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The Unbounded Gatherer: possibilities for posthuman writing-reading

Abstract

This article develops a posthuman approach to authorship to challenge implied distinctions and superiorities between the social and material worlds, which can detach academics and their writing from societies and ecosystems. By reimagining academic texts that are open for richer interpretation and accessible to diverse audiences, this article offers two main contributions. Firstly, I develop a conceptualisation of the posthuman author as an 'unbounded gatherer', adding to others' attempts to destabilise predominant humanistic ways of writing about managing and organizing that view authors as autonomous agents. Secondly, by developing the idea of 'mediators' as a means to explore how the sociomaterial is implicated in writing, debates about materiality in writing are extended. Through an illustration of posthuman writing, five emergent categories of mediators are analysed, and three textual practices are performed and examined.

Key words: reflexivity, writing, authorship, sociomateriality, entanglement, posthuman, mediators

In this article by bringing close attention to the problematics of humanist perspectives, that understand writers to be clearly bounded selves who generate their own discrete ideas, I develop a posthuman approach to authorship. Posthuman theory understands academics' selves, and the texts they author, as socially and materially entangled. Consequently, the re-imagining of boundaries in this article, in relation to authors and writing, offers a new perspective which unsettles accepted ways of writing about organizing and managing. The

posthuman approach, that is developed and illustrated, can help us to produce academic texts that are open for richer interpretation, and accessible to diverse audiences, beyond academia. This is because understanding the author as lacking sovereignty, through sociomaterial entanglement, can help to challenge implied distinctions and superiorities which can detach academics and their writing from societies and ecosystems.

Posthumanism is a growing area of theorising which seeks to reimagine the human subject and our entangled relations with other inhabitants, and actors of the earth (for example, Barad, 2003, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 2008). To elaborate alternative ways of conceptualising the human subject, posthumanism challenges anthropocentric assumptions, that human will is the only significant ingredient for action and substantial source of control to our existence. To achieve this posthuman theory "questions the relationship between the 'human' and other taken-for-granted categories such as 'nature', 'animals' and 'technology'" (Gourlay, 2015, p. 487). Consequently, as Hayles describes "in the posthuman, there are not essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanisms and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (Hayles, 2008, p. 3). The idea of posthumanism engaged in this paper is not about a project of antihuman despair, or "find[ing] our next teleological evolutionary stage" (Gane, 2006, p. 140), but about "evok[ing] the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means" (Hayles, 2008, p. 285).

Posthuman debates explore and reimagine a range of interdisciplinary issues and questions including: human-machine interactions (Hayles, 2008); meaning-matter entanglements (Barad, 2007); and, human-animal relationships (Braidotti, 2013). The influence of

posthumanism within management and organizational studies has been limited. Some significant contributions informed by posthuman thought include: exploring ethical implications of how organizational processes enact boundaries between bodies and nonhuman entities (Carlile, Nicolini, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2013; Dale & Latham, 2015); and, considering how technologies actively shape sociomaterial practices involved in organizing (Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). However, although posthuman theory can have significant implications for how we understand the production of our research texts about managing and organizing there has been little attention to exploring such possibilities. The implications are significant because understanding boundaries as indistinct between human/nature, subject/object, mind/body, and matter/discourse requires us to rethink what authoring and writing entails. Significantly, the consequences of posthuman theory for understanding writing extend post-structuralist ideas of authors as socio-culturally embedded. Whilst there has been some attention in management and organizational studies to considering the implications of appreciating 'materialities' in writing, relating to the co-constitution of the social and material (Fotaki, Metcalfe, & Harding, 2014; Muhr & Rehn, 2015; Prasad, 2016), there are greater opportunities to conceptualise and experiment with a posthuman perspective on authorship.

My 'sociological imagining' to develop ideas of posthuman authorship (Mills, 1959), as well as using posthuman theory, involves bringing together ideas from a range of work relating to sociomateriality (Carlile et al., 2013; Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), relational ontologies (Barad, 2007; Cooper, 2005, 2010; Gergen, 2009; Law, 2004), and reflexivity (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Finlay, 2002; Macbeth, 2001; Woolgar, 1988). These streams of literature are drawn upon because of the interconnected questions they explore about sociomaterial boundaries and entanglement. Additionally, an important influence is emerging

work associated with Linguistics which has also begun to explore the possible implications of posthuman theory for writing and producing research texts (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Gourlay, 2015; Pennycook, 2016).

I add to existing debates about writing in two main ways. Firstly, I develop a conceptualisation of the posthuman author as an *unbounded gatherer*. 'Unbounded' referring to selves and authors as inextricably sociomaterially entangled within the realities about which they are inquiring (Gergen, 2009). Gatherer in reference to Law's (2004) metaphor of 'gatherings' which relates to appreciating how process and methods of researching are enacted within an emerging and intra-acting world. The image presented of the posthuman author as an *unbounded gatherer* active in relatings of fragments of realities, involves a humility of appreciating and experimenting with potential insignificances of writers' selves in authorship. *Unbounded gathering* adds to other authors' recent demonstrations of alternatives to destabilise predominant ways of writing about managing and organizing, for example, 'metalogue' (Allen & Marshall, 2015), 'polyphonic novel' (Helin, 2015), and 'fictocritical' (Rhodes, 2015).

Secondly, debates about appreciating entanglement by bringing materiality in to writing about studies of organizations and management are extended (Fotaki et al., 2014; Muhr & Rehn, 2015; Prasad, 2016). I achieve this by drawing on and developing ideas of 'mediators' (Latour, 2005) implicated in writing-reading, a term I develop to reflect and highlight the relational unfolding in the reception as well as production of texts. Five categories of emergent mediators (discourses and associated performances of academia; texts and inscriptions; technological artefacts and writing equipment; academic publishing systems; and, physical and virtual spaces of intra-acting) are explored in an illustration of *unbounded*

gathering. The illustration of the possibilities for posthuman authorship draws on research interviews with senior managers in the energy and power industry to whom I asked questions about the concept of sustainability. The need to address questions of socio-ecological sustainability, a key aspect of which relates to fossil energy use and climate change, is an important prompt for rethinking human/nature, human/animal and human/technology boundaries (Bateson, 1972; Plumwood, 2002). Additionally, I suggest and examine three textual practices (photographs and images, crossed out text, and notes) that taken together help show the flow and flux of the sociomaterial relations amongst which research accounts are produced. My experimenting with tracing mediators and performing three textual practices I suggest can be an entry point for exploring and expressing posthuman writing about organizing and managing.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section discusses how posthuman ideas of sociomaterial entanglement add to post-structural debates about social-cultural embeddedness. An understanding of the distinction between embeddedness and entanglement, in particular from the work of Barad (2003, 2007, 2013), is key to the argument which informs the re-imagining of writing and associated contributions. In the next section, work which has taken a posthuman view of writing is reviewed to show how this article will extend existing debates. In particular, the emerging use of the concept of 'mediators' (Latour, 2005) to explore how the entanglements of persons, devices and other artefacts produce writing and meanings, is considered. Next the reconceptualisation of writing as *unbounded gathering* is presented, which includes distinguishing the approach developed from other genres such as autoethnography, because a posthuman perspective brings close attention to the problematics of humanist selves. This section includes introducing the emergent categories of mediators that will be traced in an illustration of

unbounded gathering, as well as describing three textual practices that will be explored in the illustration. The following section introduces and illustrates the consequences and possibilities for unbounded gathering based on the interviews with senior managers in the energy and power industry about the concept of sustainability. The next section, organized using the five emergent categories of mediators, analyses and discusses the illustration, which leads to the final section that brings together the key contributions and highlights the value of experimenting with the implications of entangled authorship.

From embedded to entangled

The posthuman interest in considering boundaries can be traced from earlier post-structuralist debates, which suggest that the categorising and bounding of people and things is highly important in creating and limiting our representations, and so our understanding of being in a world (Bateson, 1972; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1974). A key aspect of these earlier debates is to challenge perspectives which see the world as being composed of discrete things and entities which have solid separations. For example, Bateson (1972) argues for rejecting views of bounded selves and bodies by suggesting a need for expanded concepts of human and mind to (re)embed ourselves and our understanding. Through an analysis of post-structuralist writers Burke promotes the idea of an author being something that is not related to an autonomous and humanist self, but as "the site of a collision between language, culture, class, history, episteme" (2008, p. 167). Post-structuralist texts attempt to show "inconsistencies, fragmentation, irony, self-reflection, and pluralism" by including "multiple voices, pluralism, multiple reality and ambiguity" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 201). Consequently, post-structuralist authorial selves are understood as inevitably embedded in and so referentially expressive of a socio-cultural world in which they are becoming.

Posthuman theory extends post-structuralist questions of boundaries to appreciate how materiality (including technologies and ecologies) along with socio-cultural embeddedness can be understood as active in producing boundaries and realities (Barad, 2003, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 2008). For example, Barad suggests that "practices of knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices, not simply because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part" (2003, p. 829). The radical claim related to ideas associated with posthuman theory is not that things are social and material, rather that they are only defined and produced by their interaction (Jones, 2013). In posthuman theory the social and material are appreciated as being in co-constructing interrelationship where, as Cooper explains, "nothing is complete or self-contained but is the result of the continuous movement between things" (2010, p. 247). For example, Ingold argues that our skin can be understood "not [as] an impermeable boundary but a permeable zone of intermingling" where "every organism – indeed, every thing – is itself an entanglement" (2008, p. 1806). Consequently, working within a posthuman view requires not just an appreciation for social-cultural embeddedness, like the post-structuralist ideas which challenge notions of an autonomous and humanist selves, but also of sociomaterial entanglement.

Barad (2003, 2007, 2013) makes a key contribution to posthuman theory by developing ideas to appreciate socio-material entanglement. In her 'agential realist' account "matter is not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency" (Barad, 2003, p. 828). What this means is that nature, objects, matter and bodies, far from being "passive surfaces" (Barad, 2003, p. 827) are "iterative intra-active" (Barad, 2013, p. 17) in a becoming world. Barad suggests that Haraway's concept of 'cyborgs', an organism that is both organic and technological,

epitomizes this point as to how boundaries "materialize in social interaction among humans and non-humans, including the machines and other instruments that mediate exchanges" (Haraway, 1992, p. 298). For example, Orlikowski (2007) explores how internet search engines are agentially active as they enact search outcomes that are continually shifting (as a reflection of the interrelating parts such as multiple servers, directories, databases, indexes and algorithms) which means that they help to produce variegated research(er) practices.

Barad argues that agential realism is about understanding within an 'onto-epistem-ology' because bringing together ontology and epistemology helps to enable appreciations that "we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are of the world" (2003, p. 829). As she suggests "'humans' do not simply assemble different apparatuses for satisfying particular knowledge projects but are themselves specific local parts of the world's ongoing reconfiguring" (Barad, 2003, p. 829). Consequently, when seeking to appreciate sociomaterial entanglement we can understand that "knowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement" (Barad, 2007, p. 379), where there is "no 'I' separate from the intra-active becoming of the world" (p 394).

In this section posthuman theory relating to sociomaterial entanglement has been distinguished from post-structuralist ideas of socio-cultural embeddedness. Importantly, in posthuman theory the social and material have been described as being in co-constructing interrelationship, which means that boundaries are understood to be socially and materially diffuse. The implications of posthuman theory for writing have begun to be considered, these will be explored next.

Entangled authors

Some years ago Law proposed an understanding of the author "as a textual and interdiscursive effect" (1994, p. 189). He explains that "whilst it is us that sit down at the computer and push the keys on the keyboard there are also a range of other performances, individual and collective" participating in the writing (Law, 1994, p. 190). More recently, Cooper has considered how writing could be understood as involving an "integrally implied relationship in which both author and computer write or re-late each other" (2005, p. 1708). He suggests there are possibilities to conceptualise how "the computer expands the mind outward" as part of a body "reaching out beyond its own limbic limits" (Cooper, 2005, p. 1708).

Management and organizational scholars have recently begun to engage in these posthuman debates about writing by considering the implications of developing an appreciation for materiality in how we understand and conceptualise writing. Fotaki et al. draw on the writing of Luce Irigaray to suggest that "the creation of ideas is a relational process occurring in the space in between thinkers and through interactions between them" (p. 1251). Consequently, they advocate an embodied reflexivity in writing where writers understand texts as inhabiting an inter-relational feminine space "that nurtures growth and acknowledges pain" and vulnerability (p. 1257), which they contrast with a "dominant masculine position that aims to impregnate" ideas in to passive minds (p. 1257). Other scholars who have considered the materiality of writing use Haraway's metaphor of a cyborg to argue for "greater attention to the technological mediation of writing" (Muhr & Rehn, 2015, p. 135). In particular, Muhr and Rehn (2015) seek to explore how the boundaries between the author and evolving writing technologies (e.g. journal submission systems) can be understood as indistinguishable within the often taken-for-granted relations, and associated boundaries, which produce academic texts.

An important stream of developing work about posthuman authorship, which seeks to challenge separations between language and materiality, is associated with Linguistics (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Gourlay, 2015; Pennycook, 2016). As part of this emerging stream of research Pennycook explains that "sociolinguistic repertoires need to be understood in terms of spatial distribution, social practices, and material embodiment" (2016, p. 6). Or, as Gourlay suggests "all reading and writing is particular rather than abstract, and involves human subjects engaged in material processes which are socially, politically, temporally and physically situated" (2015, p. 485). Hence these studies seek to develop an attention to potential relations between language and materiality, and so how sociomaterial intra-actions can be understood as consequential to writing.

As part of developing a posthuman perspective Gourlay (2015) studies the writing practices of adult learners with particular attention to the involvement of mobile devices, screens and print literacy artefacts. She draws on Latour's (2005) notion of mediators, "changing and transforming texts as they interact with them", to explore how the entanglements of persons, devices and other artefacts produce writing and meanings (Gourlay, 2015, p. 496).

Connectedly, Pennycook attempts to rethink notions of applied linguistics by considering notions of 'repertoire', which involves "interactions between people, artefacts, and space", to explore the ways online spaces mediate authors engagement with them (2016, p. 10).

Posthuman theories have also led to authors experimenting with possibilities for presenting their texts. For example, Appleby and Pennycook (2017) emphasise the situatedness and materiality of their account of 'swimming with sharks' by including specific timings and locations, analysis of dominant (inter)national discourses about sharks, and photos of sharks that they have taken.

In this article, I explore possibilities for further developing a posthuman perspective for understanding writing. I achieve this by presenting a metaphor for helping to imagine what it means to write as an unbounded author. This includes suggesting and illustrating some techniques to notice, bring forward, and raise questions about, sociomaterial entanglements in writing. As introduced, by challenging implied academic distinctions and superiorities, my intention is to help the emergence of alternative possibilities for writing which engage and entangle academics within societies, technologies and ecosystems.

Unbounded gathering

So far I have explored, how posthuman theory extends post-structuralist ideas by understanding the human self as sociomaterially entangled, and reviewed emerging streams of research which have considered the potential implications of posthumanism for writing and texts. Next I develop my contributions to debates by reconceptualising writing about research from a posthuman perspective, drawing particularly upon Law's (2004) metaphor of 'gatherings'. I explain how *gatherings* is the overall metaphor I draw upon for a posthuman reconceptualisation of researching and writing in a sociomaterial world; and, *mediators* is the concept which helps to notice material and nonhuman aspects of intra-actings within gatherings.

Law (2004) uses the notion of 'gatherings' as part of his attempt to re-imagine research methods which can be responsive to a world that is understood to be composed of messy interweavings of social and material relations. Gatherings is a metaphor that refers to researching as involving flowing processes of bringing, or bundling, parts of realities together to form our accounts of an emerging world (Law, 2004). Gatherings connects with

Westwood's metaphor of 'sampling', where writing can be considered as "assemblage of fragments" with the origin of the fragments often "being dispersed and unacknowledged" (1999, p. 196), but extends these ideas of socio-cultural embeddedness to sociomaterial entanglement. Like Barad (2003, 2007, 2013) I attempt to take back some power from language to give 'matter' an active and dynamic place in the intra-actings which give rise to gatherings.

The unbounded researcher can be understood as a gatherer of 'intra-actings' (Barad, 2003); writing-readings, speaking-listenings and co-actings. Like Gourlay's (2015) work on posthuman writing, we can make connections to Latour's concept of 'mediators', to bring attention to the potential agentive role of nonhuman actors in processes of intra-acting. Latour describes mediators (which include texts and inscriptions, and technological artefacts) as active in transforming, translating, distorting and modifying "the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry" (2005, p. 39). Hence, gatherings involves unfolding mediating processes through which written arguments and conceptualisations can gradually and suddenly coalesce. Which means that gatherings is expressive of the wider institutional orderings and networks of practices through which it is performed. This is because the researcher's potential for the flowing of mediatings is becoming amongst the territories of available physical and virtual spaces, taken-for-granted techniques and technologies, as well as accepted institutional and societal discourses and languages. Consequently, gatherings far from being about a heroic researcher's narrative is more likely about the banality of every day movements – like travelling (or not) to the office, or checking citation counts on Google Scholar – which become important and repetitive spaces to relate with. Therefore gatherings helps to shift attention from seeing a lone determined researcher to appreciating research texts as intra-actional accomplishments, expressions of the sociomaterial mediatings through

which they are assembled.

Given these images of posthuman writing as conceptualised as *unbounded gathering* I promote the term 'writing-reading' in this article instead of writing to help bring attention to intra-activity. This term has been used by others, for example Sandywell et al. (1975) in earlier discussions about reflexivity and sociological inquiry. It is being adopted because as Putnam comments "a text is a living document – one that is formed and transformed through multiple readings" (1996, p. 384). Hence, this article connects with the interest in appreciating not just the production of texts, but also how their reception can benefit from being understood through a posthuman perspective. This is both in respect of the relations between writer and reader where the text can be understood as being at their intersection, and also diffusing the sense of an 'I' in a text, which as Butler suggests in her posthumanist approach to writing, becomes dispossessed in the "crucible of social relations" which enable its telling (2005, p. 132).

This reconceptualisation of writing(-reading) can be understood in proximity to other genres of writing, particularly autoethnography. Autoethnography is described as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Consequently, writing autoethnography is suggested to relate to "crisscross[ing] between the boundaries ... of being insider and outsider [and] of being personal and cultural selves" (Alsop, 2002, p. 13). Such texts appear in a variety of forms (e.g. poetry, fiction, dialogue) where the intention is to invite readers to experience with the writer by "evok[ing] in readers a feeling that the experience described is life-like, believable, and possible" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751). Which is suggested to be done by connecting "the personal to the cultural through a

'peeling back' of multiple layers of consciousness, thoughts, feelings and beliefs" (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 185). An example, is Learmonth and Humphreys (2012) who take an autoethnographic approach to explore identity tensions associated with being an academic.

The intentions of *unbounded gathering* relate to autoethnographic attentions to socio-cultural embeddedness. In particular, bringing forward how texts reflect censorship in relation to imagined ideals of "the proper scientist incarnate" which involves "denying ourselves certain thoughts while others are celebrated and underlined" (Alsop, 2002, p. 15). However, the posthuman imagining associated with the *unbounded gatherer* works differently. As Gannon suggests despite "inclination[s] toward partiality and contingency much autoethnographic work leaves the speaking self relatively untroubled in the text" (2006, p. 477). The *unbounded gatherer* opens up alternative possibilities to autoethnography by bringing closer attention to the problematics of humanist selves. Doing this involves taking a different approach to personal-cultural connections. This is achieved by pursuing a posthumanist idea of authorship where the self is understood as lacking sovereignty through interminglings of sociomaterial mediatings. Which means that the sense of control of the potential boundaries and identities which a writer is traversing, as in autoethnography, becomes lost in a soup of unknowing and unintentionality.

Consequences and possibilities

I have adopted Law's (2004) metaphor of 'gatherings' as part of an attempt to help re-imagine how researchers go about inscribing and describing realities from their sociomaterially entangled locations in the world. For the *unbounded gatherer* writing-reading becomes about offering something of the flow of mediations (relating to people, devices, discourses, organisms, spaces etc.) to help appreciate what has been explained as a posthuman

perspective of authorship. I attempt to explore sociomaterial entanglements by developing attention beyond technological devices to the array of 'mediators' which can be "agentive, meaning-making and transformative" in relation to "the processes and struggles of text production" (Gourlay, 2015, p. 498). To attempt to pay attention to the broadest possible array of mediators which can be understood as enrolled into processes of transforming, translating, distorting and modifying writing I draw closely on studies which have mapped mediators in other contexts to explore sociomaterial entanglements (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000; Author, in press). The five categories I develop through my illustration of posthuman writing and associated explanation and analysis are: discourses and associated performances of academia; texts and inscriptions; technological artefacts and writing equipment; academic publishing systems; and, physical and virtual spaces of intra-acting. However, these are not presented as universal or exhaustive categories of mediators implicated in academic writing, instead they are emergent holders for organizing intra-active entanglements that are noticeable in this experimentation in posthuman authorship.

Along with seeking to notice and bring forward mediators that can be understood as consequential in how texts emerge is a need to show the flow and flux of relations and identities that produce accounts of research. Consequently, it is important not to conceal the temporality and messiness of *unbounded gathering* by 'denying disorder' through neatly crafted 'final' texts (Westwood, 1999). As Colyar comments, "writing puts on its trousers one leg at a time, but we rarely see it in stages of undress" (2009, p. 424). Given this need to show writing in perpetual motion, writing-reading encourages certain textual practices. By drawing on other posthuman studies of writing I perform three textual practices as part of my experimentation to offer a new perspective (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Gourlay, 2015). I do not understand these practices as *it*, a final settled way for *unbounded gathering*, but part

of conversations engaged in unsettling dominant writing conventions. Such experimenting can open up possibilities to help us to re-imagine academic texts that are open for richer interpretation, and accessible to diverse readers, because implied distinctions and superiorities, which can detach academics, are unsettled and explored through the writing. Hence, the practices are offered, which I illustrate, as a potential starting point for writers interested in experimenting with posthuman authorship. These textual practices are not primarily offered with the intent of being evocative for the readers, such as in autoethnography, but are part of a taking care in writing-reading by noticing and offering something of the currents and tributaries of mediatings. As will be explored in the illustration by using these textual practices the potential for a final version of the text becomes unsettled as there becomes an embedded sense of contingency, conditionality and openendedness. In this way, these textual practices help to show the workings of the *unbounded gatherer* by offering some visibility upon the dynamics of inscribing and describing realities. The three textual practices are:

Photographs and images – to offer glimpses of materialities through which the text is assembled that could relate to objects, places and other peoples' comments about the developing texts.

Crossed out text – to trace pieces that are written out of the final text, mostly based on expectations of it breaching appropriate boundaries for scholarship.

Notes – to track specific ongoing questions about parts of the text that can and can not be included.

The noticing of mediators and performance of the three textual practices will next be shown with an account of research that investigates how managers in senior leadership positions

make sense of the interlocking challenges of sustainability (including global-local issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and social inequalities). The need to address challenges of socio-ecological sustainability is an important impetus to open up questions about what being human means, and posthuman theories can help us to rethink human/nature, human/animal and human/technology boundaries (Allen, Cunliffe, & Easterby-Smith, 2017; Dyck & Greidanus, 2017; Heikkurinen, Rinkinen, Järvensivu, Wilén, & Ruuska, 2016). In brief, the interviews I completed with corporate managers in the energy and power industry happened across two phases of research. The first phase at the end of 2009 consisted of thirteen telephone interviews, lasting between fifteen minutes and half-an-hour, which involved asking a range of broadly situated questions to explore what sense the managers were making of the notion of sustainability. The second phase a year later, at the end of 2010 consisted of eight face-to-face follow up interviews which lasted between one and two hours and were designed to learn more about some of the emergent themes from the first phase, as well as to consider how managers' views may have evolved. The interviewing methods in the second phase included taking notes about ethnographic details of the site of each interview which involved experimenting with writing down aspects relating to all senses (i.e. sight, see, smell, touch, hear, taste). A core finding from this research was about how the pursuit of cohering identities in relation to sustainability did not appear to matter for most of the managers, this is explored in detail elsewhere (Author, 2015).

The following illustration is organized under four headings: (1) 'Beginning writing' - which discusses the origin of the research project and some key influences when attempting to publish the study; (2) 'Introducing the senior managers' - about the historical contact with the research participants and the purposes of the study; (3) 'Re-encountering the managers' - considers places and spaces within which the interviews were conducted; and, (4) 'Analysing

managers' talk' - about the processes of analysing the materials from the interviews and the emerging dilemmas and confusions. In the illustration I **bold** mediators in the text and subsequent to the illustration analyse them organized into the five emergent categories which, as discussed above, are informed by other studies (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000; Author, in press).

Making sense of senior managers making sense of sustainability

Beginning writing

*This illustration has been developed from accounts of the research written when the analysis of the interviews with senior managers in the energy and power industry was first completed, and dilemmas about how to respect sociomaterial entanglement in written accounts of research emerged. I wrote it and hence this is to whom the use of 'I' or 'my' is referring. The original version (see 'Image 1') was produced for a conference that aimed to explore methodological issues related to **Science and Technology Studies** – the contemporary title for a multidisciplinary research stream which includes the philosophy of science and sociology of knowledge – which was organized by members of a Sociology department.*

<Image 1 HERE>

Image 1 - Screen shot of part of the original conference paper which mentions 'gatherings' with some comments from a reviewer about ontology

The conference paper was the starting point for exploring posthuman theory in this article (~~although this moved through phases when it was explained to be particularly~~)

*drawing on ideas of 'radical reflexivity', later revised to be 'sociomaterial entanglement', latterly 'posthuman theory') which in rewriting has moved away from attempting to be a completely self-exemplifying text to an article with a conceptual explanation informing 'unbounded gathering' supported by this illustration. This is because from the initial submissions to several journals the **reviewers' requested** more justification and argumentation for the writing approach. For example, a reviewer of an early version of the article which I submitted to **a highly ranked management journal** commented:*

"The paper is basically an attempt to write two different papers: one paper about research reflexivity and one about tensions in sustainability. The reasons for the failure to combine them are 1) your reflexivity does not add anything in relation to understanding the managers' sustainability tensions, and 2) the managers' sustainability tensions do not add anything to understanding the research process." - Anonymous Reviewer

It was an option to produce something entirely 'new' for later revisions of this article to illustrate the arguments about the meanings and practices of posthuman authorship. However, doing so had the potential to become overly contrived and lacking relational grounding. This illustration, which has been revised multiple times since the original conference paper, is not meant to be 'it' a final settled destination for unbounded gathering, but a space for imagining and experimenting with what could be possible and acceptable in writing research about organizations and management.

*A key source that I refer back to and reread to help to appreciate myself as an unbounded author, is **a poem** by Ted Hughes called 'Wodwo', which I found my way to via a mention by Davies, suggesting that the poem was about a creature "mapping the fluid boundaries of identity" (1997, p. 133) - see Image 2. Davies introduces the connection to Hughes's poem in the concluding section of his book 'Humanism' (~~which I found on a key word library search, as in starting to try to write about posthumanism, I realised that I had little idea about what humanism meant~~) as part of possible ways forward from "imperial" humanisms (1997, p.130).*

<Image 2 HERE>

Image 2 - Photograph of Davies (1997) open at the pages referring to Wodwo resting on my computer keyboard

Introducing the senior managers

I first came into contact with the corporate managers between May 2006 and May 2008 when I worked as an Account Manager in London for a Global Research and Consulting Company (GRCC). At this time my primary objective was to sell the corporate managers either off-the-shelf market intelligence or consulting projects which were offered in support of helping their businesses pursue new markets and develop new technologies to grow. I had embarked on the interviews to hear the managers' views to test the terrain for the planned scope of my PhD research project. ~~I wanted to challenge them because I was getting increasingly worried and annoyed by seeing the disconnections between what organizations did and any demonstrable care for the ecologies in which their operations are embedded.~~ My intent was mildly mischievous as I wanted the managers to engage with a concept that is often

suggested to be adversarial to prevailing ways of doing business, and tends to be partnered by forceful **critiques of global capitalism** and logics of boundless quantitative economic growth (for example, Daly (1996) [Note – not sure this is the best reference here, but as it is cited by over 2500 in **Google Scholar** it looks legitimate so probably OK]). ~~As it wasn't long ago that I had pursued them with phone calls and emails trying to get them to sign off consulting contracts, they wouldn't suspect quite how questioning I had become of the one dimensional corporate obsession with the 'bottom line'. However, I thought that my approach wouldn't appear too quarrelsome, because I was studying at a **Management School**, and I had not long ago departed from the corporate world. In the early stages of my PhD picking up the telephone to the managers, like when I worked at GRCC, was quite a comforting way forward. I didn't know what I was doing and this looked like a pretty competent and 'engaged' way to get going. Also, these senior managers tended to be good at sounding like they knew what was going on so could perhaps convince me that the scientific chatter of the planet being in ecological melt down was only a temporary glitch.~~ [Note – should now be more palatable with the less boisterous rewording – remove previous versions of the sentences]

Re-encountering the managers

Going back to visit the managers which I had previously met at **their offices** when I was working for GRCC felt an odd experience. These places, that several years earlier were normal and uninteresting, appeared strange and novel. ~~My observations seemed to be with a fresh pair of eyes, like an alien from a different world, which I found to bring forward elements that I had not previously noticed nor pondered.~~ [Note – remove, is this sounding too contrived and romanticised?] Whether it was

*about: navigating past a thick set bouncer, who was standing at the door of the headquarters of a major global oil company, where I then waited in their expansive lobby with large screens flashing images under titles including ‘Sustainable Development in Angola’; musing about the differing approaches to promoting change as I watched on a plasma screen people trying to overcome a police barrier at the UK student fees protests in Parliament Square during December 2010, whilst in the waiting area at one of the innumerable entrances on the city like complex of a major manufacturing company; or, overhearing a conversation between the company owner and a visitor at an industrial estate located alternative energy business about the senior management team’s penchant for sports cars, some of which were on display parked outside. Such places and scenes had been previously part of my day-to-day, but I felt almost like a visitor from a separate world as I travelled on trains and buses around the UK pushed about by a **cold and snowy December**.*

*Paul, one of the interviewees, mentioned something that was brief and placed quite unobtrusively amongst some other points he was making that stuck out in our two hours of conversation [Note – do I need to mention this was via **internet video call software** as the snow stopped me travelling? – because of the weather Paul was in his home office which related to him referring to objects which surrounded him, including his family’s recycling bins which he could see out of the window]. ~~He was a wonderful interviewee to speak with as he was so candid about his sustainability concerns and how he was leaving his job as Sales Director because the people he worked with thought that his company acting in ways that showed responsibility for the environment was all “bollocks”.~~ It was in relation to a consulting project that I had sold to his organization whilst at GRCC. The commission from the project had*

paid for a proportion of ten months travelling, a core space for reflection before embarking on a PhD.

The project was a global opportunity analysis to help understand the country markets where the client could sell older power generation equipment, largely gas turbines, that they had refurbished. However, Paul, who had developed the original project brief, suggested during the interview that the intent of the project had been about finding "legislative environments we feel that we can go and exploit elsewhere so can we take these nasty old horrible turbines and sell them in Africa or something". Whilst some wider eyes at the time might well have picked up on these apparently unseemly undertones to the project, it was slightly alarming and unexpected to have brought into focus what my job, and well intentioned ~~hard~~ work to design and agree the project had been supporting. ~~Those lazy starts to the morning where myself and my wife supped a café con leche and munched some butter laden tostada outside a café in the sunshine before we continued on our three months of wandering across Northern Spain, now feel somehow tainted as I contemplate what other effects my earlier profiteering might have been having on some unsuspecting corner of the globe. Indeed the Nicaraguan village where we had lived for three months during our travels certainly appeared unprepared for similar outside forces. [Note – that's a good bit, but again in saying something about the relations I emerged from to ask these questions I can't help crafting myself into a heroic position – cut it?]. It was as if Paul wanted to tell me that although I had moved into my position as researcher my living was as intertwined as he was in what he described as the "treadmill of growth" which he explained as being at loggerheads with his understandings about sustainability.~~

Analysing managers' talk

*During the weeks I analysed the interview data, like during the rest of my PhD study, several times a day I wandered backwards and forwards between the flat where we lived on the university campus and the desk in the department that I worked at (see – Image 3). I completed this ten minute **walk through the concrete corridor of university buildings** with its occasional spaces plastered with an ever changing array of student postering at least two and a half thousand times during the three years. [Note – this sounds very dull – need to make this banality come across as potentially important or it's not going to work] This journey was often a significant daily part of my unmediated sense of the world. Consequently, any changes on this path seemed to be things to take notice of as the territory I moved through shifted. For example, a poster for the Hiking Club who made frequent trips to a nearby National Park might take my attention and leave me wondering what the managers said about outdoor pursuits, and whether this was a possible theme to be noticed. Some speculative **key word searching** across the transcripts when I got to my computer would occasionally ensue.*

<Image 3 HERE>

Image 3 – Photo from above of the author completing a walk between home and office across the university campus.

My striving to bring into conversation the most challenging edges to the managers' talk left me wondering how much I might amplify these beyond their momentary significance in amongst the hours of interviewing. Was my careful emerging of key

themes becoming something of a masquerade for manipulating their talk into shapes that could help give voice to my frustrations about a lack of urgency in organizational action for sustainability? ~~For instance, the stalling and resisting a group of us were encountering from university managers in attempting to get approval to allow some more food growing space on campus for an expanding list of enthusiastic students and staff.~~ [Note – delete last sentence – good to glimpse what else was evolving in the ‘background’ but could sound like more heroics!]

*When seeking to analyse the **transcripts of the interviews** with the managers and bring together some key themes I found difficulties comparing and contrasting managers’ views. What frequently happened was when I began to develop an argument about the relative placing and positioning of the content of each managers’ sense-making I became unstuck as looking back again at each transcript I would notice something else that they had said appeared to cut across other pieces of their talk and destabilise my attempts to place their views in relation to the other managers. [Note – I was generally unsure about what doing a ‘good’ qualitative analysis required – is this aspect over played?] An example of this is from Adrian when articulating his views on what he sees as the current sustainability challenges. [Note – Bit worried about this quote looking too tidied up with all those dots and some added words – like I’ve fiddled with it. Could revert to my initial approach with the transcripts to write out the words, sounds and pauses verbatim captured by the **voice recorder** – it was amazing how messy speech can be – but readers will surely expect / need it to be grammatically tidy.]*

Adrian – We don’t really understand complexity that well and all the interplay

so maybe coming out of this mess ... people are now thinking [about] ... these issues ... climate change [and] banking disasters. ... I ... think people all took [these things] for granted ... all we need is for the lights to go out a bit and that would probably be the last piece, or food shortages.

This comment seems strange considering his earlier remark about how businesses have the sustainability agenda in hand.

Adrian – I think the corporations are all switched on to it. Companies like us understand corporate social responsibility [and] have some sort of sustainability agenda etc. so I don't think there's an issue at the corporate level; but corporations have to have a viable offer they [have to] make money ... for their business models so ultimately the consumer has to be able to discriminate and pay the extra.

Through the analysis I found myself increasingly lost and confused about where these managers were placing themselves and how they were seeking to be identified in our conversations about sustainability. The managers' constructions of the challenges associated with sustainability, including some of them explicitly suggesting that they saw tensions between working to fulfil their businesses' objectives and acting on their concerns relating to sustainability, appeared to upset the potential to make non-contradictory sense when trying to place themselves as being good corporate managers and human beings. ~~It was all very convenient that they were able to hold it all together and then deflect responsibility away to their constructions of distant others (politicians, China, bigger businesses ..)~~ [Note – sounds too much like I'm

trying to 'take a pop at them' – delete it?] However, perhaps the more surprising thing was that I had considered that there might be a close relationship and strong connectivity between what the corporate managers said and where they chose to place themselves in the world, expecting that they would tend to embody their exalted organizational positions. Was my belief that managers and people would more generally have something resembling a consistent thread linking their thoughts and actions deeply naïve?

~~My feeling was that if I was committed to a particular state of knowing about something then I would need to go on in a way that took account of it i.e. engage in learning or reflection: indeed a friend recently described my wife and I as 'coherent'. When I asked him what he meant he described that he saw an unusual connectivity between what we advocated and what we did, citing observations like we grew some of our food and avoided owning a car. [Note – nice bit about conversation with a friend, but sounds like I'm moralising again through mentioning us acting 'sustainably' - not showing posthuman awareness? – remove] Had I become some peculiar product of modernist rationality privileging conceptions of human **self-identity where possessing a coherent and connected narrative was possible and preferable?** And anyway, who was I to impose my moral view of what was and what was not contradictory upon the meanings of what the managers had said to me?~~

<Image 4 HERE>

Image 4 – View of my computer screen at 14:52 UK time on November 21st 2017 after I have developed an initial version of the caption for this photo whilst making revisions to respond to reviewers' comments

Analysing and discussing the illustration

To examine and explore the illustration of *unbounded gathering* I will next discuss how each of the emergent categories of 'mediators' – material and nonhuman aspects which are active in transforming, translating, distorting and modifying writing practices and textual meanings – are present within, and potentially significant to, the text.

Discourses and associated performances of academia

In the opening paragraph how the original version of the text was produced for a conference associated with a research stream called '*Science and Technology Studies*' can be appreciated as a potentially significant mediator. This subject area assemblage which can be associated with certain academic practices and identities, theories, conference arrangements, texts etc. can be understood as setting possible trajectories for *unbounded gathering*. This is because the emerging text becomes enrolled into and modified through the patternings of intra-actings that produce '*Science and Technology Studies*' as brought together within the ordering of a particular conference and associated academic department. In particular, Image 1 offers a manifestation of the associated performances of academia by showing a reviewer's comments which become part of the assembled text of the conference paper, and figural to interact with through future potential versions of the writing. Other mediators, associated with discourses are '*critiques of global capitalism*' and '*self-identity where possessing a coherent and connected narrative was possible*'. Whilst these are less tangible signifiers of certain performances of academia and writing as associated with '*Science and Technology Studies*' they stand for an array of referential texts which can distort the production of this newly forming text. This can be understood through the bindings of (dis)associations which they can bring into replications and/or repellings of certain textual bundlings.

Texts and inscriptions

'Image 2' which is included in the illustration is of some pages in a book resting on the author's computer keyboard. The image shows the explanation an author (Davies) gives about the potential importance of '*a poem*' by Ted Hughes called 'Wodwo' to developing posthumanist understandings. The book was an available object relating to notions of humanism which was revealed by a key word search of book titles in the nearby university library. As explored in existing work about posthuman writing the inclusion of photographs can offer images associated with the materialities of producing texts (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017). In this case the photograph of the material form of this piece of text helps to foreground that the writing of the illustration is in some ways transformed by the presence of, and intertextuality with, this inscribed material form, which likely would typically 'sit behind' the text. Other mediators highlighted in this category are '*transcripts of the interviews*', documents created to translate the spoken words of the managers interviewed into searchable texts. These documents in electronic and printed format are generated by the author to capture the words and utterances of the managers. However, taken-for-granted practices and conventions of creating and forming these documents, for instance tidying up sounds into a coherent patterns of language, to enable the enactment of accepted qualitative analysis techniques modify the intra-actings they stand for. The resulting materials and the possibilities for searching and gathering within and across the transcripts transforms the potential ways meanings can be ascribed and supported in analysis.

Technological artefacts and writing devices

The agentive role of artefacts and devices in writing has been suggested by other authors (Gourlay, 2015; Muhr & Rehn, 2015). In this category particular mediators of '*key word*

searching' and *'voice recorder'* are identified. *'Key word searching'* technology is associated with the potential to translate broader material interactions (in this case with a poster on the walk to work) into processes of requesting a computer programme to find particular word patterns within interview transcripts (as mentioned above formed through particular taken-for-granted techniques). Whilst potentially innocuous, intra-acting with technologies and texts in these ways can open up possibilities for becoming aware of language patterns, as well as the ability to blend 'similar' fragments of language, and hence are integral to the reasonings associated with unbounded gathering. The *'voice recorder'* can be understood as capturing 'verbatim' the spoken word which can be translated into text. The presence of the voice recorder is transformative to the research process, beyond note taking, by allowing the sounds of the managers' voices to travel between locations and be replayed. Also, the sensitivity and clarity of voice and background sound patterns recorded enable and produce an organization of text into transcripts that extend the boundaries of the researcher's sensory awareness of the interviewing. Additionally, 'Image 4' of the computer screen helps to locate some textual production in time and space, and place the reader as writer in the writing-reading.

Academic publishing systems

The mediators in this category include: *'a highly ranked management journal'*, *'Google Scholar'* and *'reviewers' comments'*. These aspects of writing accounts of research for publication can be understood as significant in how texts are produced. The rankings associated with organization and management scholarship have been suggested to be highly consequential to setting and enforcing parameters of writing research (for example, Willmott, 2011). In this illustration, the comment of a reviewer imbued with the status of a highly ranking journal, is intra-actively involved in reconfiguring the possibilities for writing, by inscribing boundaries into an early version of the text, informing its division into two discrete

texts. '*Google Scholar*' is fleetingly mentioned for the associations it brings to texts via the calculations of citations in other academic texts, in doing so implying and modifying the legitimacies and authorities of certain texts based on the speed and frequency at which they have been referred to in subsequently published texts. Hence, the ongoing algorithmic accounting preferences bring visibility to some texts over others, distorting intertextual meanings to reconfigure writing-reading. Finally, '*reviewers' comments*' are brought forward this time in relation to the justification for taking an 'alternative approach' to writing and the jarring effects of this with typical ways of operating. As is traced through by the crossed out text in the illustration such feedback from publishing systems reverberates through the unfolding production of words as to the exclusions and boundaries which if breached could suffocate potentials for publishing. Consequently, these glimpses help bring attention to how publishing systems can transform the possible emergences of texts.

Physical and virtual spaces of intra-acting

As earlier reviewed a posthuman perspective helps to bring attention to the situatedness and materiality which shape and afford the movements of bodies that we are researching (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Pennycook, 2016). In the illustration a range of mediators can be associated with this category relating to: the places of completing fieldwork (e.g. managers' offices); communication technologies (e.g. internet video call software); and the spaces of analysing research (e.g. a university campus and Management School). In the case of the material arrangements of managers' offices these places inform the ways in which bodies come together in conversations, and meanings are inscribed into contexts. In many ways the buildings can be understood as enrolling and translating the interviewees within them. The virtual space of an internet video call is mentioned as an outcome of modified travelling options due to snow and ice. The consequences of this technology transforms the

materiality of the conversation, whereby the words of the interviewee at work become intermeshed within the objects surrounding them in their home space. Image 3 relates to the repetitive everyday movements of the researcher walking across a university campus, helping to notice how the researchers recurring presence in these spaces can be appreciated as participating in assembling the account of research. The photograph of the researcher at a specific location in time and space infers the type of incidental relationalities which can become interwoven in the motions surrounding writing. Additionally, the '*Management School*' to which the award of a possible PhD is attached for the researcher, stands for particular subject discipline identities which informs inclusions and exclusions of people and technologies into the associated spaces in buildings within which the author is provided a desk with computer. Like the spaces of interviewing the Management School edifice modifies the possible sociomaterial flows of gatherings.

By experimenting with the textual practices (photographs and images, crossed out text, and notes) and tracking mediators it is hoped to show the text as more fluid and open to how an inevitable multiplicity of transient meanings will be found in its writing-reading. In doing so avoiding a naïve reflexivity which overlooks how readers can be devious and clever at deconstruction (Latour, 1988; Lynch, 2000). Also, the attempted constant troubling of the authorial self seeks to erode possibilities to be challenged about promoting narcissistic 'interminable self-analysis' (Finlay, 2002, p. 212) and crafting 'mirages of authenticity' (Seale, 1999). For example, there is a recurring concern about appearing to moralise which is related to including mentions of the researcher's actions beyond the sites of fieldwork and other's words (e.g. 'a friend') about the researcher in motion. These statements help to share something of the mediated flows through which interpretations of the researching coalesce, but because these ways of doing (e.g. travelling by public transport, growing food, not

owning a car etc.) embrace images of particular social identities they could be seen as counter to the entanglements of *unbounded gathering*. However, for writing-reading reflexively an appreciation that there is likely a tendency for researchers to portray themselves as orientated to 'the good' through a crafted presentation of self (Taylor, 1989), helps to engage with these fragments about the researcher's other life spaces and associated daily practices. Although it can be argued about what sort of reality this is presenting, with critiques of reflexive writing suggesting a tendency to become realist (Macbeth, 2001), the *unbounded gatherer* tries to work with an attentiveness to being an evolving interdiscursive effect.

Overall, *unbounded gatherer* is about experimenting with the processes of finding an acceptable bundling of (publishable) text, achieving this whilst flailing in a torrent of sociomaterial mediatings. For instance, the ways that reference management databases, online search engines and citation indexing systems are involved in ordering the gathering by making some texts more visible and helping to exclude others. Consequently, such technologies simultaneously offer potential to connect widely dispersed fragments by opening up possibilities for imagining and bringing ideas together, as well as mediating the range of texts that are picked as being relevant (Orlikowski, 2007). Additionally, the politics of technologies such as journal submission systems, as discussed by Muhr and Rehn (2015), explicitly and implicitly shape the range of possibilities. Many of these material aspects could seem banal or perhaps overly 'techie', but are consequential. Although, as explored, because they are often slippery to say something particular about their effects in writing-reading can be beyond our grasp. However, as illustrated bringing attention to how sociomaterial intra-actions unfold is key to developing understanding about how *unbounded gathering* is entangled in, and expressive of, the wider institutional orderings and networks of practices amongst which it is performed. The confluences of these mediatings inscribe and

are described by *unbounded gathering*.

Closing comments

To unsettle accepted ways of writing about organizations and management which can imply distinctions and superiorities, that detach academics and their writing from societies and ecosystems, I have experimented with a posthuman idea of authorship to open up texts for audiences beyond academia. To achieve this I have attempted to engage in 'sociological imagining' by bringing together ideas across various streams of literature (Mills, 1959). As well as drawing on debates about posthuman theory (Barad, 2007, 2013; Haraway, 1992; Hayles, 2008) and posthuman writing (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Gourlay, 2015; Muhr & Rehn, 2015; Pennycook, 2016), my experimenting has involved bringing together ideas from a range of work relating to sociomateriality (Carlile et al., 2013; Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), relational ontologies (Cooper, 2005, 2010; Gergen, 2009; Law, 2004), and reflexivity (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Finlay, 2002; Macbeth, 2001; Woolgar, 1988). In doing so, I have explored how posthuman theory extends poststructuralist appreciations of authors socio-cultural embeddedness to include sociomaterial entanglement.

To consider the implications for writing from a posthuman perspective, and the associated problematics of humanist selves, the metaphor of *unbounded gatherer* was developed, illustrated and examined. *Unbounded gathering* involves exploring ways to bring glimpses of the flow of intra-actings in to the text. Doing this involved processes of attempting to notice mediators which based on existing studies were categorised as: discourses and associated performances of academia; texts and inscriptions; technological artefacts and writing devices; academic publishing systems; and, physical and virtual spaces of intra-acting. Additionally, to bring forward the multifarious and open-ended sociomaterial

accomplishments implicated in stabilising texts three textual practices were offered and demonstrated (photographs and images, crossed out text, and notes).

By messing up ideas about the authorial self, and conceptualising writing-reading, this article joins others' reflexive attempts to write about writing studies of organizations and management so as to "provoke thinking rather than provide answers" (Rhodes, 2009, p. 667). *Unbounded gathering* is about understanding selves as expanded and entangled, prompting a need for humility in how researching involves bundling together mediatings of flowing fragments of research which drift in and out of reach. The argument for a posthumanist sense of authorship is suggested not to make texts more self-contained, but helps open them up. In this way *unbounded gathering* seeks to "empower the reader in the process of ordering" (Law, 1994, p. 191), whereby the author is overtly placed as "humble explorer" (Gergen, 2009, p. 221) as they go about piecing together and making coherent accounts out of the sociomaterial intra-actings amongst which researching is performed. Hence images of the researcher as a vulnerable and confused refugee appear much more fitting than something resembling a heroic and knowing discoverer. However, *unbounded gathering* is not about collapsing the role of the researcher, self-flagellation or arguing against the worth of researching, but instead trying to promote the importance of writing-reading reflexively from a posthuman perspective. The metaphor of *unbounded gatherer* is about an attentiveness and taking care within the mediatings of entanglements. It is an invitation to experiment in the visible, partially visible and taken-for-granted sociomaterial intra-actings to help enrich the possible range of acceptable qualities of (academic) writing.

The conceptualisation adds to other authors' recent attempts to destabilise predominant ways of writing about management and organizations (Allen & Marshall, 2015; Helin, 2015;

Rhodes, 2015). I have achieved this by developing images of a posthuman approach to authorship and exploring some possible consequences of taking such a perspective. As explained, these ideas are distinctive from other genres such as autoethnography because there is a persistent attention to problematising the humanist self. Additionally, this article has extended debates about bringing materiality in to writing (Fotaki et al., 2014; Muhr & Rehn, 2015; Prasad, 2016). Whereas these existing contributions have particularly focused on considering aspects related to the gendering of texts, this article has proposed some possible techniques to bring attention to the mattering implicated in writing. This has involved drawing on work in Linguistics which has begun to explore the possibilities for posthuman writing (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017; Gourlay, 2015; Pennycook, 2016). Doing so has informed processes of noticing a broad array of mediators, and suggesting and illustrating three textual practices which help bring attention to the sociomaterial flowings in which the *unbounded gatherer* is immersed. These practices can help to enable us to question our assumptions about the mediatings implicated in stabilising accounts of research, and are offered as potential starting points to experiment in, and with, entanglement. It is likely writers can identify with some of the textual practices, seeing them as part of how they assemble texts, but instead of them being lost for neatness I am suggesting they can be celebrated as part of posthuman quality processes for interpreting and explaining.

By challenging writers-readers' relationships with texts it is hoped *unbounded gathering* helps promote critical debate about researcher entanglements within the practices and places in which claims are made to knowing about managing and organizing. The potential vulnerability associated with such imagining and experimenting can be challenging and unsettling for writers, reviewers and readers. An expanded and entangled idea of self opens up difficult questions about researcher freedom and responsibility, which are beyond the

scope of this article. The associated disorientation can be seen as an invitation to rethinking how we understand what we are doing when participating in processes of (publishing) writing. Can we enact appreciations that allow possibilities for *unbounded gathering* when we are reviewing and reading to assess the qualities of texts? And, if attempting to publish in respected journals by writing differently, perennially draws us back into writing conventionally about being different, as was involved in this article's journey, can it be claimed as an alternative? Given our entanglements associated with such things as academic jobs, careers, university performance criteria and journal rankings, understanding experimental texts as part of doing impactful scholarship is not straightforward. However, as argued, one possibility is that *unbounded gathering* could help open up academic texts for broader engagement beyond the few academics who tend to relate with journal articles. Doing so could mean that such texts initiate and become part of conversations which help challenge implied authorities and boundaries such as teacher-student and expert-lay. These conversations would likely not be easy nor comfortable, but by unsettling implied distinctions and superiorities *unbounded gathering* can help us to portray posthuman versions of selves that can challenge unhelpful detachments of academics from societies and ecosystems. We may even produce texts which we are more able to live up to, instead of finding ourselves depicted as a version of human that is unimaginably skilful, immaculate and uncontradictory.

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