


Posthuman COV-llaboration: Enfleshing Encounters of Connectedness Through Imaging Memory

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Abstract

Caught up in the “COVID moment and distancing-isolation,” the authors came together through a Collective Memory Work initiative to inquire into what solidarity during the COVID moment meant to each of them and collectively assemble understandings about this phenomenon. Critical relationships, methods, and more-than-human relationalities are shared in this article that combined to enliven the collaboration. Grounded in Collective Memory Work and widened by arts-based approaches, the academics reflexively explored critical encounters, probing into how they move(d) in/through work–home spaces during the isolation and uncertainties experienced during the pandemic. This article serves as a methodological unpacking of our arts-based research process that used Zoom discussions, memory writing, individual artmaking, and sharing stories. More-than-human capacities provide a pathway to negotiate trauma, fears, loneliness, and isolation that affectively circulate through the COVID moment.

Keywords

assemblage, enfleshment, affect flows, posthumanism, interspecies relationships

Introduction

“As there is the sense of isolation and withdrawal from human contact—there is the coming togetherness of close interspecies encounters, where lives entwine and give each other meaning.” (Jennifer)

Moments of disruption to our routinized habitual patterns and momentous shifts to our outwardly known world enable us to (re)think taken-for-granted relationships and the spaces we inhabit. The collaborative memory work in this article offers two contributions. We first link memory work with arts-based research to align the process of “writing, sharing, discussing, and revising” (Clift & Clift, 2017, p. 605) with our analysis of storied images. Second, we provide an account of how posthuman COV-llaboration (collaboration human and more-than-human within the parameters of the COVID-19 moment) can mobilize flows of affect. We, Daisy, Jennifer, Adele, and Ruth, consider how techniques to engage our mind-bodies enable us to transform how we respond in spaces and relations.

Throughout 2020, we (four women teacher educator-researchers) found ourselves stirred by the global pandemic of COVID-19 that has spread throughout the world, causing loss of life and livelihoods. Rather than remaining overwhelmed and obsessed with the dystopian news media and pervasive circulations of post-truth politics, where confirmation bias becomes the intellectual norm (Kien, 2021), we took the initiative to engage in “outward-facing intimate scholarship” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 179). Rather than obsessing about our pain and ego, swept up into the abyss of fear and

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isolation, we engaged in an “affirmative becoming-intimate with the world” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 179). Stuttering through sporadic Zoom get-togethers, we inquired into what this condition is that we felt run through our mind-bodies and how we make meaning of our experiences as teacher educator-researchers working in diverse higher education institutions.

Our article addresses a shared question –“How can we en flesh the COVID-19 lockdown moment with all of its complexity?” First, we offer glimpses of ourselves and invite you to “tumble with us” (Guyotte et al., 2018, p. 125), becoming attuned to how our bodily en fleshments respond to COVID in/through our different work-home spaces. We asked ourselves how we could continue to do our academic work amid the complexity of the new boundaries and entirely re-configured office spaces to make sense of our visceral response to the “out of our hands” changes? Triggered by the same contagion, responded to differently within each country, we wrap a narrative around our experiences. Making them visible, we flesh them out to generate a touchstone to guide our collective sensemaking.

Using esthetic memory work and arts-based research as potent sites to mobilize flows of affect as opportunities for solidarity, we study our embodied (COVID-19) experiences as researcher-teacher educators. Producing an assemblage of our critical relationships, methods, and more-than-human relations within the complexities of higher education-home nexus, we highlight the use of posthuman memory work and the sense of solidarity that emerged through the lockdowns (COVID moment).

Interspecies Articulation

The lockdown afforded rich opportunities for interspecies articulation. The disruptive grip of COVID changed our pets’ lives also. We were present in their daytime spaces, and they moved deeper into ours. When they barked, our colleagues heard it via Zoom, transmitting from home to home. They popped up on the screen and responded to the barks of dogs on the other side of the world. Still needing feeding, walking, and being played with, they also transitioned across the boundaries of home and work.

There were powerful and generative possibilities for humans and more-than-humans to “create the conditions for each other’s existence” (Rautio, 2013, p. 445). Aroused by interspecies entanglements, produced through the “throwntogetherness” (Massey, 2005, p. 140) of the lockdowns, alerted us to the “ontological question of privileging the human subject” (Malone, 2016, p. 394). Malone (2016, p. 394) points us to possibilities for thinking about the agency of the non-human subject in research:

A focus on new materialist ontologies allows me to conceive a view of agency in my theorizing as not tied exclusively to human action but that both child and dog are intra-acting, shaping each other.

Problematizing participation and rhythms in academic work, Springgay (2016, p. 75) describes the “quiverings and intensive micro-movements” that offer shimmering micro-politics that indicate the movement, affective flows, and lines of flight that punctuate assemblages. Academic work forms a relational ontology that transcends anthropomorphic concerns, where humans are in a stewardship position. There is a sense of projection that stems from an unquestioned place of human exceptionalism. Yet, our lives are intertwined. In the interspecies relational entanglement discussed here, “humans and other species share entangled, cascading and enmeshed pasts, presents, and futures” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015, p. 509)

Making Method Stutter

We use memory stories and art to map affective flows across assemblages that produce solidarity. Assemblages are processes that enable different “entities” —bodies (human and more-than-human), objects, ideas, and discourses to come together to form relations where they function as provisional wholes (Kinkaid, 2020). Claiming that thought and language constrain creative powers, Deleuze evokes the metaphor of stuttering to suggest that we can push language to its limits. In doing so, we can set both thought and language loose to create afresh. Making method stutter with a “logic of the *and*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25, emphasis in original), we use “concept as method” (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017) to write and draw a posthuman assemblage.

Our posthuman COV-llaboration and our momentary opportunities to do memory work, write and tell stories, and create drawings made tangible a material space to embody and en flesh concepts. Posthumanism involves reconceptualizing ontology, epistemology, and ethics. It shifts the emphasis away from the human to the vitality of matter, the significance of the more-than-human, non-human, and the importance of affective and sensory practices (Taylor & Bayley, 2019). Posthuman practices en flesh entanglements of material assemblages that shoot through with flows of affect, which mobilize the body’s capacity to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Deploying Deleuze’s (2004, p. 22) line of argument, we use concepts that “simultaneously surpass the dualities of ordinary thought and give things a new truth, a new distribution, a new way of dividing up the world.” The scattering force of the assemblage flees collaboration. Collaboration is conceptually embedded in notions of the humanist subject, where independent individuals elect to work together (Guttorm et al., 2015). Posthuman COV-llaboration is rhizomatic and is mobilized through the flows of affect that circulate through assemblages. In assemblages, you can “find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, and hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs” (Deleuze, 2007, p. 177). In these multiplicities, for instance, “objects, bodies, expressions, qualities,

and territories.... come together for varying periods to ideally create new ways of functioning” (Livesey, 2010, p. 18). We write affectively through collapsing academic labor in on itself, stirring ourselves into this written text as part of an assemblage that is multiplicitous, with its ongoing shifts and moves.

Memory Work

Looking to Haug (1987) and other feminist researchers, our memory work practice focuses on collective inquiry. We consider how our “past experiences may offer some insight into the very ways in which (we as) individuals construct (our) selves into existing relations” (Haug, 1987, p. 34). In Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber’s book, *That’s Funny, You Don’t Look Like a Teacher* (Weber & Mitchell, 1995), the idea of drawing and teacher work deepens the idea of working with visual and memory as a tool for a “looking back” in studying the self. This idea of a process approach to working with memory and the visual is expanded in Mitchell and Weber’s next book, *Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers: Beyond Nostalgia* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). In this memory work exploration, they emphasize memory work as “a process of going back over something in different ways and with new perspectives, of studying one’s own experience with insight and awareness of the present for purposes of acting on the future” (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 8). Like Haug (1987), these studies work within collective understanding; however, the starting points often focus on the individual.

Our collaboration developed as a memory work collective through an initiative designed by Robert Hamm from the University of Maynooth in Ireland. Daisy is a teacher educator working at a South African university; Jennifer and Adele work as teacher educators at the University of New England, in Australia; and Ruth is a Professional Learning and Development Facilitator at the Te Whai Toi Tangata Institute of Professional Learning, University of Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand. We did not all know each other; however, a collective interest in enflashing the visceral experiences of COVID emerged. Thrown together through a mutual interest in theorizing solidarity in/through memory work in the face of the pandemic, we elected to map affective flows and make the COVID moment tangible. Working through memory work, our COV-llaboration shifted and morphed. We found a space-place to work across dawn and dusk in the different time zones to turn the COVID moment upside down on its head.

Through the arts-based approach to data production, the COV-llaboration enabled us to come together and use memory work and drawings to talk about isolation, boundaries, and solidarity in the rhizomatic fluxes and flows of assemblages. Arts-based research can be helpful to explore issues where there are high levels of emotion (Khanolainen et al., 2021). Art can surface issues, convey messages, and elicit feelings beyond the written or spoken language. The arts-based research approach permits us to create data and deliberately merge our scholarly and artistic selves (Leavy, 2020).

This assemblage encapsulates movements of the spectral and embodied COVID moment: the bodies of workers in adult education, the non-human bodies of the physical structures of our surroundings, the more-than-human animals whose lives intertwine with ours, the organizations we work for, the matrices of class race and gender that intersect and constitute who we are and how we want to be known. The geopolitics of location and the macro-political responses to the pandemic entangle families and colleagues that punctuate our daily routines, and fears and feelings of nostalgia for rituals and a “new normal,” memories of past lives and lives of our loved ones. These all assemble and map lines of desires in/around the search for solidarity and meaning.

The relationships flourished between us throughout these online meetings. We come from different researcher positions—embracing both qualitative and post-qualitative positionalities. Just as Claiborne et al. (2015, p. 267) observed during their collaborative memory work, there can be “difficulties in embracing group coherence without homogenizing intra-group differences.” The experience was very generative as we each introduced concepts to the group that was new to other members. We actively listened to each other, permitting silences and negotiating the spaces of in-betweenness, where new understanding co-emerged. These spaces invite trust to grow. They enabled solidarity to strengthen from Zoom to Zoom and, with it, a sense of solace.

The memory work recounts the authors’ artistic virtual interactions during the COVID-19 period of quarantine lockdowns. Connections between art, writing, humans’ embodied struggles, and engagement through technologies, enable forms of feminist writing as a cyborg practice. This work has the political potential to meaningfully voice embodied experiences of inter-sectionality and vulnerability that remain increasingly under-expressed in a neoliberal world of the pandemic. In creative prose, theory interweaves with artistic performances, poetry, and extracts of the authors’ virtual exchanges. The storying reflects how hybrid, non-conventional, cyborg writing explorations can connect different bodies in an academic text, even when these bodies are physically apart. By invoking hybridity that counters the masculine conventions of academic writing, the text aspires to produce scholarly knowledge that writes and speaks of embodied experiences of othering that urgently seek expression under the COVID-19 pandemic. The memory work builds on the burgeoning stream of organizational literature that focuses on writing differently and especially on feminist forms of writing that integrate genre-blurring prose, poetry, and art-based research

Daisy, Jennifer, Adele, and Ruth developed vignettes that included an image, an analysis, and a narrative. We composed these images in response to the prompt “How can we enflash the COVID-19 lockdown moment with all of its complexity?” These were shared and analyzed during Zoom sessions. Our drawn images called for reflexivity, and through collective discussions, we identified and explained the memory composition

elements. The deconstructive process of opening the image to closer scrutiny happened when drawn images were shared, and stories told through digital technology. Memory narratives were developed, which offered a textual response to the drawings and the embodied momentary meanings that reveal solidarity. These visual and narrative texts serve as enmeshments of the creative production experience, as the memories were made tangible. There were creative, meditative opportunities to reflect on the self and the other and “make oneself seen summoning the gaze of the other” (Foucault, 1997, p. 243).

Listening and talking through our analysis of the vignettes, we generated a “data enmeshment” that addressed the research question. Jumping from representation and performance to collaborative listening and speaking, we created new texts. We initially listened to Adele’s narrative, which triggered connections for us. We responded by creating a collection of words in the Zoom chat function, which “jumped” from the performance of the vignette. We then used our felt sense, and the word collection to each create a pantoum poem. Noticing connections, we wrote a new vignette, specifically about boundaries, and created an image to represent our work. By doing our creative thinking and making meaning in materially situated ways, we took the risk of producing a co-flexive, polyvocal interpretation that gave flesh to our fears, feelings, and ideas—as ethical work.

Arts-Based Research

In developing our research approach, we acknowledge that other authors have used arts-based methodology to form meaningful connections through virtual space. Pithouse-Morgan and Samaras (2020) facilitated a community across South Africa, and the United States of America to create a virtual bricolage through the combination of memory work and found poetry. They collaborated as critical friends to undertake their polyvocal self-study, which enabled critical collaborative inquiry. Likewise, Mandalaki and Daou (2021) use technology as a cyborg practice that builds on feminist writing approaches that blur the genres of prose, poetry, and art-based research. The integration of digital technology co-creates us as a collective, writing together during the global pandemic.

Our posthumanist approach responds to the risk of arts-based research becoming a form of methodocentrism (Weaver & Snaza, 2017). In this writing assemblage, we move beyond notions of “pre-formed methods” which are understood to “guarantee the validity of an intellectual investigation into the world...”, we drew on poetry and a gallery of images to cohere and offer lines of flight that “(factor-in) the vicissitudes of the observer’s entanglement with the world” (Weaver & Snaza, 2017, p. 2). We use the word writing in the present tense—active act—alive and not a dead tree-like structure—so we can think in the doing (Ingold, 2013). Arts-based research is a process of enmeshment, and an opportunity to foreground art as a part of an immersive research event in the making (Rousell, 2020). The gatherings where we draw and story our

memories were “data events” that open a “multiplicity of trajectories” (Rousell, 2020, p. 1).

In engaging in our arts-based research practice, we consider key features of quality, drawing on Tracy’s (2010) work. These include (a) *worthy topic*, (b) *rich rigor*, (c) *sincerity*, (d) *credibility*, (e) *resonance*, (f) *significant contribution*, (g) *ethics*, and (h) *meaningful coherence*. Our topic has resonance with so many who face lockdowns and are renegotiating relations with companion animals and with friends and colleagues through technology-mediated channels. This work has rich rigor, given that our study draws on “sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex” theoretical cons/tructs (Tracy, 2010, p. 840). Moreover, we had met fortnightly and sometimes weekly to talk and write together since we first met when COVID-19 took hold in March 2020. There is rigor in that we have produced and worked with significant amounts of data. We have also taken the necessary time for this work to be thorough.

Exercising co-reflexivity, we discussed our “subjective values, biases, and inclinations” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840) during the writing process. There is transparency in the methodological approach and sincerity in our work. The richness of the storying offers credibility and multivocality. The stories we wrote have resonance with others, and in particular, the poetry evokes affect. A new theoretical and methodological contribution draws together arts-based methods, memory work, and Deleuzian theory. It is ethical in its onto-epistemology approach, aligned with posthuman ethics and rejecting the anthropocentric gaze. Last, the study has meaningful coherence. There is alignment with the post-qualitative genre and arts-based processes that align with our goal to “enflesh” the COVID-19 lockdown moment.

Enmeshment

The transformation or enmeshment of feelings and ideas offers a powerful means for producing data and conceptualizing the research processes (Guyotte et al., 2018; Stevens, 2017). Stevens (2017, p.11) defines enmeshment as “a progression of embodiment.” Inherent in this view is understanding the relationship between our corporeal being and the cultural forms that we inhabit subjectively. The flesh highlights the importance of bodily knowledge, fleshly feelings, and the “fleshing out of ideas” (2017, p. 11). Enmeshment builds on the notion of embodied practices; for Macintyre Latta and Buck (2008, p. 325), it is reflective of “what it is to be human.” In this work, we consider the possibilities for enmeshment in a posthuman and interspecies context. Our memories, stories, and ideas become entangled with plants, animals, and the affective flows of our assemblage. Within this permission-giving practice, the emergent lines of flight become enmeshed, emboldened, political, and maverick. We see the relational dynamic as an opportunistic, creative knowledge-making process (Guyotte et al., 2018). Enlivening connections across the globe, our shared and imagined stories delivered through Zoom (-elated) voices opened up our practice-based understandings and re-imagined solidarity.

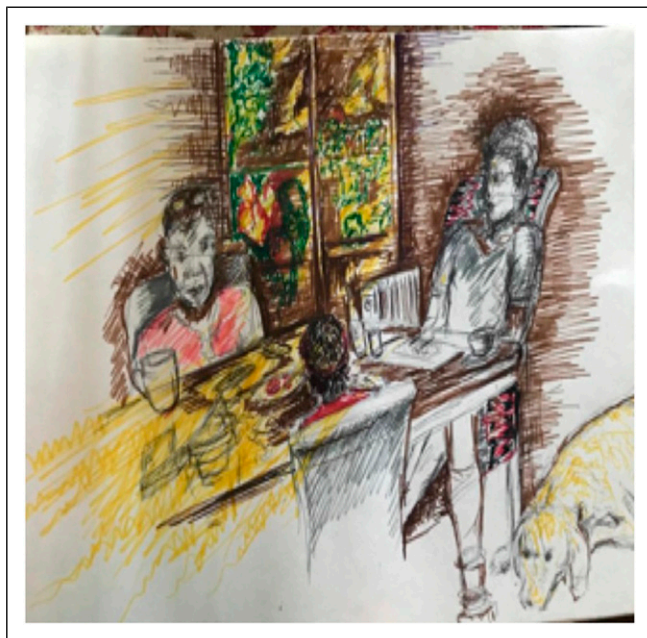


Figure 1. Daisy's drawn image: The wooden table.

Memory drawing called on us to turn back on ourselves as an exercise of care for relearning the “art of living “in the present (Foucault, 1997, p. 235). Understanding the present can be a nostalgia where we traverse a route of hope. Through drawing, we understand what solidarity in the COVID moment means. The drawings offer an entangled generative view of agency and the capacity to realize “new kinds of existence” (Allan, 2013, p. 27). This creative exercise of thought and action “reactivate(s) what it knows, that makes present a principle....and thus prepares itself to confront the real” (Foucault, 1997, p. 235–236). Resisting a formulaic approach to storying our art and memories, each vignette of memory stories, images, and image elements, reveals a medley of enlivened momentary glimpses.

Vignette I—Pleasure of the Present

This memory drawing captures a moment of thought feeling—a moment of connection around food, my son and partner, and our dog Titan. (Figure 1).

Seated around a large wooden table, it has become a routine feature now that my son is back home. Over the past few months, it has become a space for sharing the day's events and confronting our truths—in dialogue and recently as many voices. Titan grunts in frustration sometimes, and at other times he sighs with acknowledgment.

The drawing makes available more than just a memory of a particular moment in the day now. It has become a space for hope and peace—fear shifts to freedom. The light of the day filters

through, bringing the sounds of the chirping weaver birds. Noticing these magical nuances enlivened.

“It's always difficult to look back, to see past mistakes...” (Bell & Valentine, 1995).

What does solidarity look and feel like *now*? Thoughts of the present COVID-moment are provoked through my memory drawing. Choosing to engage with the interior of this moment offered me a tangible space to turn the gaze on myself and make myself an object to be known (Foucault, 1985) and learn how I got here - a mere silhouette. Turning in to see and understand past mistakes and see the present can be described as a “half warm glow, half shudder—of dim recollection...” (Bell & Valentine, 1995, p. 3). I look for the stories that the images carry as they move across the page, mapping lines of desire—converging and crisscrossing—to create contact zones.

Ruminating, on the drawing, I feel the desire to open up the contact zones and see and know the present differently.

The Table

The solid wooden table stretches across the room, disappearing into the intense rays of yellow. The table brought us both—human and more-than-human—together. Today, it beckoned to us, and over a cup of tea and Madeira cake, it provoked us to turn back and take notice of the stories and experiences that bind us. And then, almost in a whisper, table asked, “What if we just allowed the stories to be told the way it is, without the masks? What does solidarity look and feel like? The table seemed uncertain as its solid form melted into the page. Can the past sweep us all up? What are the possibilities now?”

Titan

Titan, the 11-year-old cross-breed, contemplated on this for a few minutes. Titan listened carefully, eyes wide-awake, breathing noisily as he rested his contented brindle-colored head on the cool slate floor. Slobbering over his saliva, he groaned, “What are those humans going on about again? If only they can include me in their conversations! *Anyway, I know and am without their words.*” Sun, Table, and Titan connected, and in and in that brief encounter, living and non-living embrace in a warm glowing hopeful embrace.

Humans

In that brief glimpse, honesty filtered through. The directness of the misguided human gaze and the fragility of this time was now apparent and remarkable. This emotive expression of the present's realities offered humans a

moment to realize relationships to be malleable and in a continual process of becoming. In this moment of the “thrown togetherness” (Massey, 2005, p. 140) of the lockdown, solidarity meant desire—for the present—built on the ethics of care.

Wall

The wall loomed heavily in the background, threatened by the desire to divide us along a human physical axis and other practices. It held on to the past, dimly recollecting the good old days. It shudders, caused by the rumblings of the changing forms of solidarity, which blur the line between human and non-human. Solidarity is possible if we can understand and know the present.

Solidarity whispered
Melt the boundaries and hierarchies
And become part of the sun, air, and the earth;
Become part of everything
As creation intends

What might the desire for solidarity be, which was “mapped” in this memory drawing? This imagined space opened up the “frisson of pleasure” (Peake, 2015, p. 1), in the possibility to know my place and all who are in it differently. Unity and shared space transformed into shape through the doing of memory. The desire to accommodate became a possibility.

This foliated memory drawing (human-non-human, living-non-living, etc.), assembled and held together momentarily, was my most embodied and unintentional expression of self-transformation. Recall made available an experience to imagine moving from dismembering to remembering self as an entangled, ethical act of care (Allan, 2013). Assembled, the composition of foliated layers map out contact points for me to understand what it is and to appreciate who is in it and work with it as an opportunity to know solidarity from a different place.

Vignette 2—Solidarity of the Heart

Playing with the notion of borders and boundaries and beginning as two overlapping circles representing home and work, the roads, which evolved from the line of the circles, came and went and transformed as they passed over the bridge—a bridge spanning a void below. The bridge began as Indra’s net but became the soft “heart” of the animal, the soft, fluffy feathers where comfort sat, and nurture grew. (Figure 2).

In Rahui (lockdown), the time of restriction and healing, people came into my home via video connection, but they weren’t there, not really. It was still safe and soft, where comfort sat. It was still home, but colleagues were encroaching, and work fingers were penetrating the soft space.

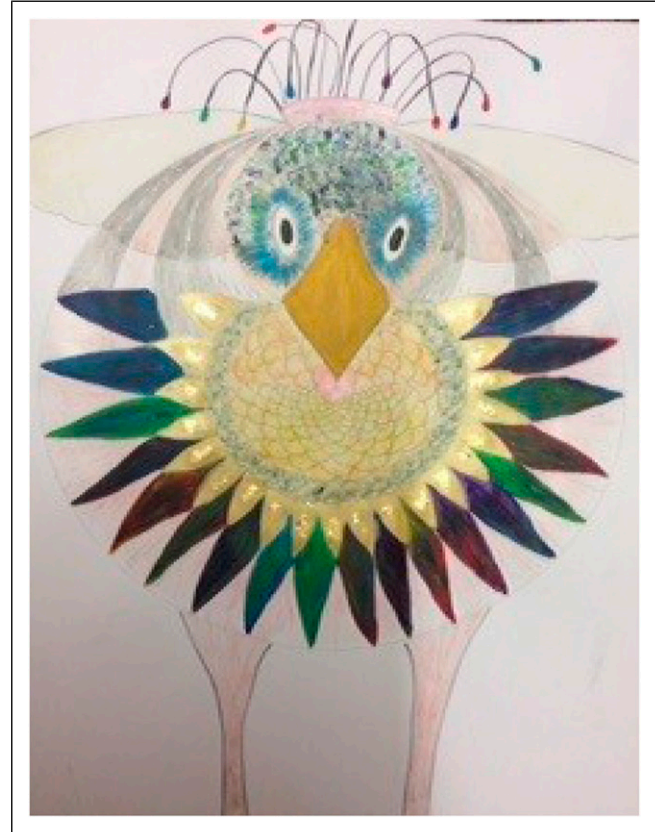


Figure 2. Ruth’s drawn image: Prince of feathers.

The gold in the drawing seemed to sit where the two merged, where the inside and outside came together, the hug of a friend, the wisdom of others, and the learning that evolved organically in the liminal space via the Internet. What was at first uncomfortable became a more joyous growth.

Senses became more attuned, noticing and connecting; bird song, birds, insects, dogs; the colors of the day and the magic of the night; the space, time, fluidity of my existence.

From the paper, the evil face of the bird, the bird that had evolved from the two original circles, home and work, stared menacingly at me, contradicting its soft safety.

Fear of possibilities, the guilt of enjoying the period of lockdown, the community loyalty, and the support people gave; there was potentially beautiful but masked by fear and beyond my grasp.

The bird wears a crown full of jewels, its semiplume or crest adding further to the symbolism of his sovereignty.

The Bird’s Back

The roads stretch up and off into the distance, bridging the gap across the void, opening possibilities to hold a space for others from a distance.

Head of the Bird

The eyes allow a deep gaze into the soul of the bird, full of untold sadness, which reaches out with pleading. The large beak, hungry to be fed, a chick waiting for regurgitated food from its mother, and searching the horizon for a glimpse of hope. The emerging soft down in magnificent colors, the promise of what is to come.

Wings of the Bird

An afterthought: On seeing a bird emerge, too small to carry the bird, a token gesture, but a reminder that not all birds can fly. Sometimes, we need to look beyond what is usual, with perhaps a focus on the why and the whakapapa (genealogy) that sits behind it. Despite finding ourselves together in this virtual space, a shared space with a shared interest, the vestiges of what brought us to this point are perhaps where the gems of solidarity sit.

Crown of the Bird

Storying memories bring us together on a journey of excitement and discovery. Our art hones in on the solidarity, turning what is a knowingness to us individually into newness for ourselves collectively, where we see ourselves reflected through the evolving evolution gems of togetherness.

Legs of the Bird

It is barely strong enough to support the bird/chick but keeping it stable as they cling onto hope, to be a combination of collective wisdom and tentative exploration.

Breast of the Bird

Where the fluffy down becomes feathers of strength and beauty, merging and evolving as nature intended. We nurture the growth of our curiosity without fear, and the cusp of transition is gilded with gold, dazzling us with possibilities.

Vignette 3—Interspecies encounters

Imagining the intra-actions between Basil the dog amid their flourishing isolation garden with the gardener/researcher recognizes their inter-dependence. Fugitives from COVID. Resisting deference to the human privilege, they blend, hidden amid the multiple layers of the garden space, finding solidarity behind the vigorous growth of the snow peas that now shields them from the street. The sun's warmth on the dog's black hair makes him sleepy as he stretches over the soft straw that covers the garden beds. The steep slope overlooks the sea, and in the other direction, there is a small township. There is a persistent soundscape; of waves crashing on the beach

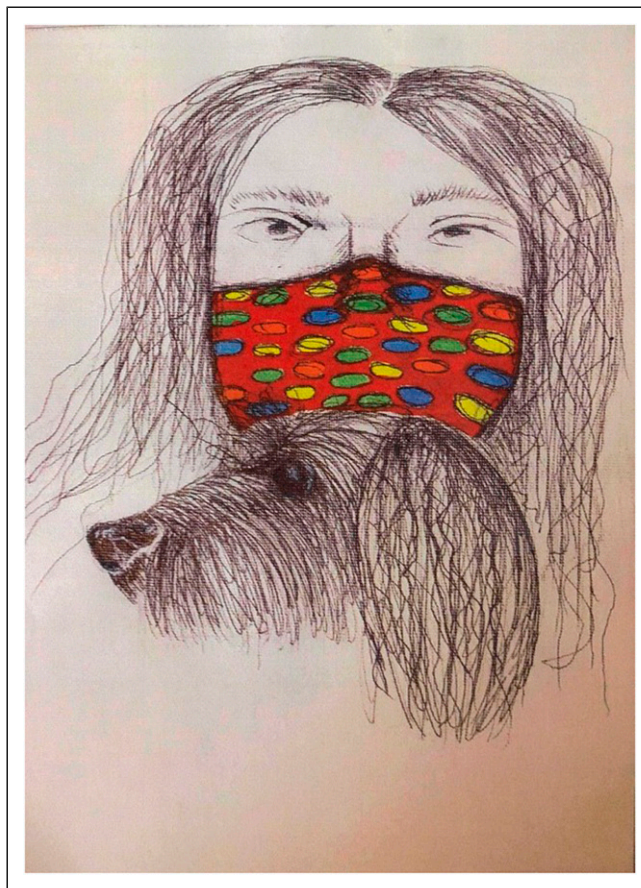


Figure 3. Adele's drawn image: Hair and fur.

below and a flurry and twittering of birds that inhabit the street's trees and bushes. The garden seclusion is amplified by large plumbago bushes and the high wall of snow peas. The busyness of this isolation experience plays out behind these green walls; rampant growth countered by trimming, pests feasting, and seedlings flattened as Basil stretches and rolls over onto them. Attention to such details allows the embodied human to fade, and the affective flows of the material and the soundscape amplify. She welcomes the warm embrace of the affective flows as she retreats and disappears into the foliage and snuggle against a dozing dog. (Figure 3).

Hair and Fur

Hair and fur blend in this image. The interspecies merge in a quiet encounter within the garden but recreated here—just in black pencil—simple naive strokes.

The Mask

The mask is a stark reminder of the virus that has led to this partnership in a garden. Both lives have been propelled into the political moment, hiding amid the garden and separated from the world.

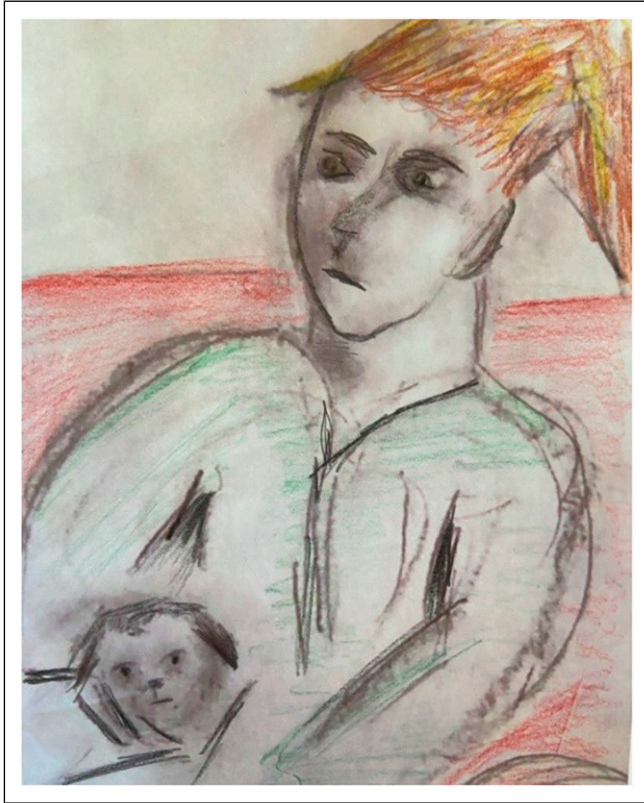


Figure 4. Jennifer's drawn image: The red couch.

Two Heads

The two heads lean against each other in an enfleshed assemblage. The world is different and precarious. As foreheads touch, there is a quiet comfort in this moment of interspecies solidarity.

Connection and Care

In this moment of togetherness, care, and protectiveness, traces of fear and concern sit quietly behind the drawing. The weight of the unknown is a silent companion, but the enfleshment reveals possibilities.

The interspecies relationship reflects an interdependence amid the often dark and isolated times. The sense of the fugitive hiding in the garden from an undescribed enemy that is known only as "COVID" hints at unknown dangers. It also speaks to the healing capacity of the landscape and nature. The "iso" garden as an enfleshed assemblage of affective flows, bodies, actions, and foliage offers a space for analysis. We might imagine how such connections lead to unexpected studies, both uplifting and disturbing. At this moment, dog and human are kin (Haraway, 2008; Malone, 2020). The foliage around them, a protective wall. As unlikely kin, the dog and human's interdependence reflect a solidarity in time and place.

Vignette 4—Mutual Inclusion

The figure is staring at the television and partaking in the "COVID-19 count"—a daily ritual. This routine is macabre. Curiosity around how many were tested and found positive with the virus each day. The statistics on how many have died. There is omnipresent fear behind the seeking of these statistics—a sense that there will be an explosion of cases. Will it be the woman in the corner shop, the child in the supermarket, the man who presses up too close to my bubble at the locksmith (Figure 4).

She sits on the battered leather couch, the stuffing worn flat where she sits day by day. The pug routinely parks its beige brick-like body against her. It likes her there, close in the pack. The small squashed-in-face and doggy-smelling bundle press close. The spiky hair and heavy compact body jam against her thigh in complicit connectedness. She is pug-minded, immersed in a pre-verbal logic of "mutual inclusion" (Massumi, 2014, p. 7). The other dog bundled in its soft bed sleeps. They engage in a "different politics, one that is not a human politics of the animal, but an integrally animal politics" (Massumi, 2014, p. 2).

The Pug

The intensive connection with the pug provides a small degree of bodily solace and a warm body to hold in compensation and escape. In the smudging pencil, there is the human-dog-intermingling of bodies—an interconnection and entanglement of animality.

The Couch

The red leather couch is safe in its dilapidation. Far from the COVID crowds, it envelopes the dog-human, and they sink into its softness. Uncaring that the day-to-day scraping of dog claws scratches it and stained with the ingrained dirt that has discolored the leather to a dull brown where the red has flaked. The enfleshed flow of love between the couch and the dog-human is unconditional. It is sensual, tactile, and tacit—a sanctuary as seemingly endless as the COVID days merge into each other. The couch wraps itself about the bodies in a timeless clasp.

Dog in the Bed

He sleeps curled and comfortably. Happy to be inside over the winter—and not running up and down the fence line barking, awaiting her to come home. He is pushed out by the possessive pug but glad to hear his owner's voice and easy breathing.

The spreading of COVID-19 across bodies highlights the frailty of the shared humanity and the mobilization of affect where the human is fearful of falling ill. Afraid of virus transmission, the human retreats to find interspecies solace. She experiences solidarity with the animal, its warmth and

smell, providing the physical and relational connectedness unavailable in the human world. The image blurring at the edges of the human and animal illustrate the enfleshment. The pug body generates “fleshly feelings,” a solace, and a sanctuary from the world in trauma.

Stuttering—and....and

The drawings were an embodiment of our ideas, fears, and desires. They opened up a space for the reader to become entangled in the creative moment. The creative freedom of this encounter enfleshed the memory work in a visceral participatory experience and invited readers into further entanglements. We recognize creative representations and interpretations as openings to arouse awareness that solidarity can assemble and reassemble meanings. The COVID-19 moment morphs from solidarity in humanist terms to solidarity with the more-than-human entanglements. The drawings are a shared space for hope. The affective flows from our homes, rooms, gardens, and families (mediated as they are through screens) become powerful sources of comfort and support. Yet, the taken-for-granted elements were at once familiar and strange in the COVID-19 moment.

The four vignettes offer moments of enfleshing solidarity through memory work that provided creative engagement with hopeful encounters. The memory drawings free and unblock embodied responses to our question on how we can enflesh the COVID-19 lockdown moment. The arts-based exercise prompted us to re-read the self differently and write for “oneself and for others” (Allan, 2013, p.28), making the Collaborative exploration of solidarity possible. Artful memory work as a Collaborative reflexive function for writing up vignettes enables us to draw funds from the self and help from each other—as enfleshments of solidarity. The assemblage opens up an affective space for ethical relations and hopefulness (Allan, 2013).

Posthuman COV-llaboration

Spaces have always been sites of entanglements, becomings, and multiplicities. Under the heavyweight of COVID-19, our work spaces come into sharp focus. The “art-in-the-flesh” (Garoiian, 2013, p. 124) remembers the affective frenzy of the COVID moment. Our spaces have changed. Having swapped busy campus offices for homes -we have renegotiated our workplace bodies and feel the presence of our more-than-human companions. “To envisage new answers to the question of animate life on earth is to overcome decades of sedimented ontologies—settled ideas, lived constructs, and understandings of what it is to be human” (Rautio, 2017, p. 723). Rautio’s image is an enfleshment that illustrates renewed possibilities for solidarity. As we explore artful ways of being-doing through embodied textual enfleshments, we consider the entanglements of our isolation. In turn, it is appropriate to reconsider the politics of space, trouble humanist interpretations, and re-imagine the

intra-relationships with our more-than-human companions and the foliage of our gardens.

Troubling alone-ness, affective flows encircle us and are of us. Their tense grip is overwhelming and stern, and yet, at other times, these flows offer a warm sense of comfort amid the pandemic. Enfleshments through images and talk create these flows. They bring further inspiration to our research conversations and a sense of connection, care, and togetherness. The regular Zoom meetings that constituted the arts-based approach allowed hope-infused encounters to enter COVID diseased spaces. We storied, named, and reflected upon our isolation and the fluctuations of the present. We created data, texts, and images by feeling, remembering, listening, speaking, drawing, and observing. In sharing our homes, balconies, gardens, and dogs, our research collaboration heaved, shifted, danced, laughed, frowned, and spoke back. Our thoughts, writing, and drawings matched the snow peas’ prolific growth, and like the peas, the work sustained us, feeding our desire to connect, write together, and explore the more-than-human world. Interconnections and trust grew.

Venturing On

We used the traditional Japanese poetic format of tanka poems to convey the heart of our learning from this creative, reflexive experience of memory connections concerning our research interests (Furman & Dill, 2015). In composing our tankas, we worked with the five-line format with a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable count in the lines (Poets.org, 2004). Each tanka poem reflects a shift from examining an image in the first two lines to examining a personal response in the last two lines, with the middle line marking the beginning of the turn in perspective (Poets.org, 2004).

The three tanka poems crystallize “in a few words” (Furman & Dill, 2015, p. 46) what solidarity means to us in the COVID moment and beyond.

Turning the Gaze

Memory, Turn! Gaze!
Image blurring dog-human
Nurture curiosity
Evolving togetherness
Visual imaging present

The Present

Interdependence

Nurture curiosity

Turn, Gaze, Desire!

Imaging Solidarity

Present, time-place, evolving!

Assemblage of Hope

Assemblage of Hope
Imagining space and time
Nurturing brain food
Unexpected Comforting
Beyond solidarity

Unexpected Comforting

Our artful memory work seeks assemblages of interspecies encounters to transform our gaze and familiar modes of being. We intermingle bodies and minds in he(art)ful encounters across the globe as a “praxis of [aesthetic] care.” Assembling hopeful scholarly connections in the cruel absurdity of a global pandemic to study our relations between self-other enables generative processes for self-transformation as an ethical act to ward off despair and nihilism.

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All four authors engaged in ongoing dialogue over the past 10 months, via email and weekly Zoom meetings. During these meetings, all four authors actively participated in the development of the conceptual framing, data generation (written narratives, memory drawings and stories of experiences). The document was uploaded on Google Docs where we each were able to work on respective sections, engaging in the analysis of the data and interpretation of data across the four vignettes to deepen the intellectual content. Drafts of the article were printed and read by all four authors prior to our meetings to ensure consistency and focus. All four authors approved the version to be published.

I acknowledge that this work is original and accurately captures all aspects of the work contributed by all four authors. There are no issues of plagiarism or copyright that may hinder the publication of this article if accepted.

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