

MEMORY AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
LIFE

guest editors: Pierre Guillet de  
Monthoux and Antonio Strati

Alberto Zanutto

Mikael Scherдин

Timon Beyes

Terry Brown & Kathy Mack

Niina Koivunen

Klaus Harju

also

Ben Johnson

on The Liverpool Cityscape

Barbara Loftus

on visual narrative

Claire Jankelson

on the aesthetics of listening

Aesthesis

International journal of art and aesthetics in management and organizational life

# Aesthesis:

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The Aesthesis Project was founded in January 2007 and is a research project investigating art and aesthetics in management and organizational contexts. The project has its roots in the first Art of Management and Organization Conference in London in 2002, with successive conferences held in Paris and Krakow. From those events emerged an international network of academics, writers, artists, consultants and managers, all involved in exploring and experimenting with art in the context of management and organizational research. The Aesthesis Project will be developing extensive research and artistic projects internationally, with academic research fellows and associate creative practitioners, publications and consultancy.

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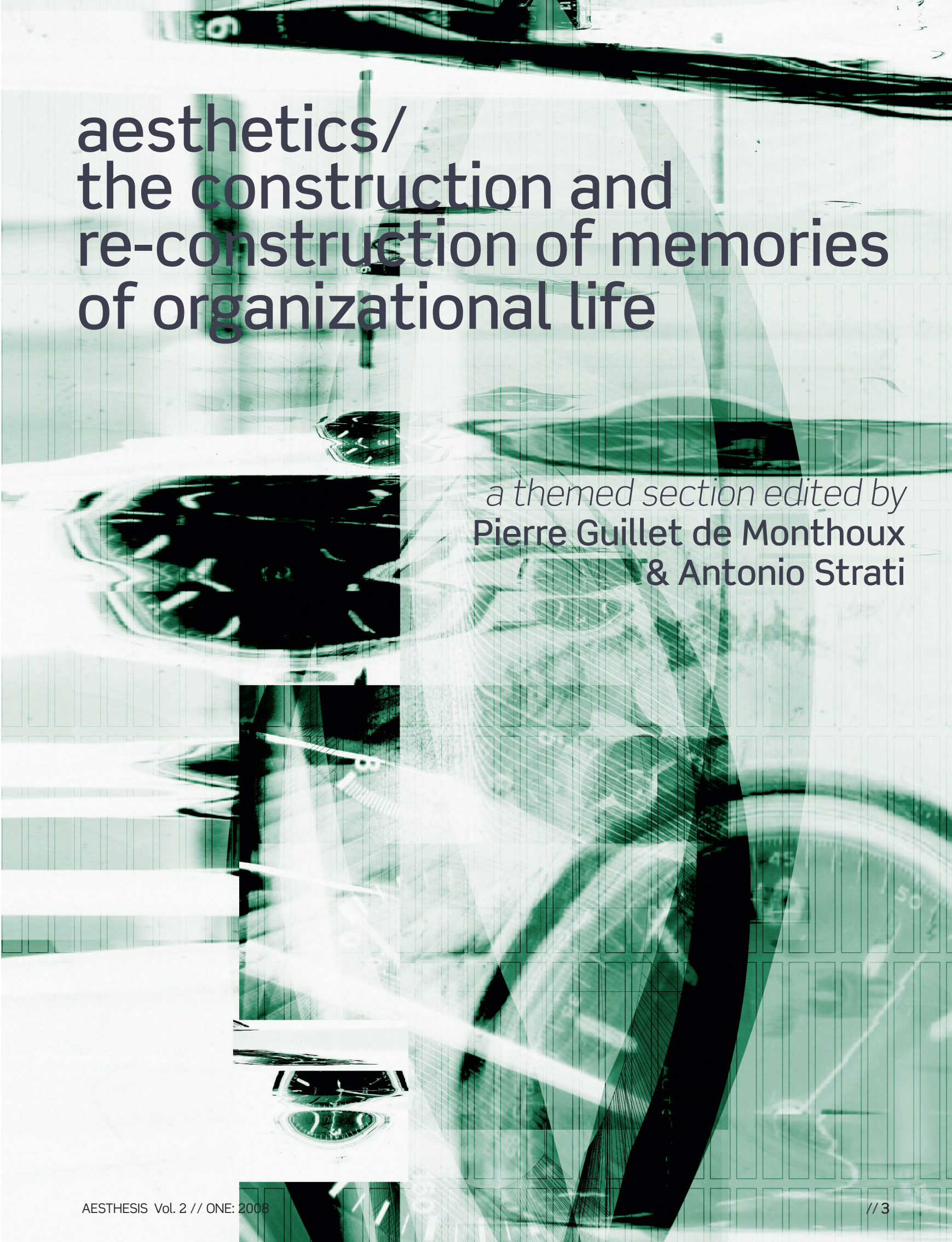
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# aesthetics/ the construction and re-construction of memories of organizational life

*a themed section edited by*  
**Pierre Guillet de Monthoux  
& Antonio Strati**



# Ponte dei Sospiri: Bridging Art and Aesthetics in Organizational Memories

Introduction by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux and Antonio Strati

Do you know when you see it, or do you see it only when you know it? Is it a matter of intention or is it something in the eye of the beholder? Is it a phenomenon or is it a perspective? How, then, do you express it, or how do you represent it? These are just some of the questions requiring an answer when 'aesthetics' enters the realm of social science. The themed *papers* section of this issue of *Aesthesis* is aesthetics and the construction and re-construction of memories of organizational life – such considerations seemed omnipresent to the researchers who gathered in the little village of Gattières,<sup>1</sup> southern France, for the Third EIASM Workshop on 'Art, Aesthetics and Organization' in July 2007. On this occasion, as in the past, the common 'call for papers' was intended to emphasise the dialectics that give strength to the ongoing configuration of an aesthetic discourse on organization. Art and aesthetics, in fact, are not understood in the same way by both of us.



// Pierre Guillet de Monthoux (2004) has a clear predilection for the arts as an arena and laboratory for aesthetic experiments. The arts have an important role as showcases of aesthetic practices threatened and marginalized by bureaucracy and corporate managerialism. Pierre is thus particularly keen to understand and enhance the aesthetics of the organization through artistic intervention.

// Antonio Strati (1999) emphasises aesthetics as a central but forgotten dimension of 'organizational life'. He focuses on *sensible* knowledge and aesthetic judgment in everyday organizational practices, and is particularly keen to highlight that the negotiation of organizational aesthetics gives form to the organization and also shapes power relations in organizational cultures.

These two diverse emphases regarding art and aesthetics in the study of organizations have also configured two different approaches – among others – in organizational aesthetics research: namely, the artistic

approach (Guillet de Monthoux et.al., 2007) and the aesthetic approach (Strati, 2008). The artists, art critics, and organizational scholars who responded to our common call for papers for these three workshops – the first held in Siena in 2000, the second in Gattières in 2003, and the third again in Gattières, in 2007 – were in various ways catering to each convener's special interests. Their participation, however, did not give rise to a clear separation between the two research styles. On the contrary, participants and organizers shared the conviction that both performing art and aesthetic comprehension must be part of our understanding of the social processes of organizing action. This conviction was shared both by participating organizational and managerial scholars and such prominent guests from art world and industrial design such as Alberto Alessi, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Maria Finders and Daniel Birnbaum. Symbolic of this interaction is the Human Relations special issue on 'Organizing Aesthetics', featuring the script of a performance (Steyart and Hjorth, 2002) inspired by the first workshop held in Siena. This was a novelty in an organization studies publication. But even though it appeared in such a prestigious journal, it did not engender much of a hybridization of art and aesthetics in organizational research and writing. The two approaches did not merge together. Rather, they continued to propose, each on the basis of its distinctive characteristics, a common ground for transgressive and novel forms of conducting and representing field research and the theoretical study of organization. In a word, what they had in common was simply a genuine and profound desire for ... aesthetics!

This issue of *Aesthesis* reminds us of this desire for aesthetics in our knowledge of organizations. When Alberto Zanutto writes that the task of research is to 'valorize aesthetics', he articulates an almost programmatic aspiration – aesthetics as an escape from a one-dimensional idea of reality. Zanutto's long experience as a researcher on a variety of projects seems to have shown how aesthetics can be 'smuggled' into traditional organizational inquiries. What memories can one represent, firstly to the researcher him/herself, secondly to colleagues involved in the same research, and thirdly to organizational students and scholars, and to the

organizational actors themselves? Zanutto's article can be read as an ongoing fragmented aesthetic memoir. It also stands as a quest for a deeper understanding of aesthetics in organizational field research, which polemicizes functionalism's basic assumptions in order to open the way for aesthetic experience itself. How can traditional, rather 'square' research, be turned into a multidimensional inquiry -- thus providing an aesthetic research team with techniques for an aesthetic research process that will constructively confuse the binary boredom of an aesthetic reading of organization dynamics! Like most freedom fighters, however, Zanutto somewhat over-simplifies matters. It is difficult to argue that reality is life whilst rationalism is death; for both are part of our desire for freedom. However, his contribution is a viable first step towards transforming the representation of the outcomes of social science research into forms of aesthetic organizational memory.

Mikael Scherдин's argument stands in sharp contrast to Zanutto's strong belief that aesthetic organizational research and the researcher's personal aesthetic comprehension of organizational phenomena should be grounded in negotiation with colleagues. Scherдин's contribution evokes a tension between an almost romantic belief in subjectivity for subjectivity's sake on the one hand, and on the other a view of aesthetics as a social phenomenon that constantly puts the idea of a given subject in constant danger. We ourselves recognize this tension in our own editorial divergences: Pierre Guillet de Monthoux's interests in art are viewed with some scepticism by Antonio Strati on account that art might well obstruct our analysis of aesthetics out there in the field. However, this issue's references to art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud's understanding of contemporary art as performing a 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud, 1998), and Guillet de Monthoux's predilection for Joseph Bueys' definition of art as 'social sculpture', indicate that we are immersed in the intricacies of a controversy. Scherдин's rather radical position begs the question of whether organizational aesthetics can be adequately represented by adopting such an individualistic style in field research. Comparisons with Zanutto's article may thus help us grasp the delicate nuances of organizational research in practice, in ways that induce diverse states of aesthetic feeling in the researcher. Here we get a feel for how to 'legitimate' certain forms of aesthetic understanding through a process of negotiation in the context of a plurality of individual aesthetic understandings. This contrasts with the aesthetic 'self-legitimation' assumed by Scherдин's 'autoethnographic' re/construction of the aesthetics of his individual organizational memories. Moreover, both articles echo broader methodological controversies in social studies, and one can see emerging a process by which the study of the aesthetic is negotiating its own legitimacy in the context of mainstream methodologies. In a sense, this brings us back to the central issue in aesthetic organizational research, that of the epistemological controversy (Taylor and Hansen, 2005) – but with a touch of novelty introduced by the specific characteristics of these two research experiences.

These methodological reflections can be understood in a new light through Timon Beyes' detailed account of Jacques Rancière's aesthetic philosophy. When organizing the 2007 Gattières workshop, we recommended this French philosopher to the participants. His booklet *Le Partage du sensible* (2000), as well other works such as *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (2004), raises issues that are not strictly bound to the art world but encompass the way in which our world offers itself to be shared and divided up in our daily perception of it. This philosophical aesthetics has recently gained fame in art schools and amongst young artists. French theory, however, has a very special way of elucidating how aesthetics is

a fundamental approach to social philosophizing, and it signalled for us exactly what the title of this introduction indicates: bridging art to aesthetics (and back).

Beyes' article provides a 'crash course' in this aesthetic philosophy. Rancière sees the formation of new arenas, the emergence of new collectives, and the voicing of new desires, and this new activity is fundamentally aesthetic. It is up to aesthetic intuition to give form to, to organize if you prefer, otherwise silenced and suppressed phenomena. Rancière's aesthetic perspective opens up what might be called a *political* analysis, and it is, as Beyes makes clear, 'critical' in the sense of relying on the self-organizing force of aesthetic intuition. The researcher is not a judge nor an expert once s/he has opted for an aesthetic approach. S/he develops a sensitivity to aesthetic forces that are profoundly liberating because they creatively generate their own trajectories, rather than simply voicing dialectic criticism or staging violent revolts.

While illustrating Rancière's aesthetics, Beyes alludes to possible implications for the study of organizing processes. Beyes also claims that Rancière's organizational aesthetics has emerged as a philosophical alternative to the implicit authoritarianism of aesthetically engaged sociologies, like that of Pierre Bourdieu. Hence his article raises an issue similar to that encountered in the tension between Zanutto's and Scherдин's articles: the tension between an aesthetics implicitly imposing something that 'ought to be' and an aesthetics that only reveals the organizational control of the sensible in order to defy and escape it – as in Strati's aesthetics (1999) or Gagliardi's empathic-logical approach (2006). The question of who is most prone to open up organizational life – a sociological researcher or an



aesthetic philosopher – still remains. Terry Brown and Kathy Mack provide a concrete example that might appeal to Rancière. They show that aesthetic research forces us to assume a new stance as social scientists. As they reflect on common organizational memories, Brown and Mack are compelled to give form to everyday artifacts in order to invoke the aesthetic dimension of collective memory. Zanutto insists that aesthetic research consists of encounters within a team of researchers, while Scherdin develops arguments to defend the sphere of subjective action for individual interpretations of an experience. For both of them the outcome of the aesthetic research process is unclear, although one surmises that it would be some kind of organizational awareness of aesthetic processes in Zanutto's case and some sort of art-like product (cut off from its context) in Scherdin's. Brown and Mack, however, illustrate how they used multimedia techniques to make a product that was then fed back into the field in order to bring forth an aesthetic dimension common to both researchers and researched: research thus consists in crafting a piece of art necessary to bring forth forgotten aesthetic memories in organization.

Niina Koivunen analyses this process by exploring the making of an artistic artefact: a recording of contemporary classical music. Her contribution implicitly supports Brown and Mack's account. They simply had to make a product to bring forth an aesthetic process; for Koivunen it was the other way round. There was a process – the listening to contemporary music by aficionados with set values and with a set context of classical connoisseurs – into which products (the recordings made by the skilled producers observed by Koivunen) were constantly fed. Rather than a process triggered by a product, the product was created by the process, and in ways that,

according to Koivunen, seemed almost automatic and system-conditioned. Koivunen accordingly helps us understand the difference between what we usually call an artwork and what we consider a tool to bring forth the aesthetics of 'non-art' organizational life.

Klaus Harju's article tackles the ontological status of this dimension itself. It propounds the extreme idea that the aesthetic of organization is nostalgia for a never-existing past. This does not involve a beautiful utopia to come; nor an ideal of some sort of perfection to be reached. It is a 'saudade' for the always bygone retrospects, which is not the same as simple nostalgia for an origin. If this is what aesthetics is about, then we are again confronted by the fact that art and research are separated only by a very fine line. For how can we seriously claim that there is a difference between fact and fiction if Harju's point is taken seriously? Mind you, this kind of fiction is not an ideal, a universal dream, or a claim to transcendent reality. It is a poetical fiction tainted by singularity, which can only be reshaped in a Nietzschean process of eternal return.

In editing this themed section of *Aesthesis*, however, we have not been able to maintain that artistic and aesthetic approaches are distinct and counterposed phenomena in organizational research. On the contrary, we have found ourselves affirming – with Rancière – that a crucial issue in both the aesthetic and artistic approaches to the study of organizational life is the changeover to a post-aesthetic discourse on organization. This involves a sensitivity, an awareness, and a taste that shapes organizational aesthetic research on the re/construction of organizational memories, as the capacity for aesthetic pathos in the understanding of organizational life. The novelist Philippe Delerm (2005: 114) – to continue with the French slant of this introduction – has relevantly and masterfully evoked:

.... tous les témoignages de lecteurs concordait: on lui était reconnaissant d'avoir su inscrire dans le temps et l'espace des sensations détachées du temps, dans lesquelles chacun se reconnaissait pour avoir éprouvé non les mêmes, mais leur équivalent dans un lieu différent, avec une intensité perdue.

..... all the readers' testimonies agreed: they acknowledged her mastery in inscribing in time and space sensations detached from the time when each reader recognised that they had felt not those sensations themselves, but their equivalents in another place, bereft of intensity.

## NOTE

1// We surely do not need to introduce Siena, but we want to say a few words about Gattières: The 4000 inhabitants of this little village, situated some 20 minutes drive from Nice-Cote-d'Azur airport, enjoy not only art & aesthetics conferences: in the village there are three good value-for-money restaurants and as many nice bars for your pastis. You can, as conference goers, check in at the nice small Hotel Beau Site and then visit Le Jardin run by the European Center for Art and Management. This is an ultra-select art space open only one day each year for us mortals. Last year Benjamin Saurer put on a show for the conference – starring a big Zebra painting and a pony in Zebra suit (see over). The rest of the year this art-space is devoted to the aesthetic education of those extraterrestrials frequently flying over the neighborhood in their tiny saucers. But there is also an annual opera festival performing late July:  
opus-opera@wanadoo.fr



Deleuze et....



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# Story as imagination: an aesthetics of listening

Claire Jankelson

This paper explores the centrality of imagination in the dialogic process of telling a real life story. The provocation for this paper arose out of the author's actual experience of an older woman who relayed her dramatic life story for the first time, and on reading the transcription was upset to find that the essence of her story had not been captured. The question arises: What ingredients need to be present for a story to 'live on'? It is presented here that story lives in the imagination – not the imagination that is surreal or more than real, but the imagination that is more than the sensory, that has a life, that is real for the one experiencing it. The way that a story is told such that it then takes on a life in the imagination of the listener is questioned.

This is a story of two stories: the first was inadequate, the second satisfied the teller. It is the story of this author in relationship with a storyteller whose story took on a life in my imagination. It is further a story of this author in relationship with you, the reader, relating both story and the experience of listening to that story, to you, in the hope that some aspects of all of these stories will take on a life in your imagination. You are invited into that empathetic level of engagement which occurs when a story is told effectively.

In the light of the narrative told, it is significant that this article was first read at the Art of Management and Organization Conference, Krakow (2006).

The old-fashioned room is cluttered with piles of books, papers and paper folders atop every possible surface, one of those rooms that was thoughtfully furnished many years ago and dominated by a king-size bed. Lying beneath white bed covers, the small figure of a pale ageing woman is barely propped up by many cushions, her hair pinned back in a bun. She looks up, peering over her reading glasses and in the sweetest, high-pitched, lilting, if slightly breathless voice,

greet me warmly. A tube dangles from her nose and hangs onto her chest like a lanyard. She expresses her gratitude for my presence. The oxygen pump quietly beats in the corner below a huge television set. I glance down at the myriad papers stacked on her bed and notice that she has been working on her will and scribbling many calculations on a tissue box. I look around for a place to sit and she suggests that I move the pile of books and papers off a stool and

onto the far side of the bed. I set up my tape recorder, and so begins a relationship that will cram a whole lifetime of experience into a few short months.

The following is one incident from Irina's experiences. The words are hers but distilled for this paper. She was from Sosnowiec, Poland, a town that, like Krakow, is within 60 kilometres of Auschwitz. In 1942, at the age of 18, Irina found herself walking:

The day came when they decided to evacuate the ghetto and all the remaining Jews were gathered. We were walking on the road to the station. We didn't really know where we were going but I knew we were being taken to Auschwitz; Sosnowiec went to Auschwitz. It was the closest camp to us.

There must have been a row of about 10 people across, or more, but there were soldiers every few steps. There were many rows behind us. I promised myself that I won't go to Auschwitz, never. I'd rather be shot or hung or whatever they want to do to me, but I won't go to Auschwitz.

I knew already then that in the camps they used Jewish manpower as long as they have the stamina to work and then they put them into ovens. I promised myself not to do them the favour of working for them. I decided, 'No, I am going to fight for my life, whatever, but I'm not going to give in'.

We were on the way to the station. I knew it was pretty close to the station because I knew the area very well as my primary school was in that area. Behind the school was the station so I knew that it was not far to go.

In the row was first my brother on my left, then me, my girlfriend and her mother, and my girlfriend's younger brother and one or two others. We passed some bushes on the side of the road and I told my brother and my girlfriend and her mother that I was going to run away. On my left, I was holding my brother by the hand. I said to him, 'I'm going to run away. You'd like to join me?' And my girlfriend said, 'Don't talk about things like that, don't even ask him.' She called to me and made me feel uncomfortable by saying, 'Do what you want,' then she brushed me off and I went along the row, holding my brother's hand. I said to him, 'You must run with me,' and he didn't say anything. I walked past others to the end of the row and came to the German soldier. I had a little ruby ring from my grandmother and I showed him. I said, in German, of course, 'Look' - I took it off and held it up to him, 'Take this because you might have a daughter or girlfriend.' He was quite young. 'I'm going to run away and I don't need it any more.'

I was holding it up to show him. I wanted to give it to him. And I said, 'I'm going to run away and I know you are going to shoot me.' I knew this because the minute before I planned to run, maybe four rows back, they had shot my girlfriend, Renee, because she was trying to get away. She was such a beautiful girl, with beautiful long black hair. She was so lovely. The soldier came behind her on a horse. In my mind I can still see how they grabbed her by the hair in one hand, and with the other hand, he shot her. This actually gave me the energy then to run at that moment too. Or soon after... the tragedy of it was still before my eyes when I ran.

I just said to the German, 'I'm not going to need the ring', and he said to me, 'Girly,' which is softer than woman or you, sympathetic, 'I don't need it. You keep it. You might need it when you run away, you should have thought about it before.'

I kept the ring and put it back on my finger. I also then told him, 'I know you have to shoot but shoot so that you don't hurt me.' Somehow, after he told me to keep the ring, I had the guts to tell him that.

I ran and there were many shots. I just ran and ran.

My brother had left hold of my hand. You know Michelangelo's painting of the end of the fingers of one hand outstretched and touching the fingers of another hand outstretched? The feeling of my brother letting go of my hand was just like that. I bought 'that painting'. I can still remember this feeling.

He vanished. He vanished.

Over the following months I witnessed and engaged with a story that was being exposed for the first time. This was, I realised, a woman whose brilliant linguistic abilities, being fluent in German, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and English, linked with her spirited and quick-witted nature, had saved her life many times. Her war years were a series of the most unbelievable escapes, disguises, sickness and hunger, meetings with some kind souls, some good fortune and the determination to survive against extreme and devastating odds.

In telling her story, her emotions were deepest expressed and overflowed when moments of human kindness were remembered: when the German soldier shot to miss; when someone risked their life for her; when a woman allowed her to have a bath and lovingly washed her hair; when a young boy on a bicycle gave her a lift. Her prodigious memory and pedantic drive for accuracy in expression of her history, coupled with the stories filtering through her fibrosed lungs and weakening voice, resulted in our lengthy and increasingly intimate relationship.

At the completion of Irina relating her story, the tapes were transcribed and minimally edited by myself. The process of editing was a further layer of being present to and listening to the storyteller. I carefully extracted my voice from the text and reworked the syntax to create a continuous story. Knowing that this was her sole testimony, I maintained every detail as precious; the raw, the



bare, the warm and momentous were each upheld. Every scene played out distinctly in my imagination. Knowing Irena's pedantic drive for exact grammar, I constantly juggled between correcting her English expression whilst striving to maintain her distinctive and nuanced migrant expression. Eventually, with some sense of satisfaction, I presented her with a copy to read.

She phoned me a few days later, quite distraught, and told me that the text had not captured the complexity of her experience. Furthermore, she maintained that many events were either incorrect or inaccurate. She was so disappointed that she could not bear to continue our mission and felt that all our work had been in vain.

I was puzzled as to how this could be possible. I read the script through again and again and knew that whilst there may be some inaccuracies, the many incidents related were powerfully communicated. Her story had now taken on a life of its own within my imagination and I felt determined to find a way for this story to be told to the satisfaction of the teller.

It had taken over 60 years for Irina to feel ready to tell her story. Her three adult daughters had never been privy to the information. She now wanted her entire life story and her life learning that had transpired as a result, to be published as a book and every detail had to be both correct and precise. She told me that the reason she wanted her story told was twofold: firstly, so that humankind would know of the struggle that people who were on the outside of the concentration camps endured; and secondly, to reveal her insight into the human psyche. From her experience she had come to realise that we do not know ourselves until faced with a challenge, which is how we reveal ourselves to ourselves and to humankind. Irina wanted her story to be known and, more than that, she wanted her lived experience to be understood and its characteristics appreciated.

It became apparent to me that for Irina, reading her words on paper was remote from the story that lived within her imagination. Whilst she obviously recognised the details of the narrative, she did not feel that it matched the power and poignancy of the stories that she held within her memory. Irina had no doubt revisited these events a thousand times in her imagination, but for her they were two different stories and the difference between the two was like a deep wound. With her life nearing completion and her identity tied into her past, it appears that Irina was too subjectively charged to recognise the magnitude of her story in the words on paper.

The difference between the oral and written versions of a story is well documented. The detailed description of the protagonist as actor had not yet been written into the story; it was still a series of events. The editor within me knew that the story had been well transmitted and even had the makings of an excellent book. I wondered what I could do to remedy the situation.

It became apparent that the experience of opening herself to her story for the first time, made Irina want to shut down again, as shown in her denying the veracity of the story. I sensed that she needed to be 'emotionally held' to create a safe way for her to open herself to her story; perhaps this meant even to open her story to her self. Telling her story was both a physical and an emotional strain for her and had required great courage.

Kornblatt (2007), a documenter of stories, speaks of the burdens that victims of genocide and other atrocities carry. These include:

- > the need to be a perfect witness for countless victims;
- > the struggle to record in spite of familial and cultural injunctions to stay silent;
- > the encounter with an internal silencer who fears the writer will be either punished or emotionally destroyed by her memories and the act of recording them.

I sensed that within our dialogical relationship, Irina effectively managed to tell her story. To appease her and ensure her absolute satisfaction, I

suggested that we begin recording her life story again, except that this time, because of her ailing health, I would read and retell her story to her. This would allow her the opportunity to make any needed adjustments and corrections. With a look of relief, she agreed. Consequently, we commenced another series of sessions.

Irina became more emotional listening to her story than she had ever been in the telling of it. She often nodded, saying 'yes, yes', as if in agreement with what she had heard, as if she were hearing an anecdote for the first time. Interestingly, there were not many radical changes made, simply a few adjustments and particular details added that became apparent through revisiting some of the events. We slowly and methodically went through her entire story and by the time we reached the end, she expressed that her story was told and that she felt satisfied. She did not ask to review the new transcript. We completed our work together on a Friday. Irina died the following Sunday, two days later. This momentous event happened over a year ago.

In order to create a climate of context for the process I have described, I would like to fill in some personal background. Over the last number of years, I have been researching lived experience in a range of contexts and worked with the stories of various groups, including Holocaust survivors, migrants to Australia and members of corporate organisations. With each group, my process is similar: listening deeply and responsively, developing the story, and drawing the transcribed text into an appropriate form, depending on individual need. The phenomenon that I strive to achieve is a particular kind of engagement with the other (interviewee), my goal being to capture the essence of the story. This engagement arises out of and is a function of the relationship established. How each story is worked with and retold differs

according to the context.

It is useful to look more closely at the subtle nature of this relationship for the essence of each story seems to almost escape out of this complex relationship. The interviewer and interviewee are present to one another, a slightly awkward, unnatural meeting, an intimate and potentially threatening situation where each will feel somewhat vulnerable. The unfolding relationship is as potent with possibility as the impending story may feel unsettling. The story to be told will range through varying states of the teller's and the listener's lived imaginations. The nature of the resultant story will, to some extent, be a function of both.

There is a spectrum of possible ways in which experience can be related. The teller may engage with the details of their experience as it is relived in the moment of the interview or it can be told through the memory of the details without any reliving. It requires a sensitive interviewer to sense the difference. The teller will often move between the two modalities, engaging directly with experience, then bringing understanding to the details of the experience, and then reengaging with the actual experience again. This means that although one is drawing on memory and emotions in constituting the conversation, essentially the conversation is being constituted and constructed simultaneously. When the telling is a direct reporting from experience, as though the events were unfolding in that moment, then an imaginative engagement is present that affects both teller and listener. This is an appeal to presence – a readiness to imagine into experience and report from that position. Events told through memory without this imaginative engagement may become imbued with more intellect or more emotion than were part of the original experience.

The difference between the two ways of telling can become apparent through reading the consequent

text. This may not be clear to a reader who does not have the initial familiarity with the narrator and the story told. When a story has been conveyed with an immediacy, presence and therefore aliveness, on reading one can experience a visceral sensation in the body. John Shotter (1997) refers to the idea of 'responsive speaking' as the 'moment by moment emergence of "words in their speaking"' through which we 'can begin to create with others, in joint action, a sense of the unique nature of our own inner lives ...'. And further, that a responsive understanding of this uniqueness is facilitated through 'our utterly unique and novel uses of language ...'. It is as though that powerful inner imaginative knowing that was present in the speaker transfers to the imagination of the reader through the use of 'responsive' language, also called by Shotter 'witness-talk'. This languaging is expressive and is spontaneously created during the actual conversation.

The complexity of memory and the impact of imagination in its recollection have been controversial topics for phenomenologists (Kearney, 1991). Heidegger asserts the importance of appreciating the finite nature of one's existence as it brings an inner obligation to recollect oneself. Such an action brings a renewed sense of time as one's own. The recollection is then a gathering of one's past, both one's personal past and cultural past. Making sense of and finding an order in the past, which happens by narrating what has been, brings and achieves a strong sense of one's identity. The narration of a life story is therefore much more than a simple recollection of events; it is a preserving and meaning-making process. It stretches back into the past and forward into the future, thereby preserving the meaning of that which has happened and making meaning for that which is still possible. Such a process recollects the horizons of possibilities that have presented themselves in one's life.

Not all phenomenologists agree with this interconnection of memory and imagination. Sartre (Kearney, 1991) suggests that memory is simply the recollection of past events. It is an act of perception and can be relied upon to provide an accurate historical account. He separates memory, as perception, from the act of imagination, which he considers to be the work of fiction and therefore unreal. Ricoeur expands this view with the idea that imagination has two functions: the first is to take us outside the real world into the unreal or possible worlds, and the second is to bring memories alive, 'before our eyes' (Ricoeur, in Kearney, 2004: 155). He states that memory is a virtual quality that has to be brought into consciousness as image. History is thereby made visible through image. Similarly, for Husserl, imagining is a productive act of consciousness, not a mental reproduction. It involves a synthesis of mind and body and acts as an instrument of the truth by expressing the reality of memory. Imagination can be seen as the living, creative building of the events of history into an individual's story or testimony. Ricoeur (Kearney, 2004) thus develops the idea of imagination as a productive, innovative and meaning-making process.

In light of these considerations on imagination and memory, it is of interest again to wonder what happened in Irina's experience of reading the words about her lived experience. She read the text with great anticipation and expectation; however, it seemed bland and ordinary in relation to her actual experience. The level of detail or the particular nuances of language on the page did not realise her intention and carry the message she wanted to convey. It was as though that fluid linking of imagination and memory was not present, at least, in her perception.

What is it that needs to happen in order for a text, a piece of writing or performance, to carry the experience such that the reader or listener is touched or the text makes an impact? Any text requires a renewed and imaginative engagement in order to bring the life of the words from an interview into their full expression as a piece of writing. It required the skills of



a writer to capture this. Yet, when I read the same text back to her, slowly and with expression, she 'got it'. It appeared that the fullness of the story that she had held inside for so long, was incomplete when merely black words on white paper. Her satisfaction seemed to require the emotion of our relationship, the intimacy of voice and recognition, and the credibility that comes through feeling heard, to be present for her to feel that her story, which was after all even more than her life, to be sufficiently honoured.

Remarkably, Irina carried no bitterness towards any group of people. She had managed her life obstacles and was filled with a great love of humankind and its possibilities. Within her imagination, the horror of many situations had transformed into events that could be powerfully imbued with meaning. She wanted to feel the strength of this meaning-making process conveyed in her story as she told it and imagined it to be heard.

Bachelard (Kearney, 1991) describes imagination as an interaction between the person imagining and the image itself. The process of telling various incidents is more than the simple telling of events that were somehow already there. It is a creative act of imagining into and building a picture through words and including the particular expression of those words. Reality is thus being made through the imaginative re-telling. Bachelard speaks of a dialogical interpretation of the image, for the imagination is not a thing in consciousness but rather an action with an intention and an origin. The image can therefore react on other minds and hearts.

Imagination is seen as a free expression coming out of an alive and inventive mind. Whereas for Sartre the image was a monologue between the world and itself, for Bachelard the image offers a world of dialogue between intentional subjects, with listening itself being a creative act. Imagination is thus a constant recreation of reality and as incarnation, is a commitment to the real. His model of the imagination is fuelled by the dynamic movement between projecting out onto things and returning to subjectivity, between speaking and listening.

The dialogic aspects of the imaginative process became integral to what transpired in my experience of working with Irina. After keeping a story inside for many years, the relationship and shared imaginative journeying of narrator and scribe appeared to provide a means of validating the reality of her experience.

Further, the story of my relationship with Irina is instructive in relation to telling a story twice. The first time I listened, each new moment of the story was dramatic and presented to me with a sense of the 'shock of the new'. The powerful events that were almost beyond credibility, unfurled in my imagination like those of a thriller! I believe it required the absorbing time of rereading the transcript and dwelling deeper into those events to open myself as an empathic and 'responsive' listener to Irina. Perhaps it was only in the second dialogical telling that my listening capacity was sufficiently receptive to hold those events completely in my imagination and thus Irina felt the safety of leaving the story 'in my hands'.

Bachelard (in Kearney, 2004) says that to meditate on an image is to dream and to dream of an image is to surpass it. The deep image rises and endures. I am convinced that Irina's story will in time be written into a book. To fulfil her dream, it will require the profound imagination of an author to live into and take on the being-of-Irina in order to make her story sing. It will surely require at least two readings for author and reader to imaginatively hold her story such that it will 'live on'. //

## NOTE (1)

This difference is finely highlighted in *Tales of the Hassidim* (Buber, 1947) in which editor Martin Buber was taken to task for his particular style of polishing the stories for the publication. He defends himself in the introduction by explaining how many of the somewhat peculiar features of these stories evolved through their oral transmission. In order to do justice to both the legend and the lived 'truth' of the stories, he rewrote them without expanding or colouring them, but through the process of projecting himself into the life and times of the Hassidim, as writers would to create a character in a novel. By using this imaginal way, he recreated the anecdotes incorporating occasional phrases or language nuances from the original stories. He remained true to his felt sense of the essence of each story and presented each anecdote bare, without embellishment or explanation, which the original Hassidic tales frequently offered. He therefore wrote from an inner living truth which had developed within him, without relying on oral-based trimmings that were passed down through the generations. In reading these stories, the reader is obliged to make the effort of applying their own imagination to achieve an understanding, and through that effort, the stories achieve a greatness and personal flavour.

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