Organization, seduction and the othered senses

The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue

Eva Pallesen

Abstract:

While the scientific rationalisation of the 18th century centred the visibly observable, it also marginalised the senses as a source of imagination, immersion and pleasure. This reduced version of the senses was inherited into the discipline of organization and management studies along with assumptions of deliberate, goal directed action based on preconceived mental models. These assumptions have been widely critiqued in later contributions to organisation theory. However, this article argues that in order to see this critique to the end, we need to re-connect to what organization studies has 'othered' into the field of art and literature. On the basis of texts from Kierkegaard and Blixen, the article discusses how a literary investigation of the othered senses may inform the study of possibility in an organized context and help us move towards an organizational scholarship, which is open to 'otherness'.

Keywords: seduction, otherness, senses, organization studies, listening

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Introduction: Western thought and the othered senses

While 'body' has gained increasing attention in organization studies, the sensory organs in their tangible corporeality still seem to remain in the shadows. We may understand this in a wider context of western tradition, which has emphasised a reduced version of the senses in terms of the 'visibly real' while at the same time marginalised the senses as a source of imagination and pleasure; in this context the emotional, sensual body has genuinely been associated to a problematic, seducible aspect of human nature.

The connection of the othering of corporeality and 'seduction' was already explored by the Danish 19th century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who noted that 'seduction' emerged from a difference between the spirit and the flesh installed by Christianity. Seduction was born with the installation of spirit as a principle by which the power of flesh was awakened, because "when sensuality is considered under the category of spirit, one sees that its significance is that it is to be excluded; but it is precisely by the fact that it is to be excluded that it is defined as a principle, as a power (...)" (Kierkegaard 1992, 62). Thus, in ancient world seduction was

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lacking as a concept. That does not mean that what we understand as seduction was not going on, but it had not come into existence as an expression of the generalized power of carnality and sensuality. However, Christianity brought sensuality into life by positioning spirit as a principle that excludes the pleasures of the flesh, the sensous, and the erotic. It has therefore also been stated that it is a specific feature for the western world that the sensual-erotic has been established as an anti-thesis to spirit and morality.

In 18th Century enlightenment, the othering of the senses gained another form with the split between the rational mind and the emotional body, foundational to modern scientific thought. Emphasising the visibly observable, scientific reasoning paved the way for a reduced version of the senses - separated from pleasure and bodily passion, which were now 'othered' in relation to the rational mind rather than religious spirit. As noted by Chia and MacKay (2007), this Cartesian split was inherited into the discipline of organization and management theory, gaining impetus in the wake of 19th century productivist economy. While the latter made use of the bodily passions by channelling them into individual economic interest (Hirschmann 1977), the study of organization and management emerging in this context, inherited a self-contained human agent, acting *on* his environment rather than being aesthetically, sensually immersed in this environment (Chia and MacKay 2007). We will return to this heritage in the next paragraph.

Thus, the mainstream discipline of organization theory is born together with assumptions of deliberate, goal directed action based on preconceived mental models (Chia 1999). In this light, 'seduction' pertains what organization is genuinely *not*, since it subsumes the rationally choosing mind to the incalculable and uncontrollable force of sensuality. Thus, it is not surprising that 'seduction' or 'sensuality' is usually not deemed to fall under the purview of organization studies and is almost absent in academic texts on organization. In contrast, if we look into

art and literature, these are omnipresent forces, which penetrate human life. To a contemporary mind, this division of labour between art and social science, which unambiguously places sensuality and passion under the purview of literature and music, may seem evident. However, we are reminded of the historical contingency of such divisions by De Certeau who points out that passions as

> determining movements whose composition organized social life ... were forgotten by the productivist economy of the nineteenth century, or rejected into the sphere of literature. The study of passions thus became a literary specialization in the nineteenth century; it no longer belonged to political philosophy or economy. (de Certeau 1986, 25; Cooper and Burrell 1988)

Thus, in order to think about how to move radically beyond the Cartesian legacy, we need to look into what social science has 'othered' – art, literature, music. In this paper, I will look into two literary treatments of seduction, both playing on the theme of Mozart's opera Don Giovanni and emphasizing the capacity of the ear and the tongue. While social science has addressed 'taste' as a concept, this has been loosened from the sensory organ from which taste is derived, the tongue. And while it has treated extensively *what* we hear (e.g. talk), social science has only given little attention to the capacities of the ear (Pallesen 2018). Indeed this can also be said about organization studies more specifically (Hjorth et al 2018).

However, first I will return to the Cartesian legacy in organization studies and address how recent streams of research have strived to move beyond this heritage. Hereafter I engage with Søren Kierkegaard's notion of the 'erotic ear' and with Karen Blixen's narrative treatment of the 'poisonous tongue'. On basis of this, I discuss subsequently how these literary investigations may inspire the study of possibility in an organized context and help us move towards an organizational scholarship, which is sensible to the 'othered senses', the ear and the tongue.

Seduction, sense and the Cartesian legacy in organization studies

As indicated above, the othering of the flesh may be related to that which Chia and MacKay (2007) call "a Cartesian legacy" in the study of organization and management, implying a split between mind and body, where the former dominates the latter. This was historically related to the emergence of scientific reasoning, where reliable knowledge was separated from the unreliable and seductive influences of the sensual, emotional body. Thus, this reasoning emphasizes the empirically 'real' that can only be understood in terms of what can be visibly observed. Notably, there is here a sensory bias of what was "othered" in the context of scientific rationalization, already pointed out by Latour (1986), who noticed that this rationalization was basically a shift from other senses to vision, centring the possibility of looking at representations. Also, organization studies can be said to have "limited the conceptualization of discovery to what the eye can see or spot" (Hjorth et al 2018, 161).

This representationalist epistemology, emphasizing classification and description, is linked to an entitative thinking, where research is given the role of representing an external world of discrete and identifiable entities, and causally linking them (Chia 1999). This relies on the assumption of "simple location" in which things and causal mechanisms are assumed to be simply locatable at one point in space and time (Whitehead 1985). Thus, there is a privileging of presence, location and the visibly observable, related to what Derrida called "logocentrism". As emphasized by a number of organizational scholars related to recent turns towards affect (Massumi 2002; Fotaki et al. 2017), practice (Chia and Mac Kay 2007; Strati 2007; Chia and Holt 2014) and process (Chia 1999; Steyaert, 2007), these epistemological and ontological assumptions were inherited into the mainstream tradition of organization and management studies, presupposing that acting and relating takes place on the basis of pre-existing mental representations (Chia and Holt 2014). Organizational actors are here assumed to be conscious,

deliberate, goal-directed and intentional in their actions (Chia and MacKay 2007). This is not least reflected in mainstream notions of organizational change, which traditionally has been treated as externally imposed and resulting from an intentional plan (Chia 1999).

In this emphasis on the intentionality of human action and the split of the mind and the body, where the former is assumed to dominate the latter, concepts such as 'seduction' and 'sensuality' become problematic. When organizational action is understood from an individual that is viewed as a self-contained, self-motivating human agent who acts *on* its external environment, 'seduction' is inevitably placed outside the field of organization, related to that which opposes and subverts it.

These assumptions on wilful actors, operating in a stable, representable reality are not unchallenged in organization theory of course. Not least in relation to the stream of process thinking (Chia 1999; Hernes 2014; Helin et al 2014; Langley and Tsoukas 2017), which has gained intensified attention over the last decade, the entitative and logo-centric premises in organization theory have been critically discussed. Importantly, here the term *process* does not so much refer to the study object, something contrasted to a stable situation; it rather refers to a basic understanding of the world as always in continuous becoming. Thus, process theorizing challenges an overly reliance on order and questions the dominant assumption that in our experience of things, they are given to us as fully present and identical with themselves (Chia 1999). Instead, process thinking implies that any present identity has an excluded other to which it owes its presence. In this context, the notion of 'otherness' becomes relevant to organisation studies.

This reasoning makes space for another conception of organizational development than the one founded on simple location, causality and intentionality. Rather than resulting from a new representation conceived by a mind, 'change' emerges from the bodily capacity to affect and be affected, related to the human

capacity for imagination, i.e. the capacity to extend what *could* become beyond past experience (Hjorth 2014). This anticipative orientation towards the future is not so much about acting from a preconceived plan as it is about acting from sense of possibility (Hjorth and Holt 2016); while the first implies that the desirable outcome is captured in terms of content, the latter implies a gap of indetermination in which joyful anticipation may emerge in resonance with the Other's otherness (Pallesen 2018).

Related to this processual turn, there is a current rethinking of organizational entrepreneurship (Steyaert 2007; Hjorth 2005; Hjorth, Holt and Steyaert 2016), which explicitly aims at introducing the concepts of 'affect' and 'desire' into the dominating entrepreneurship discourse, otherwise informed by economic rationalism and not taking into account the capacity of the body to be affected as part of the entrepreneurial process.

A founding philosophical source for understanding affect in relation to process theorizing is the Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza and the Deleuzean reading of Spinoza (Deleuze 1978; Massumi 2002), who defined the body in terms of ability to affect and *be* affected in the encounter with the Other, which is what increases or decreases its ability to act. Thus, leaving the Cartesian self-grounded subject behind – and with this also the hierarchy between mind and body, where the former dominates the latter - entrepreneurship becomes genuinely embodied and relational . Rather than a question of individuals with a capacity for spotting an opportunity already there, entrepreneurship becomes a question of how "a generosity of action" emerges, which enhances "the relational capacity to act, and so enriches the social condition by the creation of possibility - the action of opening up possibilities without known ends" (Hjorth and Holt 2016, 50-51).

Notably, this emphasis on affect and desire continues and pushes further previous alternative theorizations of entrepreneurship, emphasising the capacity to be "drawn in", and characterizing entrepreneurship by terms like "mood of joyful

involvement", "absorption" and "hypersensitivity" (Spinoza et al 1997). Rather than understanding entrepreneurship in terms of an opportunity to be taken by the rationally choosing entrepreneur acting on mental representations, there is in this stream of thinking an interest in the process that *takes* the (future) entrepreneur: entrepreneurship is a capture, a 'being grasped' – pleasurable and painfully inescapable at once.

Clearly, this challenges the model of rationally calculated individual – and moves the attention to the relational forces at play and to the bodily capacity for pleasure, enjoyment and capture. Rather than being a matter of separating oneself from the situation in order to return with a new mental representation *of* it, (entrepreneurial) possibility becomes related to the bodily capacity to be drawn into something, to be attracted, immersed and enjoyed. The working of forces beyond the control or prediction of a mind is here the source possibility itself rather than only a problem to be handled. This also opens up a new understanding of academic work as embodied practice, emphasizing the role of senses in research (Strati 2007; Pink 2009), and sensory pleasure as a driver in academic practice (Bell and Sinclair 2014).

The concept of 'seduction' here becomes more ambiguous. While it carries connotations to that which restricts possibility (e.g. the bending of the Other's will for the purpose of personal gain or problematic gender categories), it also relates to the challenging of existing orders; it pertains the emergence of a fissure in that which has already been organized, related to the human capacity for immersion, capture and enjoyment.

While organization studies is more or less silent about how this potentially subversive event of affect occurs through the capacity of sensory organs, literature and opera on the other hand are full of examples of the sensory and corporeal nature of affecting and being affected and how this changes the social context and what is possible in it. However, this is often treated in themes that are foreign to

organization studies such as 'seduction' or 'love' (Tasselli 2018). In the current context of re-introducing the corporeal and the senses in organization studies, such literary explorations may help us gain a more fine grained and nuanced conceptualization of the event of affecting/ being affected, which takes into account - rather than excludes – our capacity for sensory immersion and enjoyment in the theorization of how possibility emerges.

Seduction and the erotic ear

An extensive elaboration on the theme of seduction can be found in Søren Kierkegaard's (double-pseudonym) Either-Or, a collection of letters from the ethicist, judge Vilhelm to his younger friend 'A', whose aesthetic, poetically fashioned essays make up the first part of the work. Here we find the famous 'The Seducer's Diary', but also the less exposed essay *The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic*, an exuberant and lively praise of Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, which is the one I will focus on here. The opera's name of course refers to the main character - an epitome of a womanizer (about whom it is said that he has seduced 1003 in Spain!), built on the Spanish legend of Don Juan. However, a point running through Kierkegaard's (or his pseudonym A's) treatment of the opera, is that this is not an opera about a seducer, but about *seduction*. Don Giovanni is not *a* seducer, he is the musical embodiment of the (excluded) sensuality that breathes all life:

> Don Giovanni constantly hovers between being idea - that is to say, energy, life - and individual. But this hovering is the vibrance of music. (…) Don Giovanni is an image that constantly appears but gains neither form nor substance, an individual who is constantly being formed but not finished, of whose life history one can form no more definite an impression than one can by listening to the tumult of the waves. (Kierkegaard 1992, 86)

To Kierkegaard, the *ear* is the sensory organ that most directly connects us to this force: by listening to Don Giovanni, we hear the energy of sensuality as it carries itself through with the insisting strength that comes from being excluded. In Mozart's Don Giovanni, the sensuous is conceived as pure process, before it is

taken into the sphere of conscious reflection and language. Don Giovanni is in that sense not an individual (that would make the number of 1003 comic, as Kierkegaard points out), because "(t)o conceive the sensual in an individual is impossible". In order to be *a* seducer he "lacks shrewd circumspection". Don Giovanni has no such self- reflective strategic capacity, his life is "effervescent like the wine with which he fortifies himself" (Kierkegaard 1992, 93).

However, this pre-individual force of sensuality cannot be expressed by "the power of words" for it is "inexpressible in reflection and thought" (Kierkegaard 1992, 93). To Kierkegaard, music - more than any other medium - expresses the immediate non-reflective sensuality, and it is therefore the only medium that can express Don Giovanni. We must therefore listen to Don Giovanni to grasp him ("if you cannot get an idea of Don Giovanni by listening to him, you will never get one" (Kierkegaard 1992, 94)). As soon as one tries to add precision to his appearance in front of our gaze, imagine how he looks, what he wears, his age etc., one loses Don Giovanni; it all then drifts into the sphere of an individual, a stable picture graspable in language and reflective thought. Through the erotic capacity of the ear however, one does not hear *what* he says, one hears his voice, its tension, the vibrant sensuality, the infinite longing; one hears the inexhaustible multiplicity of life itself:

> Hear how he plunges into life's diversity, how he dashes himself against its solid dam, hear these light, dancing tones of the violin, hear the beckoning of joy, hear the excultation of desire, hear the festive bliss of enjoyment; hear his wild flight, he hurries past himself, ever faster, ever more impetuously; hear the murmur of love, hear the whisper of temptation, hear the swirl of seduction, hear the stillness of the moment - listen, listen, listen, to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. (Kierkegaard 1992, 94-95)

Hence, Mozart's Don Giovanni is energy, force, acting seductively. His passion sets in motion the passion of others. It resonates everywhere, it is the life that breathes in the other characters, it is the pulsating sensuality through which all characters come alive, the fire that lights the whole drama of the opera. What is expressed in

Don Giovanni is not a character then, a picturing of an individual, it is sensuality as a principle, a force, simultaneously locked out and created by Christianity.

However, it is through the erotic capacity of the ear, i.e. its receptivity to music as the immediate, non-reflective expression of sensuality, that we are connected to the generalized force of the flesh and senses. Music - being more abstract than any other media - is capable of articulating pure movement, and the erotic ear is capable of grasping this - not in the abstraction of reflection or thought - but in flesh, in the "concreteness of immediacy" (Kierkegaard 1992, 89). Thus the 'abstract' Kierkegaard talks about here is precisely not to be found in a platonic heaven of ideas and concepts elevated from the world's multiplicity, variation and flux; it is the immediate-sensuality, too infinite and too close to the skin to be captured in language and conscious reflection – but graspable in music due to the receptivity of the ear.

Thus, when Don Giovanni is expressed in music, we do not get to know a particular individual, we get to know the excluded force of sensuality – "the power of nature, the demonic, which as little tires of seducing, or is done with seducing, as the wind is tired of raging, the sear of surging, or a waterfall of cascading down from its height" (Kierkegaard 1992, 86). Like the cascading of the waterfall, Don Giovanni is in constant beginning, always ready - but at the same time also always finished. There is nothing emerging from this force, nothing which takes on any degree of duration, only the momentary glimpses of pictures in the waves.

Hence, without being taken into the sphere of individuation, Giovanni's seductive capacity stays in a contourless momentariness; in the moment that it starts, it is also always already disappeared, like a tone struck. In that sense, the figure of Don Giovanni forms an anti-thesis to Kierkegaard's existential philosophy, emphasizing the special effort that individuation takes, the continuous struggle to become "oneself" (Bunch 2017; Raffnsøe, Dalsgaard and Gudmand-

Høyer 2014): If such struggle of meaning and choice is removed, there is only contourless momentariness left; the social condition of possibility cannot emerge. However, A's enthusiasm to engage with Mozart's Don Giovanni may still be read as a critical commentary to western tradition through an affirmation of what it has 'othered': the sensous and fleshly positioned by Christianity as the negation of spirit and the othered sense of the ear.

Notably however, in Kierkegaard's Mozart essay this commentary takes the form of a literary rather than a philosophical text. One could even argue that the enemy *is* philosophy (Hannay 1992, 16), to Kierkegaard most clearly (but not only) expressed in Hegel's thinking framed by ideas of system and mediation. In this battle, the weapon becomes literary and sensory rather than philosophical and reason based (Hannay 1992, 17). Rather than relying on assertive arguments, Kierkegaard sets out to appeal to the reader's sensitivity and to create auditory receptivity at the reader. He even states: "When I have brought the reader to the point of being musically receptive enough to seem to hear the music although hearing nothing, I have completed my task, I make myself mute, I say to the reader as to myself: listen!" (Kierkegaard 1992, 82-83).

However, in the context of organization, we are interested in how the returning force of the excluded sensuality may be creative of a collective space, productive of something outside force itself. To pursue this interest, I will here turn to another treatment of seduction by a later country(wo)man of Kierkegaard, who was not happy with the absence of female voices in Kierkegaard's texts and the one-sidedness with which women are depicted in relation to seduction (Bunch 2017, 109). The name is Isak Dinesen - a male pseudonym for the female Danish author Karen Blixen (1885-1962). In her authorship, she created not one, but several variations of female (as well as male) seducers or catalysers of seduction, one of which we shall now turn to.

The erotic ear and the poisonous tongue

Blixen's short story, *Babette's feast* (Dinesen 2013), also plays on the opera theme of Mozart's Don Giovanni, although more subdued and variating its theme. Like Mozart's music itself (Bennett 2016), the story allows an entanglement of the artful and the mundane, of the 'high' and 'low' (Bennett 2016, 182), and enables the nature of the characters' otherness to be gradually realised.

The story takes us to a strictly religious Christian community in a remote Norwegian village, once led by a dean, but now the two mild daughters of the late dean, Martine and Philippa, have devoted their lives to keep together the community and to serve God, which in their faith implies abstaining from pleasures of the senses and flesh. One evening a French refugee, Babette, who has fleed from the fighting around the Paris Commune, knocks on the door, bringing a letter that asks the two sisters to take care of Babette and assures them that she can cook. The next fourteen years Babette then lives in the sisters' house; she is carefully instructed in how to cook meals in accordance with the frugal lifestyle in the village, where food is genuinely seen as something, which should be separated from the sense of taste. Over the years, Babette becomes a trusted and highly valued housekeeper, renowned in the entire village.

One day however, she unexpectedly wins 10.000 Francs and insists on – just for this once - cooking a French meal according to her own standards as a celebration of the late dean's 100-anniversary. The two sisters reluctantly accept and with some anxiety warn the villagers, who "now saw the French dinner coming upon them' as 'a thing of incalculable nature and range" (Dinesen 2013, 45). In the village, the tongue is seen as the most demonic of all sensory organs, guilty of temptation and intoxication and leading astray the faithful life: 'The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison' (Dinesen 2013, 47). Hence, the villagers adopt a strategy in order to avoid being affected by this strange and incalculable French meal: They agree to be silent upon all matters of food and drink

during the meal; whatever may be set before them, it should not wring a word from their tongues.

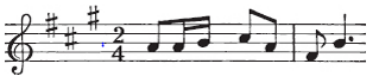
As the night progresses and one extraordinary dish after another is served together with the best wines in the world, the villagers, while being genuinely unaware of what they are eating and drinking – nonetheless affected, intoxicated and transformed by it – gradually open up to sensations and relations that have been forgotten or negated. It turns out that in the village, friendships and love have gradually been replaced by quarrels and conflict among the community members, but this evening the villagers somehow recover their joy and desire to be together. The extraordinary food remains completely uncommented though – with one exception: general Loewenhielm who arrives from Stockholm and is not part of the agreement. The meal makes his thoughts go back to Paris' finest restaurant, once headed by an unusual chef (a woman who could turn a meal into a "love affair (Dinesen 2013, 58)"), who it appears towards the end of the story, was Babette herself.

Thus, on the evening of Babette's feast the guests are seduced. They are led away from the vow they have given each other, which is not simply about not *talking* about food, but about keeping the body unaffected. They have given each other a promise to be tasteless: "(w)e wil cleanse our tongues of all taste and purify them of all delight or disgust of the senses"[1]. But as the night progresses, the senseless tongues live up and awakens for talk: "Usually in Berlevaag, people did not speak much while they were eating. But somehow this evening tongues had been loosened" (Dinesen, 2013, 56).

[1] Babette's feast was first written in English and then rewritten in Danish by Blixen. This sentence appears slightly different in the Danish version, hinting at the senses as something we have been given: 'Men det skal blive som om smagens evne aldrig var givet dem' [But it will be as if the ability of taste was never given to them]. Karen Blixen: Skæbneanekdoter/ Babettes Gæstebud, 1958/2005, p. 50, Gyldendal. .

The return of the othered flesh

Like in Kierkegaard's text, we here find the split between flesh and spirit as a condition of seduction; however here the othered flesh returns in another sensory mode. Babette's arrival to the village is namely in a certain way a return of the rejected erotic ear. We are hinted at this by the letter that Babette holds in her hand, when she arrives to Martine and Philippa's front door. At the bottom of the letter is written two bars



representing the theme from the duet where Don Giovanni tries to win Zerlina by appealing "*la ci darem la mano*" (there I'll give you my hand), also known as the seduction duet. It turns out that the letter is written by the French opera singer Achille Papin, who many years ago visited the village and one day was drawn into church (by his romantic nature, as Blixen says). Here he meets Philippa who sings for church services. Papin indeed has the capacity of an erotic ear: when listening to Philippa's voice 'in one single moment, he knew and understood all' (Dinesen 2013, 29). The (once so famous) opera singer takes on Philippa as a pupil and gives her the part of Zerlina in Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, while he himself sings Don Giovanni's part. The theme culminates in the duet of second act, after which he seizes Philippa's hands, "drew her towards him and kissed her solemnly" (Dinesen 2013, 31). After the kiss however, Philippa went strictly home and told her father that she did not want any more singing lessons – scared, Blixen lets us know, by this experience of the body's openness, its readiness to be affected, deemed as the sinful 'other' of a faithful life. Papin leaves the village and returns to Paris.

In Babette's feast then, we meet 'the othered' flesh in a number of ways: the erotic ear, the foreign meat (a turtle), the uncontrollable tongue, the refugee in all

her corporeality – once a renowned head chef, but now arriving as the wild and hunted 'other' of civilization. Blixen describes how she arrives to the front door of the sister's house "wild-eyed like a hunted animal" (Dinesen 2013, 35, a "massive, dark, deadly pale woman" (Dinesen 2013, 32). Babette's excellent meal is the return of a chance to receive the strange, uncontrollable or incalculable that has been locked out, at first anxieously sensed by the sisters who by witnessing Babette's preparations "now saw the French dinner coming upon them, a thing of incalculable nature and range" (Dinesen 2013, 45). A tortoise with "a snakelike head" and "monstrous in size and terrible to behold" (Dinesen, 2013, 46), becomes the tangible expression of this strange dinner – a flesh so foreign and almost demonic to the villagers that the whole event seems for Martine to take on the character of "a witches' sabbath" (Dinesen 2013, 46). She even dreams Babette poisons the guests.

However, with Babette's generous meal, carefully speaking to the sense of taste, something emerges - a readiness to be moved beyond preconceived decisions or mental models of the event. Hence, with Babette's feast Blixen gives us a narrative description of how a space to receive that which has been 'othered' in a specific organized context may emerge through a sensory path. At the same time, the story lets us understand how that which has been 'othered' is not gone. We understand how times and places that have been given up and left behind in the characters' lives are nevertheless real and may return and become actualized in the sensory, relational experience of the meal. Babette's meal does not only actualize the refugee's unknown past as a head chef in Paris – at that time centre of the emergence of gastronomy as a field far away from the frugal diet in the village - but also reopens a sensory path to relations and sensations that have been marginalized in the guests' lives.

Like in the opera of Don Giovanni, 'seduction' here expresses the force of the 'othered flesh', when it carries itself through with the strength it has gained from

being excluded. However an important difference between Mozart's opera and Babette's feast is that in the latter this force opens up a collective space in the already organised place, a new field of relation. By means of an aesthetic capacity appealing to the senses, Babette's meal wakes up the capacity of the tongue: It is through the tongue's receptivity, i.e. the sensory capacity to not only perceive but also enjoy (Strati 2007), that the readiness to be moved beyond any prior decision not to be, is awakened; the carefully prepared meal speaks to the body's radical openness through – what the villagers with a bible reference call – the unruly, poisonous tongue (Dinesen 2013, 47). Poison is, we know, a substance capable of affecting a living organism, spreading inside, transforming the whole body, possibly deadly. The tongue is unruly, uncontrollable, in how its aesthetic (enjoying/repellent) receptivity to substances may affect the whole body. It is beyond the control of a mind's preconceived plans or mental models of the event. We cannot decide or control how to be affected by taste. More than any other sense maybe, the sense of taste subverts, it sneaks in and transforms without permission. It affects beyond control and therefore leaves us in vulnerability.

Although Babette, who spends all her money on the meal, is generous in the everyday sense of generosity, Babette's meal is not acknowledged as an act of giving, neither by the giver, who states at the end of the story that she did not do it for them but as an artist who must give herself over to the world - *nor* by the receivers, who did not realize what they were receiving or recognize it as a gift. Rather, it affirms a silent mode of given*ness*. Hence, Babette is not *a* seducer in the sense of having a deliberate strategy to cheat the villagers into fleshly pleasure and intoxication. She is rather an artist - as stated by herself towards the end of the story - committed *and* deemed to otherness; it is her aesthetic capacity insisting on expressing itself that acts seductively.

Towards an organizational research agenda of openness to otherness

In contrast to Mozart's Don Giovanni, who eventually must leave (sentenced to death), Babette stays in the village, something of duration emerges: an event, disclosing a space of openness to 'otherness', to what has been excluded, which in itself is only possible because Babette has been received by the villagers many years ago, arriving to the village as the corporeal 'othered'. As a refugee (wildeyed, a hunted animal), she was taken inside the sisters' home, her physical needs were taken care of, she was given food and housing, just as she took care of the sisters' physical needs by helping them in their daily life in the kitchen throughout the years. In that way, Babette's feast as an event relies on a fundamental recognition of the corporeal presence of 'the other' in mundane daily life.

Thus, the event of seduction in Babette's feast announces the return of the force of the excluded flesh becoming active. However, in contrast to Don Giovanni it both lives from and affirms generosity as a more fundamental condition of human life, what Rosalyn Diprose (2002) drawing on Levinas (1969), call radical generosity, "a giving of myself that I do not choose, a movement toward the other that does not return to itself the same" (Diprose 2002, 141; Levinas 1969). To Diprose this (a priori) generosity is genuinely corporeal: it is through the other's presence in space that we are moved to think and respond and thus recognize the self; thus, it is to the other's alterity that we both owe *and* give our "sensibility, interiority and autonomy in the first place" (Diprose 2002, 139). Radical generosity is the inevitable giving over of our self-possession; when we meet the other in space we cannot choose not to open up our bodies to the perceptive processes in other, to their sensory receptivity. Acknowledging generosity as a fundamental human condition leads Diprose to a more specific concept of generosity, summarized by Hancock as a "corporeal, pre-reflective and thus aesthetic openness to the radical Other" (2008, 1368). This generosity "involves a mode of givenness, and therefore

recognition of and by the self, that is not calculated and, as such, expects no reciprocation or symmetry of exchange" (ibid.).

Seducing the guests by means of an aesthetic capacity that affects beyond any deliberate decisions or preconceived mental models of the event they were to become part of, Babette's feast opens up a space to embrace this human condition of radical generosity and intensifies receptivity to 'otherness'. Hence, whereas Don Giovanni cannot produce anything but momentary creatures in the waves, in Babette's feast the excluded flesh (in various forms: the refugee in corporeality, the erotic ear, the snakelike meat, the receptive tongue) returns and becomes productive as a *social* force, disclosing a new collective space and creating a sense of possibility that reaches beyond existing life, condensed by Loewenhielm at the end of the story: "For tonight I have learned dear sister, that in this world anything is possible" (Dinesen 2013, 62).

Seduction then – rather than being simply a deceitful bending of the Other's will for the sake of personal gain or satisfaction – is here the event of the returning force of sensuality, when it affirms the fundamental givenness of human life and becomes productive of an atmosphere in which a belonging to the Other emerges and opens up a sense of possibility through a sensory path to 'othered' times and places. Thus, we here arrive to a more ambiguous concept of seduction that pertains the corporeality, which has been driven to the margin in an organized context: the concept of 'seduction' then belongs to the times and contexts where the force of the excluded flesh returns and becomes active as a force of attraction that elicits movement. It reminds us that, what has been othered is not gone, but always may haunt us and unavoidably leave us vulnerable; but it also reminds us that this is the source of possibility itself: There is always more; whether we plan to or not, there is always a chance that we may meet the excluded or marginalized again in ways that may force us to go beyond present limits, to think from anew. However, it may

be in completely other contexts and in other perceptional modes than we have imagined or anticipated.

While process theory has taught us to think of change as immanent rather than a linear progress (Chia 1999), i.e. as a constant 'ballooning' always containing all preceding past events in it, Blixen's story reminds us of the immanence of possibility. But it also reminds us of the centrality of the senses in relation to the emergence of this possibility. In other words, studying possibility in an organized context requires a sensitivity to how openness to 'othered' times and places emerges through sensory receptivity and aesthetic capacity. Massumi (2002, 225f) has already reminded us that the condition of possibility does not lie in causal processes in-between stimulus-response (like classical cause linearly connecting cause and effect), but in a relational causality that implies a sensitive-affective in-between where a bias, a surplus, may flow into the process and create conditions for newness.

With Blixen we can thus add that 'possibility', the openness of situations in an organized context, lives from sensory openness; it lives from that which subverts and affects beyond habit and preconceived ideas or mental models, that which sneaks in without permission, i.e. from our vulnerabilty - and hence calls for an ethics of openness to otherness (Diprose 2002). Importantly, this does not imply a mere acceptance, but can in an organizational context be understood as a responsibility for the embodied Other in all its 'aesthetic particularity' (Hancock 2008, 1364). However, this centring of the corporeal encounter also has consequences for research method, which I will address in the next section .

Towards an organizational scholarship of the othered senses

While Kierkegaard points out that it takes an 'erotic ear' to hear the play of forces in the overture of Don Giovanni, we could ask how we can nurture the erotic ear of the researcher, sensible to the play of forces in organizational life? What would a

scholarship open to the erotic capacity of the ear and tongue look and feel like? Importantly, 'erotic' is not here to be confused with 'sexual'. As a commodified and dominant norm, the latter narrows the space of the former, maybe particularly for women (Bell and Sinclair 2014). Instead, 'erotic' would here be about creating knowledge from the experience of being bodily moved in a way which makes room for care and consideration as well as pleasure. This would be grounded in the tradition of participatory research where the researcher "immerses her or himself in the sound and the fury of the social world" (Bell and Sinclair 2014, referring to Wacquant, 2004, vii), meaning that the body "is not seen as an object to generate knowledge about', but instead as 'a tool of inquiry, a wellspring of knowledge" (ibid.).

However, this has consequences for data collection as well as for academic writing. When we as researchers make interviews and observations at a research site, we do not only see and hear things, we also sense ourselves alive, we are moved by them in a particular way. In other words, there is a dynamic, relational side of perception (Massumi 2002), related to an aesthetic capacity to not only perceive but also enjoy (Strati 2007). Making observations and interviews is not simply seeing and hearing, but listening and beholding from our (syn)aesthetic capacity to taste, scent, feel. However, in a simple documentation of what happens by transcripts or video, this immediate sensuality of the experience, and the way we are moved by it, is lost. A Dictaphone, videorecorder or camera does not reproduce this relational dynamic side of perception.

While the bias towards representational epistemology in research has been widely critiqued in organization studies, we have maybe not gone far enough when it comes to taking the consequence of this point in relation to data collection and analysis. It would here be a question of revising the whole idea of empirical material rather than only a matter of the limitations of certain documentation methods. This would imply taking further Sarah Pink's (2009) emphasis on the interconnectedness

of senses and the embodied nature of the researcher's relating to research material. From the attention to this point, Pink reminds us that reviewing observation notes as well as videos, photographs or drawings, doesn't necessarily mean that vision has to be given primacy over other senses, since such data can create routes to multi-sensorial knowing at play in the observation situation. Thus, instead of thinking of analysis as a matter of treating data that represent the observed situations, we may think of analysis as a new encounter (now between researcher and data), which provokes a reliving of the multi-sensory aspects of the research encounter at the empirical site after it has happened. This implies an evocative rather than representative role of data: since the senses are interrelated, observation data can be a path into the multisensory experience of the situation (Pink 2009), and to the bodily experience of being moved.

However, treating analysis as an embodied encounter where the experience of being moved is re-evoked, has consequences for academic writing. Writing with an erotic ear would here mean writing with the capacity to listen from within the embodied experience of movement, and thereby, like Kierkegaard, creating auditory receptivity at the reader. This is about evoking readers' already embodied experience relevant to the theme in question, related to what Shotter (2010) calls withness-talk, and hence opening up a path in the activity of reading to othered times and places.

Indeed, listening is inherently about otherness and openness to be affected. Koskinen and Lindström have reminded us that listening inherently involves "the creation of a space to receive that which is difficult, different and the radically strange, to allow the alterity of the other to resonate" (2013, 147). In that sense, it involves a readiness to be moved; that is, to become other and by doing so, to be open to the other's otherness (Koskinen and Lindström 2013; Shotter 2009). Thus, the ear is all about openness and vulnerability; it is unshuttable (Strati 2007), an

opening that "generously stays open, without the eye's privilege of having a lid that shuts" (Hjorth et al 2018, 161).

In terms of academic writing, this would also imply some resistance to the pressure to define and categorize, inherent in academic formats. These tend to encourage authors to emphasize the firm and unambiguous, and predispose texts to constantly run in front of the reader and point out contributions and implications. Writing would instead imply leaving room for tarrying in the inexplicable and vague, which otherwise tends to be absorbed into generalised descriptions and averaged out themes. Academic writing then, would imply a strive to create a relational dynamics in the text, which makes space for invitation and response and not only for claiming and concluding. This would all be about seduction – not in the sense of bending the Other's will for the sake of personal gain, but in the sense of creating conditions for sensing the 'otherness' of the world as an inviting nextness - a feeling of potential in the resonance of the Other's otherness, which makes room for pleasure as well as care and consideration.

Conclusion: Seduction, organization and the othered senses

In this paper, I have attended to that which organization studies has 'othered' in its emergence as a discipline related to business and management – and thereby left to the field of art, literature and music. The mainstream focus of organization studies on deliberate, wilful actors and change as externally imposed has tended to marginalise the attention to how acting emerges from our capacity to be sensually immersed in context. Relatedly, entrepreneurship studies has traditionally focused on how the knowing and choosing actor spot and grasp an opportunity rather than the process of being grasped, seduced *by* it.

However, in the stream of process thinking, which has gained increasing attention in organization and entrepreneurship studies, dominating assumptions on deliberate, rationally choosing actors have been fundamentally challenged. In this

context, the human capacity to be captured, attracted and grasped beyond preconceived mental representations or wilful plans becomes theoretically interesting in relation to grasp the emergence of the new in an already organized context. Hence, literary explorations of seduction and sensory openness become relevant in relation to seize a different conception of possibility. Rather than assuming that this is about separating oneself from the situation in order to return with a new mental representation *of* it, literary investigations remind us of the human capacity to be *drawn* into something, to be attracted, immersed and enjoyed as a wellspring of newness. In this context, the sensory capacity, working beyond the control or prediction of a mind, is also a potential source of possibility and not only a problem to be handled. However, this draws the attention to the entanglement of possibility and vulnerability and calls for an ethics of openness to otherness - a responsibility for the corporeal Other. Secondly, it has consequences for research method. In this paper, I have therefore discussed the possibility of moving towards an organizational scholarship of the othered senses, which makes room for care and consideration as well as pleasure and capture. This would imply revising the notion of empirical material as representative. Relatedly, it would imply understanding empirical analysis as an embodied encounter in which the multisensory and aesthetic experience of being moved is re-evoked. Academic writing here becomes a matter of writing from within this experience of being bodily moved, evoking readers' already embodied experience relevant to the theme in question. We may here find great inspiration in Kierkegaard's strive to create auditory receptivity at the reader, and Blixen's attention to the tongue's capacity to re-evoke 'othered' times and places.

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