and inert continuing world is invoked – one as obsessed with its own activities and immured to the protagonist's pain as Tennyson's, and one at whose door the tragedy and responsibility are firmly laid.

Play here brings the face of the other unforgettably *into* play. As Lévinas (1969) suggested, and as Lingis (2000) avers, once the life-world of the other has been witnessed, the subject is connected, and bears knowledge and responsibility for what may happen beyond that moment. It may be that, as with Hollis Brown, that other is now unreachable, but the situation carries the other's message to other contexts, other others, as a spectre that haunts us. The mystery of the other's suffering opens up and bears the tension between our

personal situation, the scene witnessed, the connection felt, and the desire or not to intervene to try to create difference. Affect means that we are touched by the other, marked by their experience. And as Stewart (1996) argues, this brings others that would be or have been discarded, dis-located into a space on the side of the road of human progress, back onto the carriageway rather than disappearing as a distant speck in the rear-view mirror.

The Political Moment

The political moment is the moment when *difference becomes visible, audible or tangible as inequality, divergence of interests, and disparities of power, even suppression and oppression* – raising questions of conflict and change. Our example here is an organizational case from Goodall (1991). Goodall reveals a moment when an individual, acting in good faith, realizes they are merely a pawn in a game that is almost certainly nested in another bigger and more mysterious game, played by unseen others. As we arrive at this vignette, he has already wrestled with some ethical issues, as he has been hired as a consultant by a senior manager of a company in which Goodall has a friend working. The friend has confided that that he considers himself to be the target of the senior manager's inquiry and expects to be fired. Goodall then speaks to the senior manager, who really wants to fire nobody, but brushes several problems relating to his own managerial style, that he considers insignificant, under the carpet.   Out of the blue, Goodall then receives a destabilizing phone call from a powerful woman, one of the owners of the company. She demands first sight of any reports Goodall produces, implying that it is the senior manager, unbeknownst to himself, who is indeed not the agent but the real target of the exercise. The investigation leads Goodall to the conclusion that, though he is well-meaning and some of the problems are not of his own making, the senior manager is incorrigible and has to go. The powerful woman meets

Goodall secretly, at night in a shabby diner in a different city, dressed down in inconspicuous clothing. He reveals his findings, and adds that the senior manager has asked him to write a report that "recommends minor repairs and that makes him (the SM) out to be a scapegoat, wronged by others" (Goodall, 1991, p. 60). The response is unexpected.

> She smiles, faintly. "That is precisely the report I want you to write", she says. There is something in her eyes, but I cannot name it.
>
> "Why?"
>
> "Because that is the version of the truth that is acceptable to me, that is acceptable to him, that won't cause problems, and it is, after all, Mr Goodall, the story you were hired to discover. I believe that is the report I want you to circulate."
>
> "You mean you actually want me to give my report to everyone, but write the report in a way that is favourable to him?" I am incredulous.
>
> "Yes. You see, Mr. Goodall, this isn't a classroom where grades can be given at the end of the semester. This is real life where the stories that people believe are far more important than the stories they have been assigned to learn. You should also know that I have already retained another consultant, this one a lawyer, who will find fault with the report you write and who will construct another version of this story."
>
> "But *why*?"
>
> "Because it requires many actors telling many stories to make a *believable play**, some of whom are never seen on the stage." She pauses, smiles again faintly. "And sometimes those who are seen on the stage are only placed there so that a particular story can be told, a particular flaw pointed out."
>
> "And I thought I was the guy writing this story."
>
> "Don't we all, Mr. Goodall? Don't we all?" (Goodall, 1991, p. 60-1) *[*emphasis*

added]

Goodall submits the report. His friend tells him everyone feels a little better, but that another consultant has been brought in. He read Goodall's report and said it was 'full of shit'. A year later the senior manager resigned. Goodall noticed a photograph in the local paper, as the manager accepted a farewell plaque from the powerful woman.

There was still something, something ineffable, in her eyes. (Goodall, 1991, p. 62)

Play, here at the micro level, is power play. The powerful woman actually herself invokes the metaphor of theatrical play, acting in, staging and scripting events. She not only acts powerfully through her performance behind the scenes, but exercises power through her speech, using her metaphor to shape his understanding of his role, placing and displacing others in the social drama that is unfolding. He plays his part, but his inability to discern the ineffable message in her eyes both returns him from the game to the interpersonal relation of self and other, whilst connecting in him, however weakly, to some mystery beyond that perception – which remains unresolved.

Macropolitics can also stand in need of a specific human connection. In 2010, producer John Leonard and musical director Andy Seward crafted an award-winning Radio Ballads special on the UK Miners' Strike of 1984-5. Two songs from this stand out as good examples of exploring interior perspectives that get behind the psychological scenes of the epic confrontation. The first is Julie Matthews' poignant *Behind the Picket Lines*, an integration of music and actuality that invites us into the story of the women who supported the strikers and organized volunteer welfare services. What is particularly powerful is the

quiet humility of the women who reflect on their ordinariness and find it hard to believe the quite extraordinary things they achieved, themselves. Jez Lowe similarly and hauntingly unearths contrasting perspectives on strikebreaking blacklegs in *The Judas Bus*, such buses being specially armoured, caged vehicles provided with government support to allow miners, particularly from Nottinghamshire, to cross picket lines to get into work. Lowe manages to convey an unaccustomed sensitivity from the blacklegs, some of whom genuinely struggled with the dilemma of conflicting loyalties between family and workmates, whilst finding a corresponding sensitivity in the hurt felt by the pickets, often simply presented as bullies, when taunted by some of the blacklegs, and even the police, waving their bulging overtime paypackets.

The political moment is moment of *poeisis* and humanity. But it loses these under the weight of *imposed* politics. MacColl himself wrote political song, including one that became the anthem of the Miners' Strike, but his political convictions too frequently overpowered his sensitivities on encountering a potentially poetic moment within a political situation [3]. Where Lowe is able to explore tensions and ironies, even agonies, MacColl tends to become bitter, didactic, and rabble-rousing. For MacColl there is no reflection needed: his is a mind already made up, and he tends to musically pamphleteer to others whose minds are in the same condition. Lowe homes in on the poetics within the political moment to find that space of tension, contradiction and human undecidability, to leave us exposed, poised and reflective. Although we know whose side he would come down on faced with a decision that is ours alone to make, he allows us to savour the difficulties whichever side we choose: strikers, police, blacklegs – even managers – and places these categories into question.

Whether the field of play is micro or macro, *play* here is always power play. But it is also the play *between* micro and macro, the interaction of the parts. With the Miners' Strike, where the macro politics were epic, tragic, and much mythologised on both sides, where MacColl poetically merely mans the picket lines, Lowe and Matthews restore humanity to the politics by putting the personal back into play with the context, destabilizing the confrontation between selves and others, and invoking humanity as mystery. The art is in the tension, and the tension is creative.

Playing Together: Critical Affectivity

I would rather risk being didactic than lapsing into blandness - or end up writing novels about   writers writing novels (Hines, 2009, p. v)

And so the quandary I face in this section. I'm already writing about writing, although trying to temper that with as much of the real thing as possible, and another step back from immediacy might well be one step too far – for my reader, my argument, and my credibility. It's an easy step to make, and I may even have already done it.

Scholarship is by default bland in comparison to most forms of writing, even to some of its most cultish adherents. Taking risks is not recommended. Happily I can call upon two people who have already taken those risks for me, and over the course of 300+ pages each have also managed to integrate their innovations with enough conventional analysis and discussion to be awarded doctorates and have their theses published. But they don't always read like PhDs:

It was a hot summer afternoon… I was standing in front of an old movie theatre. The

Palace. It looked like there had been a rock concert there the night before. The place

looked messy. Deirdre, who turned out to be a Northern beauty, picked me up at the

entrance. She had an athletic, but very feminine figure, and was smartly dressed. She

wore light, white trousers and a silk blouse. I felt overdressed, and overheated, in my

grey suit. We went up the wooden   stairs. They creaked heavily.

I found it strange and exciting to have an appointment with the police in a place that

looked like a big squat. The Palace's second youth, that of a pop temple, was over. To

me, the dumpy old cinema looked like a perfect place to start thinking differently

about police work and to work on breakthroughs. But what would the coppers on the

project think about this third generation of the Palace?

On the first floor was an office. The door was open. I saw another young woman

behind her desk, She was a brunette in her late twenties. Deirdre introduced me to her

colleague project leader, Claire Thomas. Claire stayed behind her PC as we shook

hands. I made some remarks about their daring housing. We laughed

.

I followed Deirdre's jaunty steps to another room that probably used to be the foyer of

the cinema. Now it was decorated with policeman's caps, coats of arms of other

police forces, motorcycle models and a picture of a Hindustani guy with a Harley

Davidson. Deirdre explained that the regional police force didn't have enough office

space to house the FIT project organization. "So we rented this place. but to be honest

I'm allergic to dust and the place kills me." (Bruining, 2005, p. 19).

Critical affectivity combines the critical capacity to analyse and disrupt with the creative capability to affect. Critically affective performative texts stimulate a poeisis of creativity, affect and critique that opens up and non-prescriptively provokes change and innovation at personal, organizational and social levels. The four moments, when they act relationally together, produce critical momentum that both energises and focuses the critically affective performative text. Bruining (2005) was involved in a consultancy project on institutional learning and was puzzled to find as the work progressed that a progressive police department, that had been inaugurated to introduce innovative policing practices (including those from other countries) into the Netherlands was closed down, despite its apparent success. He wanted to discover what the wider organization had learned from it, and whether its work lived on. As a hard-bitten HR professional, he nurtured a healthy cynicism with regard to organizational attachment to 'learning' and HR's capability to affect this. As his further inquiries progressed, he struggled in encountering the insufficiency of standard forms of social inquiry to convey the messiness of his encounter with the cultural processes of policing. Then it hit him. The department was dead. There was a body. No-one could say who killed it. There were suspects. The aesthetic form he needed to convey his experience effectively was that of the detective story – or as he expresses it the 'novel-report'.

The published account is at times like reading a detective mystery as in the extract above, where the short sentences and the casually sexist description echoes the Black Mask or 'hard-boiled' detective genre that peaked with Hammett or Chandler yet still evokes something quite contemporary. But this is not simply a matter of style: the reader 'feels' the complex tensions within the organization and learns to 'read' its peculiar lexicon, and regardless of the endless variety of public reports on policing and TV detective series, gets a sense of the administrative and emotional complexities of managing police work and learning from experience, whilst all the time meeting the needs of a simultaneously vulnerable yet

demanding public. Bruining's detective story, influenced by Czarniawska and Goodall, is both more and less than an unravelling of the mystery for the passive reader – it begins with an aesthetic moment, a rainy but otherwise quiet night that opens out in the early hours into a reflection on the nature of learning that leads us into the quest for 'truth' in the organization. He presents different perspectives of which the reader can make what they will, a text he intends to be 'writerly' in Barthes' terminology, the reader actively completing its trajectory. In this his model is not Black Mask, but a Japanese short story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, 'In a Grove', which also sets out perspectives without resolution. Bruining sets in motion tensions, emotional conflicts, contradictions, political power struggles and ethical moral mazes, doing this by deploying a range of textual styles, images, and innovations in form and structure. Rather than undertake the predictable review of the literature, he does what a detective would do – interviews the suspects and gathers the evidence (perspectives). He presents these accounts (suspects' perspectives) in the first 150 pages, then returns to his library (or his 221b Baker Street) to take an abductive route to reviewing the literature and set out the theoretical lines along which he will proceed to discuss the evidence. Instead of the traditional thesis summary and recommendations, or a revelatory conclusion in the style of Agatha Christie, assembling the suspects around the log fire of a country mansion, and telling each of them how they were involved before finally revealing the killer, he addresses personal letters to each of the nine individual and group 'suspects' (who had dispersed around the country after the closure of the department, some to promotions), and these missives form his final epistolary chapter. There was no 'killer', but there were connections and there were consequences, as well as surprises and accidents. The department had closed, but there was no closure: just more mystery. So rather than deploy the centrifugal force of most detective stories, he tried to bring the multiple narratives onto the same stage but keep them in motion, with centripetal force, as 'the enduring prospect of alternative configurations; (Bruining,

2005, p. 267-8). And for those who like that sort of thing, there is a whole chapter where he writes about writing about writing.

Whilst Bruining does not deploy the four moments explicitly, they are clearly present and at work in his discussions which, as a critically affective performative text, have the explicit objectives of taking a critical approach to opening up multiple perspectives and 'touching the reader' (Bruining, 200, p. 228). The account makes the personal, political, and ethical issues come alive through what is a poetic aesthetic form – following the form sensitises the reader to the affective impact of key moments in the unfolding story as initiatives get blocked, colleagues are betrayed, people take credit for the work of others, invisible fingers appear to pull strings. Whilst he experiments with form in his 'ergonography' (Czarniawska 1997), the ideas he employs to disrupt tradition are drawn from textual and narrative theory. Chris Kuiper (2006), in contrast, does explicitly focus on two moments, the aesthetic and poetic; he incorporates the visual into his methodology, and more radically disrupts textual perspective., drawing on a wider range of aesthetic theory to better suit the material with which he is engaged, as Bergson recommends. If Bruining's study is a hybrid of research report and detective novel, Kuiper's blends with a visit to a modern gallery, where abstract paintings and fragments of textual perspective are presented simultaneously – and bodily experience is rethought.

For it is bodily experience – the experience of damaged bodies – that is at the heart of Kuiper's (2007) inquiry. With a background in physical occupational therapy, he was becoming increasingly frustrated that the way that the work was being represented, through standardized managerial report forms and summaries, in the name of quality assurance, was distorting the subtleties of interaction and the skills needed to ensure positive therapeutic

outcomes for patients. It was pandering to control needs of administrative bodies, a political issue, rather than expressing what happens when consultation encounters are successful in a relational and ethical experience. He eventually adopted the position that relations change and successful outcomes become possible through emergent poetic moments within the therapeutic interaction. However, the parties involved have not been trained to identify and respond to these moments, and reports are conditioned to ignore them, or treat them as inconsequential if recorded. Kuiper chose to incorporate a radical methodology, but not in isolation. On the back of extensive qualitative research to produce 'thick description' and key issue analysis, he videotaped specific therapeutic encounters.

> I identified between eight and twelve poetic moments – fragments of between ten and
> thirty seconds – in each interview, and showed them to Ronald (Hillemans) an artist.
> Together we chose one 'meaningful' poetic moment per interview. Our discussions
> were recorded. Ronald made a two-dimensional artwork based on the poetic moment
> selected. He made five paintings. The professional was asked to read and reflect on

the   painting referring to her/his practice. (Kuiper, 2007, p. 9)

Kuiper's brief discussion here might suggest a reductiveness to his approach, but this is misleading. His discussion of theory and method is nuanced and extensive, fine-tuned and fine-grained, and incorporates reflection by the artist on the nature of the co-production that this essentially comprises. Whilst Hillemans has skills that Kuiper does not, there is much more of a sense of mutual discovery than expertism about the project. Drawing on a thorough pursuit of the concept in his literature review, Kuiper is initially applying the "weak" sense of the everyday poetic in Cunliffe (2002) and Katz and Shotter (1996) and then focusing on the stronger and more *eventful* sense that we have taken here (Linstead, 2000).   The feedback

sessions, in various interpretations of the poetic moment and the artist's rendering were shared, were also recorded. This facilitated the surfacing of points where the routine representation in language of the work of the therapeutic encounter was disrupted (Kuiper, 2007, p. 13-14) The mode of presentation of the data was also an aesthetic intervention, in that three sets of accounts – the formal written requirements for therapeutic encounters, the researcher's observation of the encounter, and the therapist's comment on the event and the painting – were included together by splitting each page in three, so they were immediately both connected and set into play with each other (Kuiper, 2007, p. 15), each chapter also including the full-colour painting. What emerged was both highly personal, ethical in its engagement with the other, and inevitably political as it showed dramatically how the system was failing to do any kind of justice to therapists, patients and the 'mysterious' elements of their encounters, whilst opening out to something that powerfully but inexpressibly linked all the participants. Kuiper was also able to mount a robust critique of policy arising from his creative and 'playful' research.

The visual and textually innovative trajectories of both of these pieces of playful research meet and are further developed in recent work by Brown and Wood (2009) and Linstead (2015) in the form of the film essay or essay-film (Corrigan, 2011; Rascaroli, 2009), and associated discussions of the possibilities of using film as a research output alongside, or even with priority over, text (Berkeley, Wood & Glisovic 2016; Wood 2015; Wood & Brown 2011, 2012; Wood & Rowlins 2016). Brown and Wood's (2009) multi award winning short documentary *Lines of Flight* takes its title from Deleuze and Guattari's concept where a line of flight 'pushes back or constitutes a form of resistance against the confines of modern life, be it social, psychological or physical' (Wood & Rowlins, 2016, p. 5). The film rests on the paradox that the rock quarried from the Pennine Hills of northern England built the

factories and mills that effectively imprisoned the labourers of the industrial revolution, yet came to provide a means of escape from that drudgery – lines of flight – of which solo rock climbing, ascending without ropes or protective equipment constitutes the purest form. The film draws on poetry, literature and philosophy, with an aesthetic that sets upland landscapes against retail park brand-scapes, obsessive industriousness and addictive consumption, and plays richly with the visual possibilities of 'lines'. Occasionally breathtaking images of real risk and danger draw an embodied reaction from its audience – an affect that is intended to set in motion the urge to reflect. As film, it has an overt aesthetic, but unusually for a documentary is replete with aesthetic moments – our breath is caught by a dangling climber's spidery weightlessness as he swings impossibly on gritty fingers to the safety of an overhang - poetic moments are also present, as much in the unscripted reflections of the climbers as in the well-chosen poetry extracts. The film sets its critical and political purpose out clearly from the beginning, although it does it subtly and layers its arguments, interlacing the with its ethical position that solo climbers, rather than being selfish adrenalin junkies, are in search of a more authentic relation with nature that transcends the physical. The four moments work powerfully together to an extent that has been recognised by film festivals, the film having received official selections, competitive screenings, and two category wins internationally.

These Fragments (Linstead, 2015) is also landscape-based, though not at all action-based, setting out on a disquieting quest to explore what remains of the coal industry in post-industrial South Yorkshire, 30 years after the Miners' Strike and in the year that deep mining in the UK ceased permanently. It takes its theme from a comment by mining photographer Pierre Gonnord, who commented on the closure of Spanish mines that 'the woods will grow back, but the human silence will be terrible'. Upon a matrix of industrial ruins and almost abandoned villages, it features people only through their voices and music, the poignant

ambiguous tensions being evoked but not resolved – a pharmacology in Bernard Stiegler's (2013) terms that requires curation rather than resolution. The aesthetic is melancholic rather than nostalgic, and the poetics animated through literally spectral voices echoing in displaced communities. The politics are overt but again voiced as much by the landscape as the people, the ethics taking the form of an agonistic unanswered questioning. The film has also been modestly successful in competition, with international screenings, one second place, and finalist and semi-finalist selections. Both films can be viewed online.[4]

Both films seamlessly illustrate the working together of the four moments in producing critically affective performative texts, without necessarily having been constructed for that purpose. They both constitute ergonographies in that they explore ethnographic issues in relation to work, interrogating the relations between work and community rather than focusing solely on either, seeking to arouse what Pulitzer Prize-winning educator Robert Coles (1989) called the "moral imagination" of their audiences by engaging their senses and emotions as well as their intellects.

Final play

> I don't know how to count the way a person feels looking out of an office window, or how to deconstruct the simmering hatred between co-workers that manifests itself in small acts of semiotic terrorism (Goodall. 1989, p.142).

We began with a question, that while organizational aesthetics is alive and well and growing as a field, and recognises the advantages of using artistic form to look at aesthetic issues in organizations, there is actually little research that does use artistic form to do just this. There are a number of issues perhaps hampering the actualisation of such methods. One is the tension between approaches that seek to promote arts practices in organizations for

essentially productive means, such as stimulating creative output that can be commodified, and other approaches that see artistic creativity as the source of challenge to organizational and managerial orthodoxies that can potentially engage the sort of phenomena that puzzle Goodall in the quote above. But our point of departure was to observe the link between ethnography and aesthetic research, and to recognise the connections between art and everyday experience. Looking at a variety of ways of thinking the everyday and expressing it creatively in ethnography, drawn from literary-philosophical anthropology and the work of Conquergood, Goodall and Stewart in particular, we proposed the performative nature of artistic texts (a text being broadly understood as a weave of techniques that may be symbolic, material or verbal) in having the intention to move their audience affectively, intellectually and practically. Taking the idea of cultural poeisis to include that critique may not necessarily be oppositional to development, but is essential for creative movement, we suggested that what is needed are *critically affective performative texts*.

For such texts to be defensible, and thus a viable form for researchers to consider adopting, we argued for the need to understand how they work to generate critical momentum, and to grasp what possible lines are available for justifying creative approaches that challenge orthodox organizational research in being neither objective, representational nor expressive. We also suggested that there is no absolute need to accommodate artistic expertism by outsourcing the creative elements of such research, although this remains an important option, as Kuiper demonstrates, as long as there are clear guidelines that enable the researcher's efforts to be related to those of the artist and integrated where necessary. To facilitate this we outlined four moments that work in play with each other to create powerful texts, and illustrated them by drawing on a range of sources from literature, music, poetry and art, some of which were drawn from workplace and organization studies.

Two concepts – play and mystery – are inextricably linked in the critically affective performance text. The aesthetic and poetic moments in these texts recognise that the "reeling" world does not come to us neatly packaged, and does not slot neatly into a linear, or even episodic, narrative, and respond to it in ways that mainstream research and its associated discourses are unable to achieve. They activate neglected dimensions of seeing and feeling, which some research (Cunliffe, 2002) has already highlighted, but they take this awareness beyond language, and transmit motion and emotion as well as sense to their audiences and use this to open up tensions that may remain unresolvable, wounds that may be dressed but perhaps not healed. The critically affective performance text makes play experimental and exploratory in moving into areas of experience - hierophanic spaces - where assumptions, taken-for-granteds and even deep suppressions are only thinly veiled (Poulos, 2009). These spaces can connect to mystery in its widest sense (Goodall, 1991) creating greater awareness, a powerful if troubling sense of not-knowing that enables new and further creative connections. At this point it returns method from its epistemological and ontological implications to its ethical, moral and political responsibilities.

At this point we might be expected to consider the 'so what?' question. However, we should not as Judith Butler (1997, p. 15) argues, acquiesce to the negative performative position of a 'replication of conventional notions of mastery'. The four moments are not a stepwise and functional guide to creating better texts – that comes through the quality of engagement of the creative artist with others, in particular contexts, as Goodall reminds us. What the four moments do, again in Butler's (1997, p. 15) terms, is affirmative, 'opening up the possibility of agency' through its relational aesthetics. Nevertheless, when that relational aesthetic plays out in a production, we now have a set of signposts to analyse how it has worked, how well art has facilitated a passage of play between the everyday and the extraordinary, how well it has lived up to its responsibilities, whether it has shone its light

with too narrow a beam, and whether, given its context, that is allowable. There have been increasing calls for greater exposure of management education to the humanities rather than the hard sciences, to enable managers to better to respond to the essential humanity of human organising (Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan & Dolle, 2011). But this often involves looking outside the field for resources, because the management and organization field itself does not encourage or reward the generation of its own arts-related resources, and finds it difficult to recognise their quality and precision precisely because they work in the spaces between the concepts of propositional logic. Whilst further discussion and research is needed on the possible modalities of producing critically affective performative texts, with greater reflection on different ways of actualising the four moments, the framework offers a set of landmarks to facilitate interpassage: a play between the humanities and organizational sciences that remains to be fully realised.

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[1] This "as if" condition also applies fundamentally to all language, philosophy, social relations and crucially ethics, according to Derrida (1967/1978b, 2002). This has been discussed in the context of organizational ethics by Jones (2003).

[2] "Rock" is a colloquial term for a hard sugar syrup-based flavoured boiled sweet, usually served by rolling out into short or long cylindrical "sticks" 2cm or more in diameter. By the clever use of layering and embedding different coloured mixes, letters could be formed into words that could be read in cross-section running from end to end (or beginning to end). It was usual for the town – or more typically resort - where the rock was purchased to have its name run through the product, and Blackpool was the most popular such resort in the North-West of England, very convenient for Stockport where the research took place.

[3] *Daddy, What Did You Do in the Strike?* (Seeger 2001:96-7) *On the Picket Line (92-3) Holy Joe from Scabsville* (94-5).

[4] *Lines of Flight* can be viewed through an online link embedded in Wood and Rowlins (2016). *These Fragments* can be viewed at www.thesefragmentsfilm.com