

**waves of flickering murmurs in everyday life:  
playing between ages**

- joanna haynes<sup>1</sup>  
university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom  
orcid id: 0000-0003-0510-4565
- magda costa carvalho<sup>2</sup>  
university of the azores/institute of philosophy of the university of porto, portugal  
orcid id: 0000-0001-8539-5061
- viktor m. johansson<sup>3</sup>  
nord university, norway; södertörn university, sweden  
orcid id: 0000-0003-0298-3832
- tiago almeida<sup>4</sup>  
lisbon school of education/center for studies in education and innovation, lisbon, portugal  
orcid id: 0000-0002-3557-0623
- lois peach<sup>5</sup>  
bristol university, bristol, united kingdom  
orcid id: 0000-0001-5157-2621
- karen wickett<sup>6</sup>  
university of plymouth,plymouth, united kingdom  
orcid id: 0000-0003-2986-5078
- claudia blandon<sup>7</sup>  
university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom  
orcid id: 0000-0002-3375-0989
- emma bush<sup>8</sup>  
university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom  
orcid id: 0000-0002-0891-5411
- arthur c. wolf<sup>9</sup>  
university of the fraser valley, abbotsford, canada  
orcid id: 0000-0001-5804-5250
- georgios petropoulos<sup>10</sup>  
university of galway, galway, irland  
orcid id: 0000-0003-4382-5064
- rose-anne reynolds<sup>11</sup>  
university of cape town, cape town, south africa  
orcid id: 0000-0002-0775-3318

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail: joanna.haynes@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: magda.ep.teixeira@uac.pt

<sup>3</sup> E-mail: karl.v.johansson@nord.no / viktor.johansson@sh.se

<sup>4</sup> E-mail: tiagoa@eselx.ipl.pt

<sup>5</sup> E-mail: lois.peach@bristol.ac.uk

<sup>6</sup> E-mail: karen.wickett@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>7</sup> E-mail: claudia.blandon@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>8</sup> E-mail: emma.bush@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>9</sup> E-mail: arthurwolf@icloud.com

<sup>10</sup> E-mail: georgios.petropoulos@universityofgalway.ie

<sup>11</sup> E-mail: rose-anne.reynolds@uct.ac.za



giovanna caetano-silva<sup>12</sup>

universidad de sevilla, sevilla, spain

orcid id: 0000-0002-8819-473X

kathrin paal<sup>13</sup>

university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom

orcid id: 0000-0002-4907-5228

bakhtawar khosa<sup>14</sup>

university of padua, padua, italy

orcid id: 0009-0007-0181-2018

patricia hannam<sup>15</sup>

university of exeter, exeter, united kingdom

orcid id: 0000-0002-8810-3252

hanna oester-barkey<sup>16</sup>

academic freelancer, berlin, germany

orcid id: 0009-0000-7782-2035

dani landau<sup>17</sup>

university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom

orcid id: 0009-0009-2903-8065

mandy andrews<sup>18</sup>

university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom

orcid id: 0000-0002-3570-4177

jan georgeson<sup>19</sup>

university of plymouth, plymouth, united kingdom

orcid id: 0000-0003-3696-4170

## abstract

The article explores the rich and varied experiences of a collective writing project, unfolding through an anecdote involving Charlie, a young boy who creatively disrupted conventional photography methods. This incident, during an evening promenade by the sea in Ericeira (Portugal), epitomizes the project's embrace of playfulness and exploration of diverse perspectives—materialized through Charlie's playful insistence on experimenting with different angles. The event embodied the group's approach to writing, leading to a collective inquiry into the interplay of ages, angles, and other themes like waves, threads, shadows, and liminal spaces. The project, driven by the Between Ages Collective, began with informal gatherings in Plymouth, UK, and expanded into a year-long online reading group. Participants, spanning different generations and academic stages, shared various materials, including films, picture books, and scholarly texts, which inspired individual contributions. Influenced by the Collective's collaborative spirit, these contributions explore the concept of 'between ages' – a metaphorical and literal space of transition and fluidity. Contributors were invited to craft pieces that delve into the 'between ages' theme, often exploring serendipitous moments that transform interactions and experiences. The writing tries to capture a sense of openness and curiosity, embracing the uncertainties and ambiguities inherent in the process. The works

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<sup>12</sup> E-mail: giovannacaetano@us.es

<sup>13</sup> E-mail: kathrin.paal@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>14</sup> E-mail: bakhtawar\_khosa@yahoo.com

<sup>15</sup> E-mail: p.hannam@exeter.ac.uk

<sup>16</sup> E-mail: hanna\_oesterbarkey@posteo.de

<sup>17</sup> E-mail: dani.landau@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>18</sup> E-mail: mandy.andrews@plymouth.ac.uk

<sup>19</sup> E-mail: janet.georgeson@plymouth.ac.uk

do not strictly adhere to conventional academic or narrative forms but rather emerge from the collective's shared experiences, including cooking, eating, swimming and walking together. The article suggests that these writings are not meant to be definitive or conclusive but are explorations that invite readers to engage with the mundane and profound textures of everyday life. The stories and themes explored are marked by their diversity in style, rhythm, and imagery, ranging from reflections on the philosophy of shadows to the profound implications of intergenerational and interspecies relationships. The Collective's work is presented as an ongoing experiment in thinking and writing together, with each piece offering unique insights into the fluid and often blurred boundaries between different states of being. This openness to the in-between spaces brings into question the notion of fixed identities and experiences, inviting a more nuanced understanding of the relational dynamics that shape existence. The article allows the readers to delve into these narratives and engage with the myriad ways they resonate with broader themes of being, storytelling, and connecting.

**keywords:** intergenerational; attentiveness; time; liminality; agencies.

**ondas de murmúrios cintilantes na vida cotidiana:  
brincando entre idades**

**resumo**

Este artigo explora as experiências ricas e variadas de um projeto de escrita coletiva, que se desenrola através de um episódio que envolve Charlie, uma criança que criativamente interrompeu os métodos convencionais de tirar fotografias. Este acontecimento, que ocorreu durante um passeio noturno junto ao mar, na Ericeira (Portugal), resume a adesão do projeto à brincadeira e à exploração de diversas perspectivas – materializada através da insistência lúdica de Charlie em experimentar ângulos diferentes. Este acontecimento personificou a abordagem do grupo à escrita, conduzindo a uma investigação coletiva sobre a interação entre idades, ângulos e outros temas, como ondas, fios, sombras e espaços liminares. O projeto, conduzido pelo *Between Ages Collective*, começou com encontros informais em Plymouth, no Reino Unido, e expandiu-se para um grupo de leitura on-line com a duração de um ano. Os e as participantes, abrangendo diferentes gerações e fases académicas, partilharam vários materiais, incluindo filmes, álbuns ilustrados e textos académicos, que inspiraram contribuições individuais. Influenciadas pelo espírito de colaboração do Coletivo, estas contribuições exploram o conceito de “entre idades” – um espaço metafórico e literal de transição e fluidez. As colaboradoras e os colaboradores foram convidados e convidadas a envolverem-se na criação de peças que aprofundam o tema “entre idades”, explorando momentos inesperados que transformam interações e experiências. A escrita procura captar um sentido de abertura e curiosidade, abraçando as incertezas e ambiguidades inerentes ao processo. As obras não aderem estritamente a formas académicas ou narrativas convencionais, mas antes emergem das experiências partilhadas pelo Coletivo, incluindo cozinhar, comer, nadar e caminhar juntos. O artigo sugere que estes escritos não pretendem ser definitivos ou conclusivos, mas que são explorações que convidam as leitoras e os leitores a envolverem-se com as texturas mundanas e profundas da vida quotidiana. As histórias e os temas explorados são marcados pela diversidade de estilo, ritmo e imagens, que vão desde reflexões sobre a filosofia das sombras até às implicações profundas das relações intergeracionais e interespecies. O trabalho do Coletivo é apresentado como uma experiência contínua de pensar e escrever em conjunto, com cada peça a oferecer uma visão única sobre as fronteiras fluídas, e muitas vezes difusas, entre diferentes momentos da existência. Esta abertura aos espaços intermédios põe em causa a noção de identidades e experiências

fixas, convidando a uma experiência mais matizada das dinâmicas relacionais que moldam a existência. O artigo permite que as leitoras e os leitores mergulhem nestas narrativas e se envolvam com a miríade de formas que estas ressoam com questões mais vastas da existência, do contar histórias, do conectar-se.

**palavras-chave:** intergeracional; atenção; tempo; liminaridade; agências.

### **olas de murmullos chispeantes en la vida cotidiana: jugando entre edades**

#### **resumen**

Este artículo explora las ricas y variadas experiencias de un proyecto de escritura colectiva desarrollado a través de un episodio protagonizado por Charlie, un niño que interrumpió creativamente los métodos convencionales de tomar fotografías. Este evento, ocurrido durante un paseo nocturno junto al mar en Ericeira (Portugal), ejemplifica la adhesión del proyecto al juego y la exploración de perspectivas diversas, manifestada en la insistencia lúdica de Charlie por experimentar con diferentes ángulos. El evento encarnó el enfoque grupal hacia la escritura, conduciendo a una investigación colectiva sobre la interacción entre edades, ángulos y temas como olas, hilos, sombras y espacios liminales. El proyecto, liderado por el Between Ages Collective, comenzó con reuniones informales en Plymouth, Reino Unido, y se expandió a un grupo de lectura en línea durante un año. Los y las participantes, provenientes de diversas generaciones y etapas académicas, compartieron materiales como películas, álbumes ilustrados y textos académicos que inspiraron sus contribuciones individuales. Influenciadas por el espíritu colaborativo del Colectivo, estas contribuciones exploraron el concepto de "entre edades", un espacio metafórico y literal de transición y fluidez. Las personas participantes crearon piezas que profundizan en este tema, explorando momentos inesperados que transforman interacciones y experiencias.

La escritura refleja una apertura y curiosidad, abrazando las incertidumbres y ambigüedades del proceso. Las obras no se adhieren estrictamente a formas académicas o narrativas convencionales, sino que surgen de experiencias compartidas como cocinar, comer, nadar y caminar en conjunto. El artículo propone que estos textos no son definitivos ni concluyentes, sino exploraciones que invitan a lectores y lectoras a relacionarse con las texturas cotidianas de la vida. Las historias y temas destacan por su diversidad en estilo, ritmo e imágenes, abarcando desde reflexiones filosóficas sobre sombras hasta implicaciones profundas de relaciones intergeneracionales e interespecíficas. El trabajo del Colectivo se presenta como una experiencia continua de pensamiento y escritura colaborativa, con cada pieza ofreciendo una perspectiva única sobre las fronteras fluidas y a menudo difusas entre diferentes momentos de la existencia. Esta apertura a espacios intermedios desafía las nociones de identidades y experiencias fijas, fomentando una visión más matizada de las dinámicas relacionales que moldean la vida. El artículo invita a lectores y lectoras a sumergirse en estas narrativas y explorar cómo resuenan con cuestiones más amplias de la existencia, la narración y la conexión.

**palabras clave:** intergeneracional; atención; tiempo; liminalidad; agencias.

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*A criança passeia pelo campo. Pára diante de um  
portão entreaberto. É o portão de uma grande quinta.  
A criança entra. Lá dentro está um cão enorme.*  
Ana Hatherly

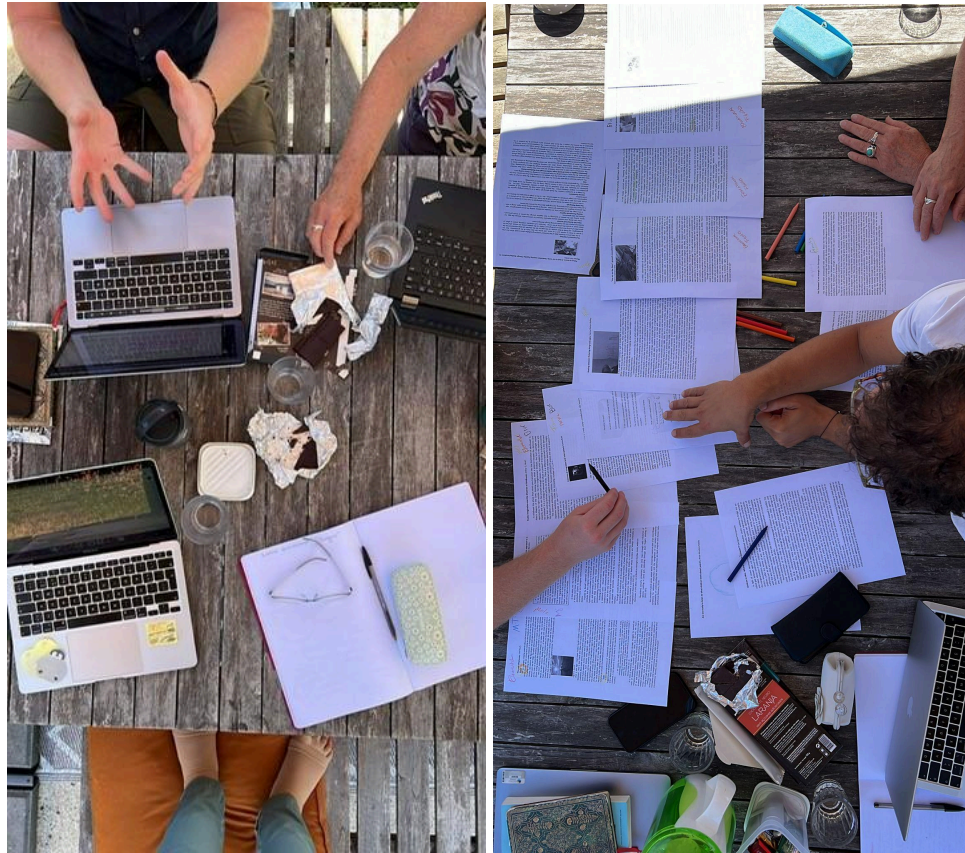
*Världen är ett bra alternativ till det säkra.*  
Signe Gjessing

*Angles, Dad! Don't forget the angles!* Charlie interjected while laughing, jumping into the photographic space and moving his father aside – bending his body and his head from side to side, up and down, and showing how pictures can be made from different positions. His father is apologetic – he worries that ‘people we don’t know’ might not welcome his son’s playful approach but prefer a more standard selfie of their tourist visit.

We had been talking about how to set up a good shot, the direction of the sun and the shadows, when Charlie’s father arrived with his two children, offering to take the photo if we would in turn do the same. Charlie was keen to get involved and his movement infected us. We were intrigued by the possibilities that angles might offer. Charlie was so clearly enjoying the opportunity to disrupt things and experiment – he was giggling – and the deal was that we would reciprocate. So we did: also with ‘angles’, following Charlie’s lead.

This short episode happened when we were out walking one evening as we began the work of assembling this collective writing. The event drew us into the spirit of this work and introduced many of the themes that were later on discussed. Between ages, angles, *angels*, waves, sewing threads and liminal shades, spaces where things can happen. We worked collectively in transitional zones, just like that fleeting moment before falling asleep, right after turning the light off, when bodies give in to the horizontality and we choose to enter the gate. Uncertain.

**Figure 1:** Assembling collective writings



This collective writing emerged through the work of the Between Ages Collective.<sup>20</sup> The story began with some convivial gatherings in and around Plymouth<sup>21</sup>, UK, and continued through an online reading group<sup>22</sup> throughout an entire year (sharing films, picturebooks, literary, philosophical, educational and childhood studies texts) and led to an invitation to write short pieces to the theme. Inspired by other practices of collective writing<sup>23</sup>, this collection does not imitate but rather tries to find its own way. We think of this as a part of a continual

<sup>20</sup> The Collective emerged through a project that set out to explore intergenerational relations as powerful potential spaces of learning and conviviality, questioning discriminatory assumptions about age, capacity and how intergenerational activity matters.

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<sup>22</sup> Reading group members joined from many different countries including The Azores, Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, Ivory Coast, Portugal, Norway, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden.

<sup>23</sup> For example of other collective writing, see Biswas et al. (2023); Gibbons et al. (2021); Peters et al. (2021); Peters et al. (2020).



exploration of the practice of thinking as a collective that will transform as we continue to work together.

The network is composed by different generations of academics, masters and doctoral students, early career researchers and senior researchers, older and younger ones. What has been notable for us as editors is the manner of being alongside one another and making the work through cooking, eating, swimming and walking together, and often talking of everyday life, the places of our meetings (Plymouth, Ericeira, Lisbon, Fowey) filtering into our thinking and conversations.

In the Between Ages online reading group, contributors read short extracts from the writing they were making and the reading group itself had an atmosphere of reaching for something, perhaps fumbling in shadows. It was also marked by trust, deep curiosity, an intensity of attention and listening to one another. The writing in this piece offers interestingly different senses of 'between'. The philosophy that happens is not 'in' the text but in the processes – the in-between conversations and meanderings and sometimes random connections to music, film, poetry, food, light, shadows and sounds. A sense of opening and breathing. There are variations of rhythm, of expression, of poetic style and imagery.

In some of her previous writing for the Collective, Lois Peach puts the question: "What really is between?" She tells us:

I wrote this question whilst scribbling notes at a Between Ages meeting and listening to the words of other group members as if they were poetry assembling on my page. Sadly, I have missed a few of these meetings, given that they often took place in the middle of my night here in Australia and in the warm haze of the afternoon in Europe. Between day-night, I lingered in the liminal spaces of the group. Perhaps because of this liminality, that adrenaline-fuelled moment, of keeping my body-brain-clock-ticking and asking myself 'what really is between?', has come to haunt me as I have subsequently tried to write the between into being (Osgood & Hackett, 2024).

We don't really know what these between ages pieces are or what they should be – there are waves and correspondences and resonances. They could be read in any order and each one can also stand alone. It is impossible to do justice

to the delicious flavours of these pieces by listing them in this introduction. Theories come into play but do not determine the writing – there are storylines and there are common concepts, but it is not yet clear what they make up together nor, we argue, does it need to be. It might not even be possible to know without our readers: What do you make of these tales? What more will they provoke?

We want to draw readers' attention to the many treasures, the pearls, the characters, and the things that live in these texts: figures, objects, sounds, creatures and elements that inhabit the stories, such as the turnip, the whales, Charlie, Nino, the old man, Dana, the invisible grandfather, the mobile phone, Greg and Nakita, Sally and Coco, the salami sausages, Giovanna's skirt, Lorenzo, blurry children, Japanese architecture, trousers, a needle, a song, a bench.

Many of the stories refer to serendipitous moments – moments that can transform interactions and experiences and possibilities, that express a quality of attentiveness in relations or events. This attentiveness is not a spotlight. Arthur Wolf reminds us that "you do not have to be in the light to exist". Maybe these pieces also show how you may be in the light and not exist, how you don't have to fall under the light of a concept, be in the spotlight of the world made up of and by adults or be of a certain age, to exist. To live can mean moving away from clarity, as if ontological, epistemological, political, and ethical uncertainties, shadows, and barely heard murmurs make up the grounds on which lives move. The writing can pull us back into the shadows, resisting disenchantments of the world, inviting a re-enchantment of the world between.

We are on the same page: "The world is a good alternative to the certain" (Gjessing, 2021, p. 15, our translation) and "The child walks through the countryside. She stops in front of a slightly open gate. It's the gate to a large farm. The child enters. Inside is a huge dog" (Hatherly, 2024, p. 15, our translation).

Sometimes we just forget.

*You do not need to be a piece of academic writing to exist.*



*the scale of between, lois peach*

*bench*

The sun emerges, creeping upwards above the horizon line. A furious glow that stings human eyes as it casts across the sky. We are sitting here waiting on the headland, in the crisp autumn breeze, slightly sweating from trampling along the muddy footpath in anticipation of the bench. Comforted by this now daily dog-walking routine, I am content. My legs dangle, not quite able to connect with ground but feeling its heavy pull. From the bench I can't see the edge. The place where land becomes sea and sea meets land. The possibility of fishermen on the rocks or dolphin fins breaking through or maybe no-thing in particular dancing that threshold is but a dream, lurking beneath the knowability of what is there. I listen to it anyway.

We aren't looking down there though, not today. We – me and Rob and dogs, Sally and Coco – are at the bench for other reasons. Gazing firmly – at pockets with treats in or out at the flattened plane of blue – we hope together. Like the dogs, our human eyes are also looking for a tasty morsel, a glimpse of something also (maybe more-so?) elusive, momentary, and magic. We long for, search for, a puff of watery vapoury breath. A breath that dissipates as quickly as it arrives such that we may only experience the resonances left, the fading marks made to sky-sea that signal presence. “It's whale migration season, did you know?”

**Figure 2:** The bench



Over a year ago I read Alexis Pauline Gumbs' (2020) *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, after a dear friend and fellow PhD student Kate Bowen-Viner recommended it to me. In this absorbing, Black queer poetry contending with social (in)justice and the survival of the planet and more-than-(just)-human species, Gumbs shows how we might learn from marine mammals' ways of living in unbreathable atmospheres. Such lessons, they suggest, might enable us to correspond, care and collaborate across generations, species and other categories that separate. I found this writing so profoundly moving at the time, but it got forgotten... until I thought about it again at the bench. I thought about it when on this visual 'hunt' for the breath of a whale. When routines of migratory, daily, interspecies living-together helped me to wriggle out of the netted threads of *between – ages, times, and more-than-(just)human kinship*. And when any remedies for what *between* might be or mean, like water, escaped through the cracks. Thinking-writing with Alexis Pauline Gumbs, migrating whales, New South Wales (Australia), and loving, longing dogs, then, has arisen an invitation to consider the interspecies and intergenerational scale of the between.

#### *scale*

In the opening sentence of *Undrowned*, Gumb (2020, p.1) asks 'What is the scale of breathing?'. Gumb is suggesting that breathing and drowning are not distinct activities, for breath is what connects us to each other, and to Black queer and feminist (ancestral) histories and presents of 'undrowning'. Such 'undrowning', Gumbs contends, is not bound to any one body or by a specific space-time of racial, gender, capitalist or ecological injustice:

I am saying that those who survived in the underbellies of boats, under each other under unbreathable circumstances, are the undrowned, and their breathing is not separate from the drowning of their kin and fellow captives, their breathing is not separate from the breathing of the ocean, their breathing is not separate from the sharp exhale of hunted whales, their kindred also. Their breathing did not make them individual survivors. It made a context. The context of undrowning (Gumbs, 2020, pp. 1-2).

At a time of extractive logic, planetary damage, struggles for survival and socially unjust violences, 'the scale of breathing is collective' (Gumb, 2020, p.1). As such, we must engage with interspecies and intergenerational lessons.

Importantly, the scale of undrowning crosses many borders – between atmospheres of air and water; between marine mammals, humans, and other bodies; between unjust histories and presents; between multiple species and planet. Scale implicates, and is implicated by, the *between*. The scale(s) of between(s) are expansive, extending, stretching and disturbing boundaries. Like waves rippling out across oceans, scale is not an identifiable, disconnected entity, but the sum of component disturbances ‘pushing through the gap[s]’ to ‘bend and spread out’ (Barad, 2007, p.74).

Perhaps then, we could ask what is the *scale* of between? What distinctions – of age and otherwise – can be unlearned? What violences of pasts-presents-futures-to-come collectively unravelled? What expansions of interspecies and intergenerational kindred might be(come) possible? And what “yet unfinished”, “unbreathable circumstances” (Gumbs, 2020, pp. 1-2) may be disturbed?

*sound, water, and knowledge waves: a hydrofeminist approach to explore the role of music in learning and listening differently, karen wickett & claudia Blandon*

In an intergenerational music session, Greg stands tall in an enormous room. His voice is powerful, resonant, and thunderous. Singing from the heart using a voice his wife of 30 years did not recognise. Greg joyfully played with the children he towered over, he sang, hid, and sought, and finally, he seemed to have found himself. Attending a weekly intergenerational music session, those around Greg discovered that he could sing beautifully and play joyously.

Engaging with music unlocked something in Greg that brought to the surface something that he forgot to forget, and in the music sessions, he was honouring that with all his might and smiles.

Nakita, an Early Childhood Studies student, had a work-based learning placement in an early years setting where a musician was also placed. She recalls how instead of marshalling the children to sit for singing time, she joined the musicians and educators standing in

the middle of the room. Together they sang and played instruments. Slowly one by one the children stopped what they were doing, adults and children caught each other's eye. In their own

time, the children moved towards the group and joined those singing and making music – even those who were uncomfortable to speak and sing at other times.

In this piece, we – the in-between: not the very young and not yet very old – embark on troubling a binary and linear understanding of what it means to be preverbal (the very young) and the postverbal (Quinn & Blandon, 2020). Thinking with the above encounters during two music interventions we reimagine communication with those that are considered not fully formed or in decline.

Inspired by Barad's assertion that we are not separate but entangled, that agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world' (Barad, 2003, p. 818), and Neimanis' (2013) hydrofeminism, provokes us to think with water and music to dissolve the binaries of old and young, pre-, and post-verbal and the importance of relationality. Thinking with the movement of waves (watery AND musical waves) reveals and floats the often unheard/seen ways of connecting, communicating, telling different and new histories/stories.

Thinking with music and water reminds us that as bodies of water (Neimanis, 2013) we are part of a relational cycle. Musical waves, like watery waves, bring newness and the emergence of conditions to learn, communicate and listen differently. For Nakita, an early-childhood student, no longer are the very young in need of taming and readying for adulthood but are already active members of the group communicating and connecting. For Greg, his family and his carers, no longer are people with dementia consumed by decline but still active connectors, communicators and learners.

By thinking with hydrofeminism, we consider a porous notion of identity that moves away from the assumption that individuals are bounded, coherent entities and fundamentally autonomous (Alaimo, 2018; Neimanis, 2017). Thinking with bodies of water, shines light on a relational conception of self that has important implications for notions of agency and vulnerability. This conceptual

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shift disrupts humanist discourses that conceptualise bodies as individualised, stable, and sovereign entities, proposing instead a conception of bodies whose borders are 'always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation' (Neimanis, 2017, p. 2).

Moreover, in this piece, we embark to reimagine bodies, music, water as:

Marshland, estuary, ecosystem, that [are] riven through with tributaries of companion species, nestling in [our] gut, extending through [our] fingers, pooling at [our] feet (Neimanis, 2012, p. 107).

We consider musical waves, water waves, knowledge waves as part of an assemblage that foster conditions for relational encounters and the recognition of our watery embodiment, of our permeability, an understanding that our experiences are both singular and shared, individual, and communal (Neimanis, 2012).

*instances of integration (and interruption), emma bush*

**Figure 3:** Doorway



We were walking back down to our camp, a tent in a field, along a wooded path. We haven't been able to stay inside the house since the pandemic. We found our way by torch light – picking our way over roots and stones, it was dark and

quiet apart from the sounds of owls, pigs, two wolfhounds barking- back up at the house. Slightly afraid, my son Theo, 11 years old, began humming a song (a simple chant) he had picked up from my research process – quietly and then rising in volume and gusto – and then stomping a rhythm into the soil track beneath his feet. Leigh and I joined in so that we became a walking chorus marching our way back to camp along the wooded garden track in the dark. This song, returning itself to the track where I had fictionally sung it before with my mother-in-law. (I had written this into a story, and into a performance a year before). I had actually sung this song with my workshop collaborators in the woods at the Greenman festival in the Brecon Beacons. This song, I had sung as a masked owl in our own home kitchen stomping clockwise around a wooden staff. The unexpected arrival of this song, in this moment, initiated by my son, held an element of surprise for me. We were all united for a prolonged instant of integration through moments and years, across bodies, times and places – that we had in various ways shared together. This connected me back, powerfully, to the many other times I had used this chant, and those animal masks, in workshops in varied locations and often with a sense of deepening engagement with self, place and the people’s bodies involved.

This example unfolds an active interest in duration and non-linear time and how this impacts composition, repetition, creating the conditions for making, and acknowledging the role of ritual and liminality in the work. This is about accumulation, repetition and responsiveness using exercises passed back and forth between my performance practice and my ‘domestic’ life. It could be claimed that I was taking an awareness or ‘tacit artists knowledge’ (Nelson, 2013) of the power of these activities; shared acts of sensing, into the memoir making, knowing that they would give me a powerful mode of dreaming back into or re-encountering in a very visceral way at later times, the presence and intimacy of a gathered moment of past encounter. It is important to note the power of song in particular in this regard; as a kind of ‘morphic resonance’ shared across bodies (Sheldrake, 1981). It is important to consider voice as an object that travels and touches the body, the ear of the other and sometimes – the heart.



The repetition and the cumulative effect of exercises, re-iterated across a broad expanse of time, is collapsed into a shared moment that contains all the others that came before it. In the context of my research – making material memoirs with my mothers, it is also apparent to me that this resonant effect may stretch into the future; offering a sense of continuity of contact with my mother's after they have died; an archive of embodied experiences that continue to proliferate into the future.

*poetic imagination and the shadows of childhood, arthur c. wolf*

Is childhood the phase from which you transition into the illumination of adulthood? In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, thinking begins when a prisoner escapes the darkness and approaches the light outside (Plato, 2000, pp. 514-519). For the Enlightenment thinkers, the Sun's spotlight moves inwards, and you can free yourself through reason. But what happens in the darkness and the shadows? Is it a strategy of removal to refuse or protect? If thinking is characterized by light, and then seeking darkness affirms its limits. There is a different approach to the dark and the shadows of childhood. I suggest that shadows are the intimate spaces for poetic images.

The Japanese philosopher Junichiro Tanuzaki (1933/1977) praises the use of shadows in Japanese aesthetics. Unlike the increasing number of well-lit houses filled with modern conveniences in the early 1900s, the traditional Japanese house would be sparsely decorated and dimly lit. The recessed alcove is far removed from the garden where the sunlight enters the house. The sunlight is filtered into a pale white glow by the shoji, the latticed sliding doors covered with white paper. The hanging scroll and flower arrangement are placed in it not as ornaments but rather "to give depth to the shadows" (p. 31). If illuminated, "the alcove would in that instant revert to mere void" (p. 33). This aesthetic apprenticeship can also be challenging and requires courage. Sensing the quality of 'light' that suffuses such a room, Tanuzaki describes feeling "a sort of fear in the face of the ageless, a fear that in that room you might lose all consciousness of the passage of time" (p. 35). But once sensitized, it lures you "into a state of reverie" (p. 24).

Similarly, for the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1958/1994), such a state can give birth to a poetic image or “a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche” (p. xv). According to Bachelard, shadows possess a oneiric depth (p. 33) or dream-like quality because they enhance space and thereby produce intimacy. This intimacy has “magnifying properties” (p. 202), and with the ontological openness of childhood, “[t]he intimacy of the room becomes our intimacy” (p. 226) and expands the imagination.

And so, to see what cannot be seen in adulthood, Tanuzaki (1933/1977) “would push back into the shadows the things that come forward too clearly” (p. 63), and Bachelard would explore these “centers of condensation of intimacy” (p. 29). To put it in poetic terms, as a child dances in a dark space with a single fixed spotlight, their body moves in and out of the darkness, producing different shadows and in and out of the Sun’s gaze. You do not have to be in the light to exist.

*children in war. where is the ‘in between’? georgios petropoulos*

In light of recent developments in childhood studies, adults seeking to bridge the so-called gap between ages are called upon to critically examine ingrained norms, concepts, and ideas about childhood (Wall, 2022). These often subtly -yet significantly- contribute to the marginalization of children or create a false sense of inclusion while perpetuating adult-centric assumptions about children's agency. As this piece is being written thousands of children suffer the harms of war. Why are children subjected to such suffering? Is this suffering just an aberration? Is the possibility of a child dying in a war-zone incompatible with the way that we conceptualize childhood? Can we reduce this suffering and death to the failure of armies to uphold international law? This convenient explanation absolves us of any responsibility, relating to the way that childhood is conceptualized in a world that is mostly designed by adults for adults.

Recent scholarship challenges the victimizing language of children trapped in conflict. The social construction of the child as an inert victim strips them from their agency and “undermines their status as political beings” (Brocklehurst, 2006).

Furthermore, the figure of the child as inert victim obscures the multiple roles that children are given or assume during war (e.g., soldiers/combatants, peacemakers, etc.). Whilst acknowledging that children can be exploited in many ways in difficult situations such as war, scholars challenge the simplistic narrative of the inert child exploring, for example, the complex reasons behind a child's decision to become a soldier. One can even wonder if the phenomenon of voluntary child-soldiering dismantles the adult-child binary, showing that children have agential qualities that have been traditionally attributed only to adults (see Watson, 2006). However, one might need to take a pause here and ponder whether the ascription of agency to children through soldiering creates a double bind for children: either understood as apolitical and thus having nothing to contribute to the political sphere, or conversely understood as potential threats and combatants and thus direct targets.

A further concern is that by focusing on activities associated with the figure of the sovereign adult male we might be overlooking other forms of agency. What about a child's cry? What about a child's calls to stop the war? What about a child's determination to attend school despite putting its life at risk?<sup>24</sup> I bring to your attention eight-year-old Dana in south Gaza who is determined to meet her peers and teachers in a tent in southern Gaza and sing a song about her good heart and good spirit. Are these not forms of agency with political significance, even if they don't fit adult standards about what qualifies as 'robust' political action? Can we not think of these as relational acts of agency that seek to shape the world? It seems to me that such actions are political, but we continually fail to understand them as such.

The brutal reality of war reveals how far we are from seriously listening to what children might have to say to us. For adults to occupy a space 'between ages' we need to cultivate an attentiveness toward the variety of ways in which children reveal their agency. Insofar as the notion of agency is colonized by the adult gaze, and adult subjectivity is prioritized over child subjectivity (Biswas et al., 2023) the possibilities of the "in between" remain limited.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-30/gaza-children-take-part-in-school-lessons/103649136>

*remaking the world?* rose-anne reynolds

As adults we made and named the world.

Colonisers (who were usually men) on boats, and on foot and on horses, with compasses and sails, with guns and other weapons of violence, made ‘this’ world.

“When the colonisers came they were always lost because they refused to live within the network of living...” (Simpson, 2021).

The world was ‘made’ separate and distinct, with some in and others out, including and excluding the rivers, trees, animals, plants, land, sea, solar systems and galaxies with the placement of a border and always with war.

We are called to think with the entangled pasts and how the co-habiting with more-than-humans in a multi-species world might look (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015).

The markings on ‘this world’ remain as scars forced upon some humans (including children) and the more than human, a homage to dispossession and violent occupation. “...but there is no taking it back, setting time aright, putting the world back on its axis. There is no erasure finally. The trace of all reconfigurings are written into the enfolded materialisations of what was/ is/ to-come. Time can’t be fixed” (Barad, 2010, p. 264).

The world has never been remade.

What if children remade the world?

It is time to remake the world.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The images in the watermark are pieces of playdough played with by students becoming teachers.

*'you are on the floor': ground encounters to re/think (age) positions and listening constraints, giovanna caetano-silva*

**Figure 4:** It is “field work” day and I am affected by children’s excavation to find dinosaur fossils



A child's observation of me as a teacher/researcher/adult sitting on the floor resonates in my body as I now sit in my 'researcher's chair' to re/think the boundaries that remain between adults and children. I re-play their voices and re-tune to what is impossible to leave behind in a traditional sense of time (Barad, 2007). I think about the aliveness of the sounds of the pebbles, the traces of earth in my skirt and the entanglement of bodies. I am interested in how decolonising relationships can emerge and untold stories can be enacted when these ground encounters are honoured. This gesture may engender some generative possibilities for us to think about a more relational idea of child/adult (Murriss & Borchers, 2019). However, I do not want to argue that this is sufficient or indicative of non-hierarchical relationships. One can kneel with children while still perpetuating what Hackett (2022) calls a hierarchy of talk, in which ways of being in the world beyond reason/representation are diminished (see also Shannon & Hackett, 2024). One can kneel and still forbid the unplanned 'vitality' of the everyday to be experienced (Boldt, 2020). That said, instead of being sure about these practices, I keep wondering: what does kneeling down (among children and more-than-humans) produce in this cut? (Barad, 2007).

I am drawn to how our<sup>26</sup> practice of sitting on the floor bears the traces of the adult-child divide. As researchers have pointed out, when adults and children meet, there are a series of “shouldness” indicating the way (Peach & Haynes, 2023), for instance on where each one should (not) sit, or how one should not behave (Osgood & Rijke, 2022). These taken-for-granted positions echo colonial boundaries that perpetuate the idea of adults as the ones who know the way (Murris, 2021). Against this backdrop, “kneeling down” in this event becomes an opportunity to think differently about the theme of “between ages”. Through multiple “ground” encounters<sup>27</sup>, I am reminded of post-age relations in “a world where age as a category matters less” (Peach & Haynes, 2023, p. 4), and I would add, in a world where the titles associated with age do not forbid us to “kneel down”. It is in such moments, when children, adults and more-than-humans refuse to take positions for granted, that troubling narratives of existence can be traced (Truman et al., 2020). Floors, sticks, fabrics and voices travel through time and space, being one and many.

Through the ground encounters briefly explored here, I consider how listening and positioning need to be constantly reconsidered. As we kneel, I am reminded that this is not a physical space but an ethico-onto-epistemological one (Barad, 2007). In this intra-action, children are not individual bodies, but phenomena (Murris, 2016). Kneeling becomes not a story of individuals to be listened to, but a story of collaboration (Tsing, 2015) in which relations are constantly being re-composed, collectively, relationally. We are used to seeing children and interpreting what/why they do (Hackett & MacRae, 2023). Listening/kneeling, in-between ages, requires more than that. Kneeling makes us ask what becomes im/possible in these ground encounters and for whom: children, earth, sticks and pebbles, what are they (not) trying to say?

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<sup>26</sup> It is not possible to claim authorship on this. Barad (2007) reminds us how entangled our bodies are. I do not sit alone; I do not sit guided by intentionality.

<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon entangles with other stories of kneeling down during my doctorate (funded by España, Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities – PRE2020-094747). Collectively sitting on the floor resembles the different moments in which my adult/professor/woman/foreigner titles are dismantled.



*blurred perspectives? – tensions between children's and adults' agendas, kathrin paal*

**Figure 5:** A favourite place outdoors



In her article ‘Naked by the Pool? Blurring the Image? Ethical Issues in the Portrayal of Young Children in Arts-Based Educational Research’, Cathy Nutbrown (2011) delves into the ethical dilemmas surrounding the portrayal of young children in research, particularly focusing on the use of photographs. Nutbrown expresses concerns over the increasing practice of pixelating images of children, which distorts their representation and raises questions about the ethical implications of such portrayals. The article argues that this practice may contribute to a “crisis of representation” and the “Othering” of young children in research. Nutbrown explores the balance between child protection and the integrity of research, advocating for a more nuanced approach that respects the identities and experiences of child participants.

In my research, I investigated what young children think, experience and learn when engaging with nature. I aimed to explore it from their perspective through child-led methods, which meant that what they shared sometimes appeared to me as blurry, unexpected, different, abstract but at the same time direct, honest, authentic and powerful. These tensions make me question who

does the blurring, and why, in some cases, the blurriness might be discounted whereas in others it would be mandatory.

Nutbrown's findings suggest that the practice of pixelating images of children in research is problematic, as it distorts the reality of the children's experiences and can be seen as a form of dishonesty. Nutbrown argues that this practice may stem from a culture of fear and overprotection, which can lead to the constraint of children's freedom and the misrepresentation of their lives in research. She calls for a re-evaluation of the ethical guidelines and practices surrounding the use of images of children in research to ensure that they are both protective and respectful of the children's identities and experiences.

Researchers should strive for an ethic of care and responsibility towards child participants, engaging with them as experts in their own lives and individuals with unique perspectives and wisdom. As an adult outsider trying to capture children's insights, it is pivotal to offer creative methods to children to reveal their views while following an ethically sensitive process of corroborating their ongoing assent and consent. It is also crucial to critically engage with power imbalances that can occur when the researcher's agenda collides with children's understanding of the study aims and their personal intentions.

This photo was taken by one of the children I was lucky enough to be led by, while showing me their favourite places and spaces in their preschool's outdoor space.

### *disrupting hierarchies, bakhtawar khosa*

In bell hooks' seminal text, *Teaching to Transgress*, a foundational critique is levied against the rigid hierarchies that define traditional educational spaces – prompting a reflective reassessment of the roles of speaker and listener (hooks, 1994). She advocates for a pedagogical practice that questions long-standing dynamics of voice within the classroom: “...who speaks? who listens? and why?” (hooks, 1994, p. 40). These questions resonate with the discourse of post-age pedagogies, which eschew rigid age-based and cultural hegemonies in favour of fluid dynamics of learning and teaching (Peach & Haynes, 2023).

Reflecting on these theoretical frameworks, I find myself replaying the voices of the children I have engaged with. One particular instance involved a young student from a religious minority who shared an account of their family's celebration during a local religious festival. Their description was vivid: the smells of homemade food, the beautiful decorations, and the joy they found in music and dance. The entire class was captivated. It was a moment that transcended the usual teacher-student dynamic. The student, despite their age, became a storyteller whose voice commanded attention and respect. At that moment, the classroom hierarchy dissolved, and their voice was the guiding force. Their voice held as much weight and respect as any experienced researcher or teacher.

In such moments, the traditional roles of speaker and listener dissolve, creating a space where learning and teaching flow freely *between ages*. One moment a child shares a story, rich with personal and cultural nuances, becoming the teacher whose voice guides and enlightens. The next moment, an educator listens, trying not just to understand but to learn and be transformed by the child's perspective. Through this process, listening became a philosophical act, an engagement with the profound depths of human experience and understanding (Haynes & Carvalho, 2023). A practice that challenges an educator to be more present, more open, and more willing to learn from those who are often marginalised in traditional educational settings. Because their exchange is not unidirectional; it is a dance where roles continually shift, attempting to create a more egalitarian and interconnected approach to knowledge.

However, I recognise that this instance was more of a serendipitous event rather than the result of intentionality. Reflecting on my journey as an educator, I question: What can educators consciously do to recognise children as *knowers*? (Murriss, 2013). To what extent does a "credibility deficit" related to age, as Murriss (2013) describes, influence how much credibility an educator affords children's voices? How can educators create a classroom environment that consistently promotes these egalitarian exchanges, rather than relying on serendipitous moments? What does it mean for us, as educators, to give up authority, as Murriss

(2013) challenges? And ultimately, within the philosophical confines of our classrooms, *who speaks, who listens, and why?*

Addressing these questions is not merely an administrative undertaking but a philosophical necessity. Through exploring these relationships, we can start to shape an educational environment that values a collaborative process – a harmonious blend of voices that questions the very foundations of conventional classroom dynamics.

*cultivating attentiveness: an enquiry into what might happen if all the world mattered*<sup>28</sup>, patricia hannam

In these uneasy times could there be significance,  
in each moment of our humble human existence,  
in cultivating attentiveness<sup>29</sup> in our relations and encounters with others?

This is both across and between our ages as well as with all that is in the universe.

Not a simple matter at any point in history.  
But, in this age of rapid motion and change,  
a time of instant and constant communication,  
where there is much distraction as time flows by in the race for material gratification, something as vital as breath and water may have been forgotten.

Suppose deepening the roots<sup>30</sup> of attentiveness through speech and silence,  
in all our relationships.  
is a matter of present and utter and eternal significance?  
That without this we cannot live,  
we are not alive,  
for attentiveness like breath makes a life-giving difference to everything we are.  
It is in being seen,  
being attended to,

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<sup>28</sup> The editors suggest reading this contribution out loud.

<sup>29</sup> After Weil (1965).

<sup>30</sup> After Weil (2002).

waves of flickering murmurs in everyday life: playing between ages

we appear alive in this world anew.

I bring to you the attentiveness of 6-year-old Lorenzo as he danced,  
danced alive the story of the Elves and the Shoemaker,  
and, as, in the enquiry circle,  
to the attentiveness of his classmates  
who, watching with attentive eyes.

Lorenzo was seen and arrived anew (Arendt, 1998) in the world.

So, for a moment come along with me and accept that attentiveness, like breath,  
makes a life-giving difference to everything we are as educators.

That this is something we can bring to our relationship,  
with children and young people and to all that is,  
and make space for children to do the same.

That this might be something healing,  
an antidote,  
to the hurt we see all around us in the world.

Well, let us suppose our role as educators includes being something of a healer.

Assume that like doctors we have a responsibility to do no harm,  
what if deepening the roots of attentiveness through speech and silence,  
is not only a matter of present and eternal significance  
but of educatorly duty and responsibility?

That without this, since we cannot live and we are not alive without attentiveness,  
each of our educational encounters need something of its balmful<sup>31</sup> presence.

It could be that as teachers we have a responsibility to initiate  
the creation of conditions wherein attentiveness can exist  
and in so doing make possible the emergence of the new into the world.

If attentiveness is a necessary condition for life  
and all the newness implied,

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<sup>31</sup> Balm understood here as like healing ointment, akin in its effect to mercy and compassion.

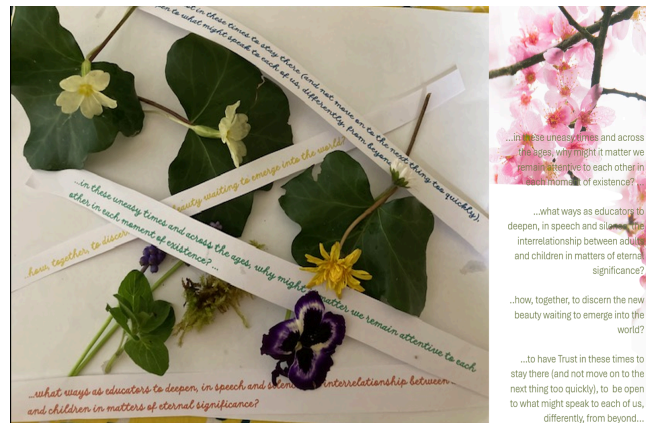
and attentiveness is a kind of action in the way envisaged by Arendt, attentiveness is a prerequisite for each one newly appearing in the world.

Finally, to discernment, which follows from attentiveness, let's together recognise this new beauty emerging in the world.

Let's hope for an attentive trust.

In these times to stay there for a while (and not move on to the next thing too quickly), so as to be open to what might call from the world (Arendt, 1998, p. 199), to our hearts.

**Figure 6:** Collaging plants and questions



*nestling between flickering things and ages, hanna oester-barkey*

**Figure 7:** Painted salami sausages





A few weeks ago, I painted a wall in dusky rose in our apartment with my three-year-old child. While I was busy painting the wall evenly, Nino called out: "Mommy, look, I painted sausages!" I looked over at him and was alarmed to see that he had painted rose lines on the adjacent wall, which I had painstakingly painted white. But before my anger at this mishap could arise, I was taken aback: the lines really did look like hanging, dried salami sausages. I had to laugh and couldn't help but be happy with Nino.

I constantly experience moments like this, in which children draw my attention to a phenomenon that suddenly takes different shapes than those I habitually perceive. They are my favourite moments in my everyday life. It's like something is waking up inside me, an attention, a joy of life even. When my child runs his toy trains on the keys of our piano because the keys have become tracks, when he spreads a long belt on the floor and loads it with cargo because it is now a tanker. I can immediately understand what he means when he draws my attention in a very concrete way to similarities that are, perhaps subtle, but clearly present. His references are tangible, his observations arise from our concrete, everyday life, in which things suddenly emerge from the fog of adult routines and unfold their ambiguities (Stieve, 2008, p. 180). I believe children have a heightened sensitivity to pick up on the many flickering relations that surround us in our lives with caring people and beings, with meaningful things and stories, with memories and feelings (Meyer-Drawe, 1986, p. 270). I believe that as our rationalistic socialization advances, we put more and more distance between ourselves and this flickering world (Meyer-Drawe, 1986, p. 269), but it is there, everyday, tangible, and nearby (Steward, 2011, p. 449). Perhaps it is precisely because of this closeness that makes it blurry that we often see through it? (Alcoff, 2006, p. 188; Stieve, 2008, p. 252). My feeling of joy in life when children draw my attention to physiognomic similarities between things comes from the fact that I feel invited by them back into this flickering world. By appreciating and responding to this childlike attention, I also allow myself to slip into my childish experience and I start (again) to paint, build, collect and spread out with pleasure instead of tidying up and organizing. In this way, our everyday familiar places become condensed atmospheres, the trees in the

park become beloved mountains, our bicycles become horses, our family furniture and interior become relatives, our cuddly toys and things become companions or odd creatures. They all join in an animated murmur that speaks to us, so that we do not feel isolated in our own ego facing an objective world, but deeply related to it and to one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1986, p. 23; Welsh, 2013, p. xix). A world that whispers and offers us niches for memories of our (human and non-human) loved ones, stories and parts of our subjectivity to hide (Benjamin, 2000, p. 9).

*picture in picture: a hard to pull turnip. generations learning together through reading storybooks on phones, dani landau*

**Figure 8:** Screenshot from a WhatsApp video phone call



*Note.* Grandparents reading a picture book to their grandchildren and son.

*the enormous turnip story*

In the 19th century Ukrainian fable of *The Enormous Turnip* (Tolstoy & Oxenbury, 1968) the grandfather plants a seed. When the turnip is grown, he finds he cannot pull it up alone, and enlists the help firstly of the grandmother, then the granddaughter, and finally of all their animals. On this page we see the reluctant cat being volunteered into the grand effort of pulling the turnip out of the ground. Finally, it is the smallest animal; the mouse, who has the added power to enable the pulling of the turnip. The fable depicts individuals combining powers to cause change, and continually creating a family with increased capacity to cause change.

waves of flickering murmurs in everyday life: playing between ages

The family, including both human and non-humans, forms through the event of pulling together.

*video calls during covid isolation*

Video calls during covid isolation became especially important for communication between the ages. Our family, pulling with the powers of technology to learn together amongst the stories of COVID particularly affecting the older generations.

*reading picturebooks together*

In this image, the grandmother's hand, the invisible grandfather holding the phone, granddaughters' eyes. Me, behind my daughter, the in-between generation. Hearing my parents reading stories again, trying to relish it, and learn from them about parenting. Learning again about how my parents read stories.

*the family photograph*

In this moment, we create our family portraits. The family photograph is made live, so we adjust, to see the phone, and to be seen by the others involved in making the image. The image we make on our phones is of togetherness, our images combined in a unified surface. But it is also an image of separation, by distance, and COVID isolation.

*learning generations*

The image is of a present in motion. The family photograph image is of a present bringing together the generations in a singular changing surface: "the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 14). This Ashkenazi Jewish family, with their roots in Eastern Europe, living city lives, reaching for turnip fables, over telephones. The generations become a singular present in the formation of a live image.

*eyes*



The cat looks reluctant to help with the turnip. Our eyes focus on the image in the book. It's hard to make the eyes meet with the telephone. If you look at the other people you are looking away from the camera. Even the cat looks away. But the book is a focus, pulling the three generations in creating the shared reading event.

*generations together in event of family image creation through story reading on phones*

The involvement in the event is more than individual and also more than human. More than individual capacities to collectively become in the meeting of the generations through the effects of participating. These are more than human "collectivities" (Sharp, 2011, p. 25) involving biological and non-biological forces in becoming. The event of intergenerational learning stories, and relearning and reflecting on storytelling, and learning again to parent through re-telling tales.

The image mirrors back the collectivizing effects of the storytelling event. The collective image-making not only represents but "constitutes" social worlds (Coleman, 2013). The live picture-in-picture technology affords the live video call image in continual formation to produce that intergenerational event. Like a hard to pull turnip it requires and produces a coming together of a strange, awkward, and difficult ensemble of difference in their combined effects. It affords tones of combination into the generations old story.

The book, its telling, and the picture in picture technology are creating a family image, each process is part of the transgenerational forming the relational event. Intergenerational mutual learning is dependent on the events and relations that create it. The family both produces and is produced by the qualities of the learning encounter.

*a speculative fabulation on play experienced some time, mandy andrews*

The sun is shining, it is early in the morning, the front door beckons, ...let's go out. There is a moment of dazzlement on the front path as light reflects back. The big gaps between the tiles are for jumping today and the ants are on the move. The molar striations of home as school are put aside, the boundaries are undone, though always leaky, until the last decade when the electric gate went into the

middle of the plastic-coated railings, and nobody could get through. Out of the box, out of the pen. Who else is out? What else is out? What will the doings do today, and more than today, the past meeting the future.

At the corner an old man sits in his chair by a sunny window, the sun on his face, knowing of his playing cricket on the imaginary extended lawn-pitch in front of him as he bats, or throws and catches the ball in an eternal return. He is both there and here, thrower, batter, catcher, boy and aged together. The times of squeezing bullets in city gates to make them pop are long gone... but still residing within his dreams, defended in his weakening mind... no more embodied understanding of wartime motion acts of swinging on ropes from lamp-poles. But knowing that... still there when the mind drifts, who was that boy on manifold materials of rubble running, blitz bombing playground? A spider drops on shiny pate, the ingenuity of the arachnean, threading the pearls of our findings, and once precipitating acting upon them also. 'Whoever said the object simultaneously situates the being conscious of being that distinguishes itself from the object' (Deligny, 2015, p. 26). The old guy scratches his head and threads the pearls of what he has noticed, known, and now imagines onto the web, the dry threads upon which acting went back and forth acting unembodied, tracings of the past.

Child sees the old man, cue a smile, return, connect and wave... a flow... mock bowl, a bat, a catch, and on. Once an old man did the same, cue smile, mock bowl, a catch and move on, and on, and on, a cricketing refrain as crickets call. Child as an old man's future will sit in the window, watching, pearling moments on arachnean threads, pearls sparkling at the child who plugs in. Moment and movement making the child and eternal return making man more than compost, ludicosity then and now emerging anew from oblivion... a life... alive. Future child who is not yet will smile, cue, catch the return, connect and wave... a mock bowl, bat, catch and so on... and on... and on... and now... right here, and there... Old man feels played, plugged in, alive and vital still despite dull greyed eyes and wayward mind.



*but 'between' is not enough, jan georgeson*

My mind has been preoccupied with connections these last few months. I live far from my children and from my increasingly frail mother. My links with work colleagues are being disrupted by organisational changes. I find myself searching for ways to maintain connections between myself and the people I hold dear, between generations within my own family and generations across the workplace. But 'between' is not enough. It emphasises the space that separates, the fading of togetherness and the loss of presence.

Then, on a recent visit, I watched my mother sewing, absorbed as she mended a pair of trousers for my son. He was very fond of these trousers; over the years, they had changed from stiff new material to a soft lived-in feel, but now they had gone beyond to holes and splits and threadbare areas that threatened retirement from wardrobe to recycling bin. With a carefully chosen needle matched to the weight of the now delicate fabric, and patches and cotton selected just one shade darker to disappear into a sustaining frame, she bridged and neatened and brought together the solid sections of garment. Then she noticed, as she selected patches and darned the thinning fabric, that this was not the first time she had been tasked with bringing these trousers back from the brink. She met again previous mendings, and this sent her thoughts backwards to the last time she had mended these trousers, and then back back back to all the times when she had talked and played and cooked and read with her grandchildren. Holding, manipulating and crafting new life into the garment in anticipation of another few years of service, she felt connected. The mending. The stitches. Making useful something that was old but loved. Never throwing anything away. These values were threaded through her relationships with her children and grandchildren, and indeed with her own mother, as the eldest daughter helped with the piles of clothes that forever needed mending. She ironed the now serviceable trousers and sent them back with me for my son, remembering and knowing that she was remembered and part of our everyday lives.



There was no 'between'; the care, the knowing of the other, the sharing of skills learned, and the values of make-do-and mend were in there... in every stitch.

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