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CREATING UTOPIA: MEMORIES AND LEARNING TO LIVE WELL

Caroline Mikhail

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PHD

CREATING UTOPIA: MEMORIES AND LEARNING TO LIVE WELL

Mikhail, Caroline

Award date:
2021

Awarding institution:
University of Plymouth

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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

CREATING UTOPIA: MEMORIES AND LEARNING TO LIVE WELL

by

CAROLINE MIKHAIL

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the
aegrotat degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Plymouth Institute of Education

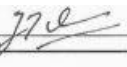
September 2021

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Word count of main body of thesis: 32,131

Signed  (on behalf of Caroline Mikhail)

Date 25/09/2021

CREATING UTOPIA: MEMORIES AND LEARNING TO LIVE WELL

By CAROLINE MIKHAIL

Abstract

The focus of this research was how we might learn to live well. The research was conducted in collaboration with people living in an eco-community.

The overarching questions framing this work are-

What is their interpretation of living well and how is it realised in the day-to-day actions and dynamics of the community?

How and what is learnt in these day-to-day situations?

How did the collaborators (and researcher) learn to be who they are and how relevant is one's subjectivity for living well?

The methods used to answer these questions were immersion, observation, journal, and interviews. The researcher spent time living and working with the community members over a period of three months in total to include the seasons of Autumn, Winter and Spring. The research also had an auto-ethnographic element drawing on the memories of the researcher as well as the participants.

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Chapter One Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

The Project Creating Utopia: Memories and Learning to Live well is an ethnographic inquiry and is both non-representational and representational (Simpson, 2011).

Simpson (2011) explains that this is a way of thinking that values practice. It attends to the mundane of everyday life and is concerned with precognition and affect. The outcome of this is it is more concerned with subjectivity rather than subjects and how this in turn effects action. Simpson then goes to explain that this does not discount representation because it is representing what is but does not allow for a fixed notion of representation. This type of social science research is based on experimentation and the wonder of life.

I am working with people who live in a rural intentional eco-community as I am interested in other ways of knowing especially community learning and learning and with and in nature and how this affects and contributes to learning to live well.

Intentional communities are groups of people who have chosen to live and sometimes work together for a common purpose (Sargisson, 2004). 'They are founded by people who are dissatisfied with life as they know it, share a vision of the good life, and aim to collectively realize this' (Sargisson, 2004, p. 321).

I have opted to work an with eco community for two reasons. One because I am interested in how people who make it their life's work, to work in harmony with nature and each other. Secondly it is the study of people and culture which is similar to my values and life experience, these similarities are intended as a part of the research method.

It feels as if this project was already embodied within me and somehow was directing me as consequence of a lifetime of happenings and emotions (Stewart,2007).

Desire to do this work is line with desire as expressed by Deleuze and Guattari in that it does not come from the individual as such, but that which makes up the individual through its relationships with the world i.e. those multiple happenings.

Mazzei (2009) citing Goodchild (1996) states that this then engenders how we act, relate and so exist or live. Emotions are linked to desire and so intensity of feeling (Freud cited in Marinelli & Ricatti, 2013) which is also linked to memory.

[A] history of emotional lives and memories [is a] history in which emotions play an important, if always ambiguous and complex role in individual and collective lives and memories (Marinelli & Ricatti, 2013, P.7)

By drawing on memory in the research, I am exploring what these multiplicities were which helped to shape who we are and what we do and how these embodied multiplicities can be plugged into to multiplicities of how we think and respond in the present moment.

Tinkers Bubble Community

The community have cited nature and the environment as their founding ideology. It is therefore the overarching reason guiding their behaviours and actions. This is a community which can be defined as a community of people and nature. The place is set in a rural location and the residents work the land. The setting is a quiet location on the edge of Ham Hill in Somerset. It comprises of gardens and orchards on the South East side with a Douglas fir plantation surrounding the rest of the site. The dwellings are set in and on the edge of the plantation. It is a requirement of the

temporary planning permission to place the dwellings further up the hill and hidden from the road. The community own the land in trust and is close to several small villages, and adjacent to a public country park. There are a string of string of public footpaths traversing the woodland and the parkland, which means that walkers occasionally pass through the site. Produce grown there is sold mainly in Glastonbury and at festivals although recently they have negotiated to sell vegetables in the local village shop.

Research Questions

The research is based around my enquiry of, 'Creating Utopia: memories of learning to live well' the use of research questions helps to frame, consolidate the work, and give direction (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

The overarching questions framing this work are-

What is their interpretation of living well and how is it realised in the day-to-day actions and dynamics of the community?

How and what is learnt in these day-to-day situations?

How did the collaborators (and myself) learn to be who we are ie our subjectivities and how relevant is one's subjectivity for living well?

The methods I used to answer these questions are immersion, observation, journal, and interviews. I spent time living and working with the members over a period of three months in total and to include the seasons of Autumn, Winter and Spring.

Epistemology

The way I have come to know is by experiencing what has happened, thinking about what is going on with references to those experiences and memories based in part on my positionality in the world as a woman experiencing difference and based on a lifetime of memories, experiences and adventures. This intuitive (Anderson & Braud, 2011) way of knowing has led me to review the literature and theory in such a way as to make sense of what I have come to know through life experiences so develop my knowledge and reasoning skills. Belenky et al (1988) have conceptualised this a 'women's way of knowing' but they have been critiqued by for not developing adequately the theory of how we learn or the power of ideological and material structures affecting our learning (Ostrander, 1988)

Barad (2007) asserts that one's epistemology is enmeshed in with one's ontology and ethical viewpoint, thus it difficult to untangle but demonstrates how they all affect each other. As I work my way through this auto/ethnographic journey I am still not really sure what my epistemological position is. I imagine I have grasped it then it fades away again. I am aware it is eclectic in nature, it is articulated in posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013) and new materialist philosophies (Alaimo, 2008) based on the awareness of ourselves as 'embedded and embodied' within the world. It includes an ecological thinking, which sees ourselves as part of the web of life. Code (1991) defines this as a way of

thinking [that]analyses implications for those organisms, of living in certain kinds of environments and the possibilities for those organisms of developing strategies to create and sustain environments conducive to a mutual

empowerment that is exploitable neither to the habit nor the habitats, (Code, 1991, p.270)

From the inception of this project I have found myself become alert to the 'signs' or incongruous incidents around me and how they can help me to reflect or notice articles or book titles which have helped me to learn in depth theoretical and philosophical dialogue. I have also found myself saying something then thinking, 'oh that's a metaphor for the work I'm doing, and it acts a sort finger pointer or reassurance. Semiotics for me act like a breath of fresh air rushing through the mind, clearing the fog.

As I was about to make notes on this section...

My eye is caught by movement, I look out of the window and see a red admiral butterfly dancing about in the breeze, the sun making the colours more vivid. It is not so usual to see a red admiral these days and I am reminded of the metaphor of butterfly as breath and soul. Perhaps this is a sign.

The notion to write in spontaneous incidents and memories came to me spontaneously. I have since realised they act as ordinary vignettes, moments which make up how one comes to know and make sense as understood by non-representational theory. These 'narratives' will be dotted about the report as way of helping not only myself to make sense of how I come to know but also it helps to identify what is meaningful to me and my bias as the researcher to the reader. These texts are identifiable by the italics. Which could also be seen a metaphor or a play on symbols as in, 'my emphasis'.

Social Learning and Affect

Learning from each other has been conceptualised as reciprocal social learning by Bandura (1977) and it is a critical part of our life long informal learning. In exploring my and informal learning in general the concept of social learning helps to explain much of my learning experiences.

As a consequence I have a particular interest in a philosophical enquiry into incidental learning we can gain in, from and with community, a learning that is both a knowing and a not knowing (Code, 2007). I understand this to be dynamic and relational based and phenomenological (Yang, 2003) and ecophenomenological experience (Sannilands, 2008) and in part it is affective learning (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative *besideness*.

Affect is understood then as a gradient of bodily capacity – a supple incrementalism of ever-modulating force-relations...[at once intimate and impersonal... (Gregg & Seigworth p. 2, 2010)

When we are affected, it is felt within the body and across our mind. I would suggest that affect induces a reflexive moment, which is spontaneous, uncontrived and unexpected. Much of how I come to know is based on this form of learning.

It was in previous work in a special school that I became aware of how I was 'thinking and acting through my heart' and inclusion and disability issues influenced my practical work and my academic inquiry at undergraduate level. This way of being is a reflection of whom I embody. The 'emotional turn' Davidson et al, 2005 and affective turn (Simpson, 2011 citing Thrift,) has been realised as important by cultural and social geographers and sociologists and it is within these

social/geographical frames based on my life experiences that projects an expression of my epistemology.

Jones, (2005) citing Thrift (2001) explain how 'social life and therefore learning go beyond the rational and linguistic realm of knowing and to ignore emotions (and emotional learning) 'is to miss out on, and misunderstand, much of what life is'. (p. 207) Stewart, (2007); reminds us that powerful affects are ordinary and 'their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feeling they make possible' (p. 3). Ordinary incidents effect change Stewart, (2007). Ahmed, (2014) discusses how affect is felt upon our bodies and this produce queer feelings, and for her the hope is that 'queer politics...bring[s] us closer to others from whom we have been barred [and that this] might also bring us to different ways of living with others' (p. 165). In an interview with Lauren Berlant, (Berlant & Greenwald, 2012) Berlant appeals for affective collaboration in social change which she asserts cannot be simply intended that is, just plucked from an idea and bolted onto us. She emphasises that what is needed instead is to 'become attentive to the nimbus of affects whose dynamics move along and make worlds, situations and environments' (p. 88). Berlant goes on to say that what this means is if we are to afford change we need to theorise the present now and to do this we must attend to the affective dimension (de Villiers, 2012).

Mindfulness

Paying attention, being alert and keeping a relaxed/ frame of mind, which is conceptualised by Buddhist philosophy as a frame of mind which, engenders mindfulness. Mindfulness (Bei & Scutt,2009) means being attuned to the situation one is in. By this I mean much of what I have come to know has been in those

ordinary situations we find ourselves in and pay close attention to. Therefore being relaxed helps one to notice the extraordinary in the ordinary or the incongruous in the present moment because the mind is spontaneously alerted to something that needs more attention.

Theoretical approaches

Mazzei (2009) talks of 'thinking with theory'. I prefer this approach rather than the metaphor of the lens, because it allows for multiple influences which is in line with posthumanist methodology. I draw on several theories and interdisciplinary work notably feminist and ecofeminist theory, affect theory and anarchy and political theory, ecocriticism, cultural studies and cultural geography.

Anarchy theory helps to highlight and point to the critical 'spaces', that might lead to better ways of being/healing such as a 'third way' (Amster et al, 2009; Martusewicz; 2005; Shannon 2009, 2014; Urenã, 2017). Environmental theory especially the emerging field of material ecocriticism (Iovono & Opperman a 2014) which seeks to 'reenchant reality' is also powerful theoretical tool to help work my way through this project. Eco criticism is radical and ecocentric (ie. non-anthropocentric) theory which draws on an eclectic mix of disciplines and ideas. It is non-dogmatic and non-exploitative and attends to rethinking past ideas, the needs of the present situation with the future in mind.

Included in this dynamic is the spiritual dimension of humanity. One is the spirit of the person who is responding to the needs of the planet, another is the infusion of the spirit of nature or the spirit of the universe that animates the 'universe' within that person. The third is a form of spirituality that is nature or an earth based understanding of spirituality (Starhawk, 1988;2005; Szersynski,B. & Tomalin,E.

2004; Rigby, 2016; Kili'An, 2009). The neoliberal mind set is bereft of spirituality, therefore it is something that needs to be addressed if we are to attend to the flourishing of the whole person and their actions so they learn to think for themselves and are mindful enough to attend to spiritual matters.

Martusewicz (2005) in her work with a Detroit community making and envisioning their community describes the driving spirit she identifies there as Eros. For her Eros place that is 'embodied as passion and connection' (334) and because it involves people working with the land, the term she uses is 'eco-erotic'.

Utopia

The work of political scholar Lucy Sargisson (2012) enlightened me to the role of utopia as a theoretical as well as a political tool. As Sargisson (2013) asserts, 'critical utopia does not blueprint, but rather it privileges social change in process. It retains imperfection.' (P.54). she goes on to explain, 'blueprinting utopias easily replace one system of domination with another, they stop progress, and they manifest desire in a totalising and totalitarian manner, (p.54). Zuzanek, (2017) chillingly reminds us of this by highlighting Thomas Moores' novel' entitled Utopia and the use of slave labour in the success of his Utopia.

Utopia is primarily a thought experiment however it be put into action and adapted (Brace,2014; Purkis & Bowen, 2004). Thomas More created the term Utopia for his perfect place in his novel as devise to emphasise the paradoxical nature of utopia . As explained by Sargisson, 2012 b) 'ou' means no or not and 'topia' means no place, it could also be a play on words 'eu' meaning good. Thus, giving rise to the meaning of Utopia as 'good no place'. If it is 'no place' it is there and is not there it is

continually in creation by the humans who think the project into being the react accordingly. Sargisson concludes from her work,

Environmentalist intentional communities are utopian in a number of ways. They contain classic features of criticism and creativity; they are living responses to feelings of discontent about the modern world. Their mission statements articulate desires for a better way of being and their members explore bringing this to life, in the here and now. These are practical, concrete utopias (Sargisson, a 2012 p. 144).

It is following on from her work of literary Utopias/dystopias Sargisson (2001) begins to explore work that is put into practice here equates eco feminism with Utopia and intentional community with realised Utopia (Sargisson & Tower Sargent, 2004). I was reminded in their work that I had lived in an intentional community for 10 years: a High Anglican Convent School for Girls in the 60's and 70's.

Some Christian (Kemmerer, 2009) communities can be understood as anarchic too, 'because anarchists can be catalysts for less consumption both by making reductions easier ...anarchists can be the ones to make change easier...' (Jones, 2009 p. 243) .

I attended a High Anglican convent school in East Grinstead, Sussex from 1967-1976. This was founded by Christian Socialist, John Mason Neale a member of the Oxford Movement, around 1880. His social work was understood as health care in the community, in particular of the poor 'out laws' (outside of any jurisdiction or means of support from the local aristocracy) of Ashdown Forest. They were administered to by women volunteers who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (to God i.e their own good conscience). The school attached, was set up

to provide a home and education for orphaned girls and provide a socialist education for young women from middle class backgrounds. When I attended the school 1967-1976, many of the girls came from lone parent families, we also had girls from parts of the world where their overseas missions operated as well as girls whose parents were mainly in the forces, or vicars' children. It was a small school of just under 200.

Sargisson and Sargent (2004) tell us, 'communards communicate their dream by trying to put them into practice' (p.159) and that this form of utopia is utopia in process (Sargisson and Sargent, 2004). Utopia then is a form of embedded and embodied dialogue in action about living well.

Ontology

After a lifetime of experiences and leaning from the 'school of life' my ontology is mixed and difficult to define, aspects of my ontology change in different situations and dynamics, depending on whether I'm confident in that situation at that particular moment. I have learnt over the course of this project that by knowing oneself does make a difference to one's confidence and then helps in one's becomings.

Anarchist?

As a young child, I tended to be more of a loner, not that I did not play with other children but I felt uncomfortable and generally was on the sidelines. I loved to swim and spent many hours in the water. We did not have a family home as such, my father's parents lived in Ireland and my mothers parents lived in Essex. They were only children for a long while then both had a new sibling and half sibling when they much older. We visited the grandparents on holidays when we were in the country. I was sent to boarding school at eight years, so life consisted of school and then back to wherever my father was stationed, in various parts of the world. The school was

fairly free and apart from formal schooling when I first arrived I learnt with fascination about a world of outside of living in military camps overseas or what I simply picked up from older girls conversations such as the Isle of Wight Festival and the music they played on permitted record players. We were allowed our own pets as well as school dogs and cats. Things were different at home, there also seemed to be a quite a bit of dysfunctionality within our family. They were good enough but were not upstanding citizens. This taught me to accept, understand imperfection and to prefer people who were not pious or put on pretensions of respectability. I briefly attended another school to do A levels after my school closed down due to poor investment on behalf of new dynamic governors and the status of the school moving from a High Anglican Convent school status to ordinary school. This school contrasted with my last one that what I had understood as normal behaviour was deemed abhorrent, such as playing one's own music or occasionally skipping going to prayers in chapel. This resulted in me being asked to leave. The following year there was suicide at that school. Following this I decided to follow an interest of mine and train in cooking, however I found myself thinking as I love nature so much why am I not there amongst nature? I envisioned this as living in the country with a vegetable garden and chickens etc. These were things which I had not experienced for myself except on the few once yearly occasions I visited my grandfather. He had a vegetable patch and grew tomatoes which in later life I realised was in the spirit of himself wanting being close to nature rather than because he was someone who had come from a deeply rural background. My Relations with family members was always over vast distances and with large gaps between seeing them. Friends were more acquaintances, we just part of an eclectic school community.

Classical Anarchy theorists such as Bakhtin, and Goldman (Marshall, 1992) shake up complacent thinking. Their outspokenness provides useful reminders for our own contemplation and responsibilities. It is not all perfect but it does allow for diverse and original ideas initially articulated by anarchists (Purkis & Bowen, 2004; Amster, et al , 2009) to be thought through carefully and incorporated into society.

Contemporary Anarchy is also asks us to think and act in utopian ways (Amster et al, 2009),and to gain insights from the past to be helpful for the future.

The anarchist way of being that is relevant to me is a non-consumerist life expressed in simple living, voluntary simplicity (Elgin,2010) and simple pleasures from conviviality and earth base spirituality (Kinna & Pritchard, 2009). Anarchists emphasise that it is not just structural reality that needs to be changed but we need to think about moral change too.

Critically it is anarchy which has highlighted a disconnect between the academy as a site for radical learning but 'mostly divorced from practice, leaving educated people with lots of knowledge but little potential for taking action' (Shannon, 2009). Ten year in an 'anarchist' school has had a profound effect on who I am.

Ecofeminist

I met someone who was also interested in living a rural life although I did not envision getting married, however things turned out differently. I became interested in nature conservation and what I later understood as sustainability. I realised in the main my life responded to what I intuitively felt was rightful action. Becoming more conscious of sustainability gave me a focus for my 'not that successful life' so far. When my daughter was born I was able to introduce to nature to her as part of the day to day living on the farm, something that I was conscious of doing. A few years

later on, following on from attendance at a South Hams District Council meeting in 1991, with regard to responding to Agenda 21, (United Nations, 1998) I was made aware of the need to develop community as part of the sustainability discourse. With hindsight I realise this resonated with me in part because of my school days, we even had a public spirit cup but because of my lack of belonging to any real community. In the following decade I found myself being a play leader in our local play group, caretaker of the village hall, making cakes for fundraising or running stalls, organising cricket teas to initiating and organising larger community music and drama events with local theatre groups and bands. As a female and being responsive to nature and community enhancement on reading about eco feminism that I felt this was close my thinking and hence my ontology.

The part of eco feminism I identify with most comes from the personal responsibilities I have found myself responding to as one makes a life for oneself by attempting to contribute to the wellbeing of society and nature as well as one's own family and personal needs. It was my love of nature which alerted me to the environmental crisis before my daughter was born and my lack of ambition for personal gain which influenced my 'ecofeminist behaviours'

There has however been much critique of eco feminism over the years, Biehl,(1991) suggests it is a social construct and beholden to patriarchal society. However there is a steady flow of writers who have continued to see value in certain aspect of ecofeminism (Salleh, 1997; Sargisson, 2001; Starhawk, 2005; Clark, 2000, 2012) Moore, 2015). Salleh in particular links ecofeminism to our material and survival needs, Sargisson (2001) equates ecofeminism with a form of Utopian thinking, Starhawk (2005) helps to articulate the growing rise in an understanding and practice of earth based spirituality. Clark (2000) with Salleh appreciates eco feminism as a

practical and real life approach to countering the planetary crisis. Moore (2015) understands that there is a need to further theorize ecofeminism and to link this with feminism to develop feminist thinking.

Some eco feminists embrace that they are part of the nature culture continuum especially in their role as mother. This way of thinking is viewed as essentialist and simplistic and this reading of ecofeminism is critiqued as a patriarchal way of thinking. Plumwood (1993) rightly warns of a form of 'papal' eco feminism which is an artificial form of feminism an upgrading of traditional 'women's sphere' while denying them the opportunity to choose that role or to structure it. Eco feminist philosophers have identified patriarchy and humanism and a dualism as the factor for the domination of women, as well as identify male/patriarchal oppression amongst men (Plumwood,2002). - men bully men.

Eco feminists are prominent in their critique of the devaluation of nature and things that are supposedly associated with the feminine such as emotion, the body, passion and primitive for example, which they assert have deemed unworthy or beneath reason.

Women the world over are the physical bearers of new human life, and generally are the providers of food welfare, and it is Eco Feminists who have questioned why is this so devalued in a neoliberal culture, notably (Shiva, 1988). It has been highlighted that these ordinary women were among the first to realise the impact of pollution and environmental degradation on their children or the land and attempt to do something about it. (Shiva,1988;Salleh,1997; Alaimo, 2008; Moore, 2015). Sargisson (2001) and Clark (2009) have also identified how eco feminists inspire critical, creative and subversive thought and action.

In devising the project my first thought was to have 'Community' in the title before deciding replace it with 'Utopia'. I prefer utopia because the main focus of this concept is on 'things as it should be' and inspires thinking and reasoning and action based on practicalities. 'Creating' suggests something new, experimental and worthwhile. It is likely that because I had such a transient life and spent much time on my own even when I lived farms, that I did become a dreamer; came into the habit visioning out of situations. It is likely that these experiences also highlighted what was missing from what a more sedentary life might afford and so I made attempts at creating situations that made things better fitting in with what made sense to me as result of my life experiences.

Methodology

Post Humanism and New materialism

The guiding philosophies are Post Humanism (Braidotti,2013) and New Materialist philosophy (Alaimo & Heckman, 2008).

Posthumanism proposes different starting points for educational research and new ways of grasping educational experience than those afforded by humanism... These different starting points are located in a different set of epistemological presumptions about forms of knowing that produce valuable knowledge about educational experiences, and in different ontological presumptions about modes of being through which humans and nonhumans inhabit the world. (Taylor, 2016 p. 5)

This approach attends to a learning which is experiential, dynamic and imaginary and linked to our day to day reality, thus representing much of my lifetime learning in ordinary day to day situations. A learning that attends to the wellbeing of people and nature. As Taylor (2016) explains this paradigm differs from Feminist poststructuralism and post modernism because it is inclusive ie it includes more-than-humans.

Post humanism is significant because of the focus of the project to explore how and what learning took place that lead people to be ecologically literate, globally aware and socially concerned enough to live and help others to work towards social change.

As Ulmer (2017) states 'How we live, eat, breathe, commute, hear, see, smell, touch, sense, and experience life are inextricable from our local ecologies (2017) and I would add they are inextricable from global ecologies too.

Posthumanism attends to what is happening here and now, it is a situated and practical approach. As a consequence, the occurrences are many, dynamic and interconnected, changing and staying the same but not quite the same. The post humanism approach is a 'decentered' human that is a co creating embedded and embodied (Braidotti,2013) being and 'becoming'.

Posthumanist methodology invites experimentation (Ulmer 2017) which may lead to us developing different processes of how we can understand what it means to be human. Posthumanism by decentring the human invites mindfulness and thinking of all the multiple factors in constellation rather than in a linear way. Linearity has the potential to mask out and so deny oppressions.

The planetary crisis as represented by climate change, population explosions, resource depletion, human and nature exploitation has prompted people to turn their back on the hegemonic neoliberal culture which is increasingly about not only the commodification of stuff but the commodification and consumption of wellbeing on the one hand as it perpetuates violations of wellbeing on the other. Thinking with the Anthropocene, (i.e the change to planet systems and destruction caused by humanity) (Ulmer, 2017) the natural environment, land, foodscapes, theories, place, (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) the 'assemblages' that affect us, are posthumanist ways of 'decentring' the researcher and humanity. It helps to create a broader and deeper awareness of the harm going on and the need for all to be mindful and benign in the world.

New Materialism

Feminist new materiality (Alaimo, 2008; 2010) has reminded us we are made up of the elements, animated by forces that happen naturally i.e .food and oxygen and acts as a 'wake up' call from the hubris and belief that some of humanity has transcended from nature.

New materialism can be explained as our bodily experience and interdependency of the material world (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008;). The point is to remind us to include the body as well as mind in interactions with materiality for our survival and wellbeing. Our trans-corporeality (Alaimo, 2008) is a conceptual tool to help those who fail to understand we are not a fixed, bounded entity our bodies are 'porous' and dependent on and contribute to the material becoming of the world. New materialists understand that not only are we bodily dependent on the material world as individuals but that the material world in which we are embedded is linked to a

conglomerate of stuff and histories that 'speaks' to us (Sanilands, 2008; Bennett, 2010). What is meant by this conglomerate is nature, place, the land, sea, rivers, rocks, minerals which are 'recorded' within us as our memories in our bodies as well as our minds (Sandilands, 2008).

'Material ecocriticism' (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014) is the study of the way material forms-bodies, things, elements...landscapes intra-act with each other and with the human dimension, producing configuration of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories... what characterizes them is a narrative performance' (p7).

In this way 'natural-cultural' (p.6 Iovino & Oppermann, 2014) interactions become 'material narratives'. The day to day lives of the community members are producing material narratives in their rural low impact living. Their bodies and actions 'speak' in a new direction of awareness, one which includes the human interpreter i.e the meaning maker and the material textuality, our material, transcorporeal, humanature encounters wherever bodies find themselves. As Iovino & Opperman (2014) remind us, 'bodies are living texts that recount naturalcultural stories' (6). It is not only material interaction but incorporeal, intangible material interactions.

...[P]anpsychist post materialism is closely aligned with new materialism in seeking not to transcend materiality per se, but rather to reconceive and indeed, enter more deeply into it namely through forms of encounter and interaction in which the material world is disclosed not merely or principally as a series of causal relations among discrete objects, but rather as possessing ...a "subjectival" dimension that is agentic, communicative, and unfolding

temporally in ways that we can neither predict or ordain. (Rigby, 2014, p. 285-290)

Put simply panpsychism is the understanding that we learn from nature and can be affected by nature (Mathews, 2002) and well as being physically dependent on nature.

Metaphor

In philosophical terms a metaphor is a figure of speech which uses one pictorial expression to explain another word expression, the metaphor has some similarity to that which is being described and becomes what is being expressed (Mauntner, 1996) for example, 'the river of time' Mauntner, p.266,1996). As Levi Straus(1995) points out, 'metaphor far from being a decoration that is added to language, it purifies it and restores it to its original nature, through momentarily obliterating one of the innumerable synecdoches that make up speech.' P.339,

The use of metaphor is poetical and pictorial, it helps to develop understanding of concepts, ideas and reality. In other words, metaphor draws attention to and clarifies nuances of meaning. It is important to realise that metaphor can be enacted as well as spoken or written. The eco community that I work with could be understood as metaphor in action.

Other examples of metaphor I use are Utopia, it's use as a metaphor engenders imaginary thought (Sargisson, 2013), It highlights things are not all well, in the case of this thesis, colonisation: the domination and imposition hegemonic factors on individual and collective wellbeing. Utopia draws attention to liminality, places on the

edge or in between spaces, physical, spiritual and imaginative etc and how this can help to foster new ways of being, living well.

It is intended that the methodology of the research will have some form of transformative effect on the reader, researcher and collaborators (Anderson & Braud, 2011). In part to help people to be aware of oppressions and violence which is hidden.

For example, the people I am working with do not feel oppressed in that they are autonomous enough agents, they have reason and skills that they can and do exercise (Johnson, 2017). However, their autonomy is being constrained (Johnson, 2017) by an ideology, which only allows for a certain way of being which fits in with the economic beliefs and self-interest of the hegemony. One woodland community I worked with for the Pilot Study have been forced to remove their dwellings and discontinue the community (Moore, 2016) despite owning the land and being welcomed and loved by the local, mainstream community because of the present law.

Poetics

In the writing of my personal narrative I sometimes adopt a poetical stance, sometimes incorporating small subtleties of humour. Bennett (2010) cited in Rautio, 2013 suggests that 'fooling around' with nature helps us to imagine nature away from fixed notions of nature as a resource only for human consumption. Moments of light humour on myself demonstrate not to take everything too literally, or for me to take myself too seriously. Being light hearted at times helps to detract from too much despair and a feeling of hopelessness in the magnitude of the

problem and so helps provides some hope that one's actions are worthwhile and not to stop .

Methods

To help make the research viable I use the following methods.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a study of culture (Holloway, 1997). I am spending three months at the community in total to give myself time (Jeffery & Troman, 2003) to be settled, affected and learn from the people and place. More time in the field also allows for more time for self-reflexivity and reflexivity. The ethnographic approach I use involves the studying of one's own culture or one that is very similar. This is with the intention for a more equitable relationship with the collaborators and, mutual respect for each other's understanding, awareness and knowledge. It also means I am not a total outsider with no depth of understanding meaning I can be aware of nuances which might be glossed over or simply ignored or not noticed (Tedlock, 2005)

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is a deviation of ethnography and is the exploration of *methods* people use to make sense of their lives to themselves and their actions in the world through practical knowledge that they may be unaware of (Holloway, 1997).

Ethnomethodology gives precedence to the views of the people in the study above that of the researcher. This fits in well with a posthumanist methodology as explained above. Ethnomethodologist's examine the 'practical' accomplishments' of members of society (Holloway1997). This project is dependent on the practicalities of every day, the theories I wish to discuss are grounded in practicality therefore this approach is

suitable for this study. The practical accomplishments are outward evidence of the dwellers of this community.

In informing this project, I need to listen not only to the people but seek evidence in what the place 'tells me' about what the humans are doing as well as telling about 'its self'. Therefore by engaging myself in intentional, rural, low impact living I am able to see, 'hear' and, feel cognitively, affectively and physically what the place is telling me. By 'listening' to and observing the nature, the dynamics of the group, the place and dwellings these 'voices without organs' (Mazzei, 2013) are in essence speaking to me. For example the abundance of birdlife and the presence of dormice in the wood tells me that the human presence is not harming these creatures. The presence of nature tells me of the wonder of nature and its action beyond my control and its ability to affect me.

Autoethnography

To help inform the project requires an examination of the self, in this instance the collaborators of this research.

Autoethnography at its best is a cultural performance that transcends self-referentiality by engaging with cultural forms that are directly involved in the creation of culture... [facilitating] closeness, subjectivity, and engagement.
(Tedlock, p. 2008)

Autoethnography was first conceptualised by Hayano, 1979 as a study of one's own culture. Autoethnography can be understood as a process of self-discovery (Foltz & Griffen, 1996) and engenders a dialogic process to develop thought amongst the collaborators and readership.

Gale (2017) understands that autoethnography is a concept and a process. However Gale (2017) is critically engaging with the notion of autoethnography from a humanist perspective, by 'tentatively' putting forward new theory from a post humanist perspective. He points out that autoethnography has overemphasised the Cartesian model, and not engaged with the vitality of assemblages, i.e. of the power of the humans and non-human assemblages as expressed by Bennet, (2010). He therefore 'argues for an autoethnographic approach which is processional and eventful which involves 'thinking through affect' (7).

Herbert Gans (1999) cited in BRE,(2007) assumes that autoethnography implies there is no knowledge beyond one's self and that this denies the chance to educate those being researched of any knowledge about their society, cited in BRE (2007). BRE counters this approach, and as I have worked through the process of autoethnography inquiry being mindful of Gans warning it has helped me to look outward to the culture and beyond. 'Beyonding' is term used when people wish not to be fixed in ideas or assumptions (de Villers, 2012).

Autoethnography generally focusses on first-person accounts (BRE,2007) and as a consequence, it gives way for a more poetical approach as discussed above. The weaving in of my own narrative into the thesis provides evidence of my bias and thinking process. Autoethnography is also a forum for subverting conventional wisdom (Rossman & Rallis, p.94, 2012) and providing opportunity to free ourselves from freeing us from dogmatisms or assumptions. Listening to a variety of human experiences provides opportunity for nuances of being and becoming to be expressed. This uniqueness of individuals' subjectivity and thought makes for an inclusive dialogue. Inclusive practice creates new 'conceptual spaces'(Gale,2017)

for the researcher and reader to reflect upon and use this to develop their own thinking and responsibilities for sustaining the planet.

Collaboration

Collaborating with the community members ensures the project is more equitable moving away from 'colonising' subsuming or patronising practice as we learn from each other in an effort to foster social change.

I have collaborated with people similar to myself. They hold the same concerns, think, and act in ways to cause minimum harm to the planet and people. They invite people to visit the site on open days and hold year-round volunteering opportunities for people to learn more about rural, low impact living and work with opportunities for self-reflexivity.

Prior to the collaboration for the main part of this study, I conducted a pilot study on myself and my personal experiences on intentional rural communities in the Southwest of England. I chose these communities because they were within reasonable distance of the University of Plymouth and all cited nature or the environment as their founding ideologies. I informed them of my research intention as a PhD student looking for research collaborators. I wanted to be clear about my intentions from the start as well as provide opportunities to develop some sort of relationship so that they could begin to get to know me as well as me them.

As a result, I was able to gain some concrete understanding of intentional eco community while at the same time conduct a self-reflexive (Golbatt.& Band-Winterstein,2016) pilot study which also served to help me to develop a deeper understanding of autoethnography and the role of self-study with regards this project.

After these initial visits, one community 'spoke' to me as the most appropriate for my study. Culturally it was closer to my material experiences and my personal values and ethics. Prior to making a formal request, I asked each member of this community if they might be interested in collaborating in which they all agreed; following this up with a brief discussion of the project at the community's monthly meeting they officially consented to the collaboration.

Immersion in the Pilot Study and main Field Work period

I am interested in how practice and experience can be used to inform a theory, which in turn is practical, and of use for sustaining the planet and ensuring wellbeing in day-to-day living i.e living well. The immersion of living in a rural, intentional community gave me an embedded and embodied experience that affected me emotionally, intellectually and physically.

I immersed myself in the community for a total period of three months spanned over three seasons: late autumn, winter and spring. Thus giving me the opportunity to get a feel of the place and work at different tasks at different times of year. In the pilot, (the year prior to the main study) I visited this community in the autumn and winter. Coming back in those seasons also helped to experience the cyclic nature of time with this community.

For the first month, November (2017) I was considered a normal volunteer, staying in the guest house and following working instructions from the team leader of that day, However I was asked to be responsible for two days of food preparation, which I accepted with pleasure.

This first immersion period was a chance to settle in as well as begin to collect data. Being in this new situation only sought to highlight my lack of confidence and

discomfiture with new situations and people. I did feel self-conscious and shy, I am not particularly affable or at ease in company until I know people well. Working alongside, just being there and giving myself time for formal meditation or short walks in the area helped me to become at ease with myself. The immersion took place over the weekdays, returning to my home at weekends to provide emotional support for my mother who has serious memory loss and my father who is her main carer. This did not impact too much on the research, for example I stayed for 'working weekends' in which members of the public come and stay on site and learn a particular skill. I was generally there on Friday nights (leaving early Saturday morning and arriving back Monday morning) which involved socialising at the pub or the monthly open mic sessions at the local village hall, or socialising during the Friday evening cider making sessions. Often the residents of Tinker's Bubble are away at the weekends visiting friends etc.

Evidence of my ability to live this quite austere life, join in easily with the volunteering and be in charge of cooking sessions for a training weekend provides further evidence of my previous personal experiences. It also helped to reassure the collaborators of who I said I was.

Observation Pilot Study and main Fieldwork

Crucial to the project is my participation in the community as a working member of the community and of being 'embedded' in Tinker's Bubble. If I were absent, I would not be able to make field notes or keep a journal and so relate my observations in practice to historical, political, social and ecological facts. Observations took place on several dimensions, for example I found I was observing the nature such as how the leaves were changing and falling around us, the sound of the birds at different

times of the day. I observed how and what their intervention and interaction with the place was. Noting how the buildings, the paths and pathways through the wood were created and used; how the gardens were attended to and used every day to pick fresh vegetables for the meals that day, the activity in the orchards, which also doubled up as pasture, route ways and food source for wildlife as well as people. I observed what work was carried out and how and how we interacted with each other as well as observing and myself as became more accustomed to living at Tinker's Bubble. Observing the day to day practice and then deciding what to note is not necessarily easy. As Mason (2002) on the one hand one has to be intentionally aware of what one is noting so that there is the opportunity to reflect on this yet on the other if one only observes what one is familiar with one is missing out on leaning opportunities. The other tension is that to notice things that come to one's attention it is helpful to be in a meditative or mindful state, which suggests non-intentionality. By making notes on what one has observed in a non-intentional, mindful state can still be subject to reflection by noting this in field book and then when one is ready or rereading intentional reflection is possible.

Immersing myself in the experience provides a richer base for me to think and understand the reality of living well. I have learnt over time I need to be in a concrete situation to engender my thinking and knowledge base. Placing abstract learning as the point of entry for a learning opportunity be it self-knowledge or other knowledge prior to practical experience makes it much harder for me to grasp.

Holloway (1997) pertinently informs us that the closeness of immersive work and the relationships make objectivity difficult. Objectivity is important because without this it could lead to extreme relativism (Code, 1991, Holloway, 1997). Relativism claims that objective knowledge does not exist (Holloway, 1997; Robson, 2011) and reality

only belongs to the culture or group sharing or constructing this. This approach suggests that in cases of 'extreme relativism' anything is acceptable (Holloway, 1997) without any real evidence for saying why it is acceptable which could in turn lead to justifying harmful practice. Holloway (1997) critically informs us by citing Silverman (1993), that by adopting this extreme relative approach one has 'no stance at all' (p. 136) which could mean the theories produced in this way may in fact represent no understanding, knowledge, argument or reasoning to justify their work or pursue further work.

Once immersed in a situation I spontaneously find myself noticing and reflecting on what is going on around me. I have come to more conscious of self-reflexivity as a result of autoethnographic practice and it's use of memory and personal narrative. Incorporating and my personal reflections, to identify myself as the narrator of the project, this contributes to the objectivity of the project as I declare my bias.

Interviews

I wished to have time to settle in and give time for the collaborators to decide for themselves how much they could trust me. It took time for the request forms to back and only received them all by the last week.

The first set of interviews took place in the third and fourth week. The interviews all took place at Tinker's Bubble, in varying locations. The collaborators decided when they wished to be interviewed which turned out to be in their free time, which generally meant after dark as the fading light means no opportunity to work outside. Three interviews took place in their homes; one took place in the guest-house and another around the fire pit. The interviewee and I were the only humans present during the interview, two of the interviewees had their dog with them, one participant

spent the whole interview cuddled close to her dog. As the work on site is quite intense and several people were always present, it was not possible to conduct the semi-formal interviews while the physical work took place. Some people required seeing the questions in advance.

The interviews were recorded on a small digital recorder. I attempted to make the interviews into a form of conversation by maintaining the semi-formal, friendly disposition as opposed to a detached interviewer. I made an effort to ensure my body language, my facial expressions and listening reflected to the interviewee the interest and I was moved by their narratives. The mothers of two of the women I spoke had died. The questions were intended to put the interviewee at ease and to evoke memories making it easier for the interviewees to express themselves (Josselson,2013). A further reason for open ended questions is an attempt not to influence the interviewee with leading questions and by reducing the opportunity to answer questions they assume I wished to hear.

I will conduct further interviews on other memorable happening, events and encounters that the collaborators are aware of and wish to share, which led them to live in this rural, community in February.

The questions were open ended to provide the interviewee the opportunity to respond in accordance to the nuances and subjectivities of the individuals (Grbich,2007).

Reality is a shifting feast, subjectivity is usually viewed as important, and power is seen as lying primarily with the participants who are the experts on the matter under investigation. (Grbich, 2007, p. 196)

The questions I asked were mainly focussed on childhood memories of experiences with nature although I did ask some questions about experiences in community.

This information would not be possible to receive with quantitative research or closed questions. Asking the questions also acts a point of reflexivity for the interviewer and interviewee, a learning opportunity in accordance with feminist values of research which is more democratic and less exploitative. Interviews do not just give voice of the individuals, as Mazzei (2009) articulates the interviews have agency of their own and are affective as well as being affected by multiple factors. As part of my self-reflexivity I took notice of how the interviews affected me and how they will affect what I write about.

Open ended questions provide a forum for personal subjectivities to come to the fore. People perceive their reality differently but also people's reality is different so it would be impossible to gain a narrative of people's memories and experiences without the individual concerned informing me. Open-ended questions are a typical method of qualitative (humanist) research and according to Robson, (2011) are part of a systematic method for adopting a scientific attitude to the research to allow for socially responsible research. They help to elicit a narrative, a personal interpretation of meaning for the individual telling their story and so share experiences (Holloway, 1997)

Photographs

Taking photographs provides another mode of conversation or 'storying' of the place. Something speaks to us so we take a picture of it. I have opted to take pictures to help give the reader a richer feel of the place as well as invite the collaborators to

take photos,(Pink,S. (2001,Riviera,2010). Lorimer (2010) quotes Latham & Cormack to explain this further.

[The] force of images is not just representational. Images are also blocks of sensation with an affective intensity: they make sense not just because we take time to figure out what they signify, but also because their pre-signification is felt in the bodies. (quoted in Lorimer, 2010,p. 239).

Images can evoke an embodied response in the observer of the photo, creating an understanding, which might not be possible with text alone, a bodily feeling which tells a certain truth about a place, situation and people with the hope of stirring a positive response, a change of mind. Photographs therefore help to portray what is ineffable or intangible. However, I do not wish to detract from the representational. I wish to be able to locate in the readers mind the reality of where the narrative is coming from and to provide them with a visual understanding of the dynamics of the place and to provide evidence of intentional, low impact living spaces. Keeping a photographic record also acts as an aide memoir (Whincup, 2004) for me as I work with the interviews in the data analysis.

Photos provide another mechanism to think with and remind me of the multiple factors which are affecting me and my thoughts and the interviewee, and what is being said. They evoke the place and stirs memories of being in the field within me, these memories also help me to think in terms of an assemblage of interconnected and interacting factors which in turn affect each other. In this way, they also assist the researcher to document the symbolising self-representation of the participants (Riviera, 2010). The camera was small and unobtrusive. I have addressed the use of photos in the ethical approval form and is discussed further in the ethics section.

Memory work

Central to the project is the role of memory.

Memory is no more than a trace of our experiences, a little understood pulse across the synapses of the brain, upon which rests the whole constructed edifice of human life. In this special function to note consistencies and to recall them, lies the core of our survival, our humanity and our individual identity. Whincup 2004, p.79 .

Counter-memory is a Foucaultian concept essentially equated with recalling memory that is erased and forgotten and does not belong to the 'created' collective memory of the hegemony (Quinn, 2007; Medina, 2011). I see this kind of memory as a forgetting but not quite forgetting, one that might be lurking in our memory that reminds us of past incidents and so help us to formulate how we might respond well in the future. 'Counter-memory' (Quinn, 2007) is a feminist perspective that also resists hegemonic discourse of memory. It based on a method of research called Memory Work which was devised to explore the gap between theory and experience (Onyx & Small,2001) specifically with experiences of women. By 'the understanding that our past experiences help us to construct [ourselves] into existing relations', (Haug, 1987 quoted in Orynx & Small,2001, p. 774). This collection of memories will help to inform my analysis on individual subjectivity how we are who we are and what we are and how this helps with our thinking, reasoning and action.

I was loosely inspired by the method of memory work as explained by Orynx and Small (2001) to inform me of my own research process and ethical considerations. It provided me with more confidence about my role and my interests as the one seeking a qualification yet at the same time it gave inspiration to be inclusive in ways

that I had not originally envisioned. That is, to contribute to the understanding of knowledge formation about oneself with the collaborators in a non-didactic way in the hope that they may gain (Caretta et al 2016).

In memory work researchers spin out the web of themselves and find themselves in the act of spinning, in the process of making sense out of the cultural threads thorough which lives are made. (Davies, 1994 p. 83.) quoted in Oryx & Small, 2001.

Memories are consolidated and recalled by emotion (Marinelli & Ricatti, 2013) and emotion is an outcome of how we are affected by something and the outcome of affect is a form of change.

Without memory, life would consist of momentary experiences that have little relation to each other. Without memory we could not communicate with each other – we would be incapable of remembering the thoughts we wished to express. (Marinelli & Ricatti (2013), P. 80 Quoting Butler, (1989))

According to Marinelli & Ricatti (2013) emotion helps us to understand and evoke memory and they go on to inform us of work by Davidson & Milligan (2004) explaining how emotions are crucial to negotiating difference and identity in the human experience of our spatiality. This is also useful in helping us to understand how we might conduct ourselves in creating ‘spinning’ a life/utopia which is meaningful and corresponds to our values wherever we find ourselves dwelling in life.

Memory can be unreliable (Mason, 2002) however the nature of the project is such that absolute truth is not required and it is an essence of the memory bringing to the fore the affective and a visual understanding of a memory in nature for example that provides the data for the project.

Ethical considerations

The project values will affect the collaborators and to work on developing an ethical practice I followed the advice and procedures of the University of Plymouth, spending much time reading and reflecting about why ethics is important and how to implement ethical behaviour. It is important to be able to negotiate one's way around the many situations that could arise which may be ethically harmful, that one may be unconscious of, or previously might not have cared less about any harm caused.

People's situations are different and it is important to be aware of how perceived power relations may impinge on one's ethical conduct or the ethics of the project. It was important for me to work with the collaborators in an equitable way, to inspire self-reflexivity and learning from each other so we all gain (Caretta et al, 2016).

Weaving this into the methodology and methods is way of realising this.

Researching with people in the close proximity of their everyday life situations in a small and close-knit community for an extended period of time has further ethical implications (Sargisson & Sargent, 2004). This is notable with regards to impinging on the dwellers personal and private life. In the first instance, I helped to overcome this in part by negotiating with a community of whom I had a connection. In this instance a past resident who had then lectured at the University of Plymouth. Prior to moving in, I spent several occasions volunteering with this community so that I could build up a relationship but also so they could get to know me enough for them to make a reasonable decision to join in or not. While on site, I did not talk about people to other people or discuss the interview conversations. I was mindful of personal feelings and moved away or did not insist on being conversation if someone wished to be quiet or were in a private conversation with someone else. It was also important I do not make up false assumptions about people, as this is oppressive and prejudiced behaviour.

All those in agreement to the study have signed the permission form and all understood the options available to quit the research within the parameters of the data collection process.

Ethical behaviour I hope to exemplify is non exploitative and decolonising at the same time. It involves continual self-reflexivity in the field or while reading, in other quiet moments or with colleagues and being mindful of how I respond to the collaborators (Josselson, 2013)

Interview Ethics

This means being socially responsible towards the collaborators as individuals as well as the nature of the research criteria. In advance of the interviews, I attempted to take account of all possible eventualities that may cause harm to the collaborators. I understood there might be vulnerable aspects to answers even if we collaborators do not perceive ourselves as vulnerable. I sought out the contacts of the local health authorities' mental health telephone service known as Talking Therapies (www.somersetalkingtherapies.nhs.uk) so I was prepared to offer this if someone became severely distressed that includes myself. This was to be used as a very last stage for example if a collaborator was unable to disconnect from a traumatic memory.

I took time to think how I would behave in the field and with interviews, reading several accounts of ethical behaviour in various books and articles eg Pillow, 2003; Etherington, 2004; Farr Darling, 2014; de Leeuw et al, 2012. I also followed the guidelines and advice of the Ethics committee of the Plymouth Institute of Education that helped to highlight ethical procedures I had not thought through enough concerning interviewing people, such as verbally ensuring everyone

understood the nature of the project. All the people I interviewed did so voluntarily having first read and understood the project information sheet and then signed the permission form. I provided a clause for opting out of the project during the data collection process.

Causing harm can happen in various ways from denying one's subjectivity, either by not listening or mis-interpreting what is being said, by not giving someone a chance to speak out in the first instance or not clarifying with the interviewee what was meant by their words. The words of the collaborators are vital to the project and I held what they had to say in esteem. I will paraphrase the interview and pass a copy to the interviewee to ensure I have understood correctly.

If any children are to be interviewed I will speak to the parents first ensuring that they have properly understood the project before proceeding by explaining it verbally. In the case of interviewing (or spending time in the company of) any vulnerable people or children I have applied for and received an Enhanced Certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service declaring I have no criminal record.

Following on from these interviews based on memories of childhood experiences in nature I am arranging a second set of interviews based on other memories which the collaborators believe may have led them to live in this rural eco community.

Photographic Ethics

I only took recognisable photos of people who had given permission by ticking the photo permission box and signing the form. Before keeping any photograph I had taken, I checked with whoever was in the photo, if they did not like it, I deleted it.

Conclusion

This research is in part an experiment in research methodology, in order an attempt at providing a valid and informed report on living well. I attempt to achieve this by decentring the human and accounting for the human as a different way of being and becoming counter to the neoliberal subject. A way of learning to live well that frames the needs and exceptionalism of humanity (Soper, 2012) in such a way that humanity does not destroy each other or the planet. A humanity that cedes to the mystery and higher authority of nature.

Exploring the role of experiential memory and countermemory in our learning process is central to the project of exploring the subjectivity and reasoning of western people who go out of their way not to harm nature, and to work towards planetary renewal by turning their backs on consumerism and neoliberalism.

The memories are drawn from the past and represent an intangible yet vital component in living which although based on our materiality cannot be fully accounted for in our materiality. Our personal memory helps to evoke thought, emotion, reason and numinous values that can only come as result of these experiences and so embody who we are. Our memories are the 'spirits' of our past life revisiting us in the present. It is our choice of reasoning born about from our memories and experiences practical and abstract and the situations we find ourselves in which ultimately makes up who we are and how we respond outwardly to the world and inwardly to ourselves.

With the Anthropocene upon us expressed in climate change, resource extraction, warfare for power over resources and the planetary population over 7 billion Haraway (2015) shares the hope this is a threshold to rethinking and acting what it means to be human and not the definite future.

Posthumanist and New Materialism philosophical and methodology combined with ecocriticism provide the theoretical framework for articulating this project. Anarchist theory provides a political, historical and practical framework for rightful action in our day to day lives. Feminist theory highlights how it is our subjectivity and who we are which we project onto the world in our particular place. Critical race theory helps to highlight hidden or unaccountable oppressions as we move forward with this project.

This melding together of ethnography, ethnomethodology and autoethnography can perhaps best articulated by thinking with the term 'public ethnography'

(Tedlock,2008) which she describes as 'research and writing that directly engages with critical social issues of our time' (153).

List of Questions/conversation prompts I used in the first round of interviews.

Sample of questions

As a child did you have a favourite activity with/ in nature which you came back to on several occasions, why did you like doing this? I am particular interested in activities that you initiated or decided for yourself you liked doing it could be on your own or with other children or an adult may have taken to a particular place for example.

Please can you tell me about a particular memorable time you spent with / in nature as a child that was important for you? It can be when you were in your own or with another person or people. Please can you explain why this is memorable to you and how you think it might have affected you? It does not have to be spectacular it could be in the park, a street tree or insects in your garden for example.

Please can you tell me about your very first memories of nature. How old were you? Can you recall how you felt? Any small detail you remember is helpful.

Why do think that you like to spend time in /outdoors and live a life that causes minimum harm to and or enhances nature how did experiences inspire you to live like this?

How would you define nature? Please could you tell me your interpretation and understanding of nature?

As a child, did you have a fondness's for nature and in what way? Did you have care of a pet or a friend/relative's pet or a family member who grew veg? If so please could you tell me about any encounters you had.

How and when did you first find out about the harm we are causing to nature, the planet and each other and what were your first attempts at responding to this?

Were there any particular adult/s that that you believe may have contributed to your appreciation of nature/being outdoors onto you as well and how did this happen? Was it a gradual introduction to nature/outdoors was it explicit or implicit for example? If not how do think you became acquainted with nature so much so that you live in a community whose founding ideology is nature and the environment.

Please could you tell me any incidents/events, which you think may be relevant to contributing to your understanding of the planetary crisis? Why do you think you responded to this in the way you have.

How involved were you in any form of community as a child and before to coming to Tinkers Bubble? How would you define community and what does it mean to you? Please could you tell me about any community experiences you had good or bad. This may be school, religious, village, interest group etc. Did you grow up in one place or move around? Please could describe any places that are of importance to you as a child young person are they the same or have they been altered in any way?

What was particular about Tinkers Bubble which attracted you to the Tinker's Bubble Community and how do they fit into your personal interests prior to arriving at TB?

Chapter 2 Theory

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,

vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

What does [wo/man] gain by all the toil

at which [s/]he toils under the sun?

A generation goes, and a generation comes,

but the earth remains forever... (Ecclesiastes 1: 2-4)

Introduction

Curious Bodies

My thesis is looking at the role of creating ways to learn to live well, in creative situations that foster creative and ethical thinking (Taylor,2017). This can be applicable to the formal curriculum but equally important and relevant to this project, is our day to day life interactions with each other and nature. Social and ecological justice and educational development are my primary concerns for doing this project - my interest being for humans and nature to flourish together- experience has taught me that emotional and spiritual needs have to be included for this happen. Essential to the development and my own understanding of this project is a collaboration of 'teachers' living in an eco-community, who are attempting in practice to live well with each other and the natural world. Working with this group of people not only provides concrete empirical evidence of a trend in social change but also demonstrate a form of *bodily teaching and knowing* through the hard work of growing food, attending to orchards, the animals, feeding each other, attending to fire wood and keeping the peace with each other while ensuring the environment around is a place for nature to flourish. These people also have similar but experiences to me

and therefore their lives and the place they provide me with the relevant 'tools' for thinking with in terms of informal learning for living well. I in return gave them something additional to think about as result of my 'intervention' in their lives.

In conducting this project I would like to develop myself and become 'useful' in my interest of the development of education by providing insight gained from my subjectivity. I hope to contribute to education in England that attends to needs of future generations, nature and the planet, (Sterling, 2001; Young,2008; Jucker,2014; Taylor;2016; Standish, 2010: Bailey 2018; Sandlin & Letts, 2018) responds to an understanding of education that is humane and engenders more equitable ways of being with each other (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Salleh, 2009) while being attentive to nature and the planet (Plant,1989; Piersol & Timmerman 2016). To steer away from an education frame that is being 'colonised' by supra national corporations, normalising hypocrisy and corruption at global levels (Nixon, 2013), and as a consequence causing existential harm to humans and nature; infiltrating affecting every aspect of the Globe. (Collings, 2013).

This process of my self-doing this project in the research practice, reflexivity and writing, the toing and froing back and forth, the internal 'swirling' and swaying of the field work, the literature, the attention to new conceptualisations and realisations as they make themselves known to me either from my own body or the work of others are also available for the reader as they themselves engage with this self, this body's body of work. It acts as a catalyst for self-knowing and understanding for the protection, privacy and creating of ourselves and our communities (Vine,2019), as response-able to counter the huge onslaught of powers beyond their control vying to appeal to us detracting from our flourishing and so engendering a truer way of being. Another strand of this project is therefore therapeutic intervention (Vine,2019).

The purpose of this thesis is an exploration of knowing gained in life, a melding of social and cultural leaning and human knowing brought about as a consequence of human action in the world. The thinking I am applying is concomitant to a feminist understanding of learning from lived life, of one embedded and embodied (Braidotti, 2013) in the world; involved in the making of one's life and others and being made in the world by the world around them (Belenky et al; 1986: Ostranger, 1988; Plant, 1989). I mean ideas that attend to living well in the world by exploring learning situations from a real life, paying attention to the material body in the world with the rest of the inhabitants, geological features, earth systems etc. An assemblage (Bennet, 2010) in which the human is part, the place, nature, material objects, the work, to help us think not just of the needs of the human but the world, nature with the human as part of this. The idea first came to me as an intuition Alaimo (2011) suggests that do this we to attend to,

submersing [of] ourselves, descending rather than transcending, [as] essential lest our tendencies toward Human exceptionalism prevent us from recognizing that, like our hermaphroditic, aquatic evolutionary ancestor, we dwell within and as part of a dynamic, interactive, emergent, material world that demands new forms of ethical thought and practice (. Taking up this idea provides an understanding for human and nature flourishing and planetary sustainability.

My intention is to develop an intellectual argument in order to explicate the necessary inclusion of experience and materiality as empirical evidence of the reality of people's knowledge acquisition and the actions put in place accordingly. It is also a methodological experiment and inquiry into my own learning experiences (Taylor, 2017). What I learn about the nature of learning and how this affects me, what compels me to be reflexive what past experiences emerge and what theoretical data materialises to help inform me that I may know differently and have something different to be reflexive about and act upon.

As part of the process I wish to attempt to counter, concurring with Jucker, (2014) and Fricker;2017, assumptions expressed in certain circles of what counts as valid knowledge. This is on one hand to help avoid future misunderstandings and acts of epistemic injustice (Fricker,2017) and on the other to help to build and maintain resilient bodies to the negative material effects of neoliberalism and rampant capitalism permeating into our very bodies. This also impacts or can impact on our thought processes according to Shiva (1993)

'[w]hen local knowledge does appear in the field of the globalising vision, it is made to disappear by denying it the status of a systematic knowledge, and assigning it the adjectives 'primitive' and 'unscientific' (page number needs to be added)

However since that was written other ways of knowing i.e. 'local knowledge' have become acknowledged as appropriate scientific knowledge (Vine,2019). I discuss this more later on. Experiential knowing is thus relevant to be subject to scientific and philosophical inquiry and so demonstrate experience can do much more than lead to inadequate reasoning and knowing, (Young, 2008;) if thought about differently.

I assert therefore that experience in living the world is vital to complement formal knowing and the creation of new knowledge. Knowledge cannot simply be appropriated/stolen, known in the head but not understood as a felt lived experience as this only perpetuates the ontological, egoistic humanist body, in private places that the words spoken suggest caring and sensitivity but the bodily actions do not correspond to the rhetoric. What is missing in these cases can only be accrued through time, being sensitive to the felt affective (Stewart,2007; Greig & Seigworth, 2010) internal sensations and the learnt attunement (cited in Manning,2011) and reflexivity brought on by experience and practice in day of day occurrences of making life happen, not so much being the recipient of this.

Informal learning in real life situations of everyday life by happenstance

(Ahmed,2010) includes being in the changes in society we are caught up in. Either we are making the change or are simply going about our life in accordance to that change. As mentioned above not all these changes are down to our volition and errant entities exercising or perpetuating power which bears no consideration of the universal wellbeing of all people or nature. These powerful 'bodies' are flouting hard worked for universal human rights (and other mechanisms of social change intended for the wellbeing and peaceful living of humanity). This then is essential ethical work for educators who must be free to be attendant to exercise their duty of care and ensure an emancipatory and appropriate education is being imparted to the future generations.

Experience in the doing/making of life is also a necessity for appropriate development and applications of ideas that are 'true and beautiful'; in the literal and metaphorical climates we find ourselves in today. Such as the political, i.e neoliberal globalisation, the social i.e. economic primacy, mass consumerism, global growing dependency on wage labour), technological, (eg. warfare, huge earth and ocean exploitation machinery, loss of habitat and the extreme damaging weather systems). As mentioned experiential learning is a way of knowing that we embody, it is not simply a passing down of the symbols of knowing as the knowledge themselves, it is knowing engendered of and from our own experiences in life, of the experiences of others and of the new knowledge we have acquired formally. Thus knowing inclusive of experience provides a more dynamic, and dimensional and humane appreciation of knowledge and the affects this can have on someone as opposed to only a fact. The symbols of the fact which are essentially the words of the fact grouped together in a certain way to explicate what that fact is, it is not the fact its

self. To assume or to unquestionably accept this symbolic articulation of the fact as reality can either be explained by lack of experiences, encounters and formal knowledge thus having been denied the opportunity for reflexive capacities or one has a congenital learning disability. In either case interventions are needed. One to provide relevant experiences which help to develop the individual's capacity to reflect and know and appreciate how knowledge is a profound concept that is animated and affective and has to be applied in accordance to the situation and the knowledge acquired in that situation and that one must be party to relevant knowledge if they are to interact well in the world, if they are to put themselves forward as authorities of knowing (Fricker,2017) Or if one works with the learning disabled or those who learn differently create appropriate, shared learning opportunities within a compassionate frame.

Queer Bodies

I write hesitantly from the perspective of a female, middleclass, white British, radical Anglo Catholic convent schooling who has worked in community settings, schools, a nursery, a university, kitchens, front of house theatre, to name but an element of my 'selves'. I can only speak from my standpoint a white British, middle class, cis gender, older, female, who is also a mother and old enough to be a grandmother who lives in England at the present time. However, mine is a queer body as defined by Moore (2015), placing me in community with the rest of queers outside of humanist society as socially ascribed and constructed (Ahmed, 2014).

Throughout the process of this inquiry, I am in collaboration with a group of essentially 'queers', people also predominantly white British, middleclass, of varying ages but who live in an eco-community. This selection of younger people is useful in thinking and remembering in terms of different lives and selves within one's own

body. Not my age now they embody ages I have experienced in the past by being alive in the past, doing and thinking about learning and living well as I and the world around me interacted or am close to my age now. I wasn't in a sensory deprivation vat by any manner of means!

Attending to this inquiry from a non-humanist approach, that is from post humanist (Braidotti, 2013; Taylor 2016) and new materialist (Alaimo & Heckman, 2008; Bennett, 2010) theoretical frames, I explore differently what can be learnt differently and discover different sort of learning, thus coming to know what it is we might need to include in educational development.

Some of the factors acting on me to conduct this research were that I could not conceptualise adequately my confusion and adverse experiences with sustainability education as a formal learner and as an education developer where I met with such adversity and what felt like exploitation and dismissal at the same time. Why I felt so much prejudice. My research has taught me to conceptualise that some thinkers must have thought they are thinking in a post human way, by reiterating theory much of it feminist but in reality these post human ideas were being conceptualised in a humanist ways as in the mind (talking heads) and projected in a punitive non-relational way, Work by Ahmed (2019) demonstrates this phenomenon is endemic. Ironically this has helped me to appreciate how much my life experiences and self-reflexivity are strengths in other ways of knowing, sincere and authorized knowers and ethical practice.

What this amounts to is the appreciation for local and situated knowledge which is inclusive of female and alternative spiritual and practical knowledge is now valued. It is however regarded as free knowledge to be apparently dismissed or inadequately

theorised but in reality appropriated. It is no longer the knowledge that is denied status (Fricker,2017) it is the knowers themselves and even more so up for grabs if they are female (Ahmed,2019). Embodied, life long, deeply felt experiential knowledge and metaphysical being, freely available for milking (Ahmed, 2019). The violation and annihilation and trauma from these unethical acts was so strongly felt that it has my effected normal functioning and wellbeing, taking years to heal (Plant,1989).

In the process of outing these behavioural practices I also hope to raise awareness of how learning practices need to be accountable '[To] strengthen the boundaries of the self against harm while also staying open to the possibility of positive interpersonal connection.' (Vine, 2019, 289) in the light of a post human world. .Yet not putting all the onus on the young people but to help to develop stronger ethical codes and support networks. This understanding can hopefully be put to use to develop education that fosters resilient generations who value themselves and each other as individuals, to value what they think. All the while highlighting an ethical code that is inclusive of nature and the ruining of lives as unacceptable.

Our material bodies are the expression of subjective individuals, particular humans, situated within 'worlds' (Quinn,2013) in the world and not just in the present. Our individual subjectivities are also more than one self. These differing selves are from different times and different responsibilities, impacting on each other to lesser or greater degrees at different times and situations thereby we need to conceptualise 'ourselves' as plurally situated, multiple knowers. (Haraway,1988).

By appreciating the material (human) body as an acquirer, and transmitter of direct teachings and knowledge, (and the brain as an organ that plays a part in this process of attaining and sharing knowledge) and by focussing on the day to day

material living I seek to make the familiar way of knowing about knowledge and knowledge acquisition strange. . 'Thinking differently' about learning means in part reducing the hierarchy of learning (Haynes & Murriss, 2017) and making it more lateral and more 'two way', blurring the definition of the knowers and learners to a certain degree without losing sight of the subjectivity of the individual entities their roles and responsibilities. It also means letting go of human hubris that assumes we are the only agents in the world and accepting that vitality and agency is also attributable to the more than human (Bennet, 2010).

When we think of teachers from orthodox thinking it is the human, usually in a didactic role. Including the agency of the body and the more-than-human decentres the human teacher knower but does not discount the importance of the human. For the purpose of this inquiry, I am thinking differently about knowledge and learning. To do this I by focus on lived day to day experiential learning which endangers a 'wandering' around, and although not quite sure where I was, I was not lost (Gale, 2017). I knew what I was doing (Jucker,2104) even if it may have random, unplanned to an extent.

While this inquiry is in part a 'thought' experiment, a philosophical inquiry and meditation into creating 'realised utopias' to live well in our bodies, interacting from 'below' in relationship with the material world (Thoreau, 2007). An unintentional outcome will be workings of the innerworld, the metaphysically of a post human body (Braidotti, 2013). Post humanism being one of the theoretical frames I use to inform this project. The focus being on critical and therefore emancipatory posthumanism (Cudmore, & Hobden, 2014). It is then an experimental, exploration into the learning process of the post human body, ecologically conscious and embedded in, i.e. situated (Smirthwaite & Swahnberg, 2016) in the world.

As Ahmed (2010) puts it we become feminist as we find ourselves being prevented and thwarted from powerful entities into being recognised as fully human. We find ourselves subject to being disciplined into and expected to stay in particular roles, and we find ourselves being subject to the imaginations and machinations of someone else's construction of we are. We know this makes us ill and prevents us from flourishing because we have become ill. We know we have to be to extricate ourselves from these situations –we become feminist even if we do not know the theory (Moore,2015) as we assert ourselves in the world.

Commensurate with the feminist articulation of ethics in action (Piersol & Timmerman, 2017), this also helps to clarify the meaning and reality of a relational assemblage of humans and the more-than human. The (post)human aware of and responsive to its positioning in the world from an earthly and material perspective can be understood as an 'ecological self' (Macy,1989). 'The entangled materiality' (Barad, 2007 quoted in Alaimo, 2011) of humans and nature. This way we can begin to appreciate in a real life situation that the decentralised posthuman does not discount the importance of humans or humanity (Taylor, 2017). Focusing on the individual body and the affects be it thriving (Laughton,2008) or adverse (Godfrey, 2005; Alaimo, 2010) highlights that the worthiness and inclusivity of humanity and the quality of life must be taken seriously as ethical consideration (Mahiligam et al,2019).

The post human working in the assemblage of for example trees, soil, other bodies, weather, meetings, traditional tools, mealtimes helps provides a stronger, physical affective but not manipulative, knowledge of the situation that the human is encountering which in turn creates a better opportunity for another human to

appreciate the interconnected, invigorating, learning, posthuman operating in an ethical manner.

What this demonstrates is that to really appreciate our material ecological positioning in relation with the world has to be understood in terms of a thinking/feeling body in action. Carolan, 2008 suggests how, many people have an implicit understanding of this as he states, 'mind is body; consciousness is corporeal; thinking is sensuous' (Carolan, 2008) as he reflected on the work he did in collaboration with people from differing standpoints living in the country. In other words the countryside and what constitutes the countryside causes affects (Stewart,2007) on the bodies in their differing relationships with the countryside. The differing aspects of the countryside have agency (Bennet,2010) on the human body, thus demonstrating one of the capacities of the human body as recipient of and meaning making of learning in day to day lived life. The inference of this then is to fully be able to comprehend something and apply adequate reflexivity this must include engaged encounters of direct experience, must inclusive of the whole person, i.e. cognitive, affective and physical domains as well as the social, cultural and biological, geological (Salleh,1993) influences.

Moving to a global perspective I am very conscious of my immersion and infusion in the world by trans and supra national global events in their differing forms. Earlier (Frankopan, 2016) but Nineteenth Century colonisation, Twentieth and Twenty First Century Structural Adjustment ('colonisation by the back door') and overt Neoliberal, market driven Globalisation. I am not however subsumed by it, nor have I swallowed it hook line and sinker. I am 'there' a 'modest witness' participating in, being affected and reflecting on what is happening around me and only now reflecting on how this

affected me and my learning and my being and becoming. Anderson states, the following

To claim objectivity for a representation is to claim that 'the world made me represent things this way'. To claim relativism is to claim that 'my identity (my situation) made me represent things this way (and my identity/situation is not inferior to yours)'. Both positions disclaim the active participation of the knower in constructing her representations. (Anderson,[2015, online no pagination](#))

Anderson is keen to point out the responsivity of thinking, individuals and not absolve oneself from knowing otherwise, by inference we cannot deny our role and capability in making up our own minds about cultural and social rights and wrongs and so attempt to do things to make a difference, to halt the pressures of oppression.

My knowing otherwise has also taught me to think otherwise. Growing up global there were other effects impacting on me, such as my formal education, connection with nature, familial teachings and behaviours and counter ideologies. My first real awakening to thinking otherwise was the correlation and connections I made from my life as a child of a military doctor living in the 'colonies' and the ethos of the radical, with socialist tendencies school I attended and formal secondary schooling regarding British foreign and social policy and the affects it had at home and abroad. I remember being very affected by the injustices the powerful affected in innocent people causing to adopt a more socialist/communitarian approach to life. As Lorde (2017) impels us we must define who we are, to appreciate that our 'personal visions are the groundwork for political action' (92). My attention to the phenomenology of body in its given situation therefore helps provides a nuanced conceptual articulation of reality and difference which could be missed in more conventional identity frames (Gonzalez-Arnal & Jagger,2012).

Looking back in amazement.

The skeleton is made up calcium which is a mineral and rock. We talk about knowing things 'in our bones'. Inspired by the thinking and teaching of rock formations articulated by Springgay & Truman, (2016) those past affections and reflections, the embodied memories dwelling within us are indeed 'queer archives of feelings' (Springgay & Truman,2016). Memories that flicker imperceptibly within our bodies, a minor gesture (Manning,2016) that do indeed engender often imperceptible recognition and thought albeit unexamined. This spontaneous bodily intra-action (Barad,2007) is the thinking body in 'conversation' the self. The manifested thought the body's thinking as form of objectivity.

My presence and will be impossible to hide within this body of work (Taylor,2017) as I invite you to suspend disbelief for a moment and imagine the symbols of the text as my physical/ material body, then what is actually written is my internal world, projecting outwards into the world. The material engenders the metaphysical within the material body which in turn helps to inform the materiality of the body. This can be understood as the essence of the self. Not an absolutely predetermined and fixed defining of who one is, this now weathered bag o bones was a rag bag at school.

Rag bag being the nick name given to me by a nun because I was that chaotic, untidy, disorganised good-natured child in school. I can easily picture her small body limping toward me from having contracted polio when she was child. I can still hear her sharpish but kind, high pitch Scottish voice calling me, 'to hurry up, Rag Bag!'

Was this a name she was called as child I wonder?

Ok I am a bit like this in essence but so much more, I haven't remained as nine-year-old child's reasoning, and capabilities I can look tidy enough now and look after myself with a little help from my friends. I don't insist on climbing trees all the time or

reading the Famous Five. However, these experiences were things that I was aware of or made up my mind about as something important to me as youngster. The broader implications of these experiences draw attention to the fact I have come to know and value things by experiencing cognitively, physically and affectively that is inclusive of appreciation these childhood experiences as political (Bosco,2010) if not directly projected into the future they definitely have. I do still like to sit on pebble beaches and notice the different stones or go for a walk in a wood, read a good book, think about the world from my experience in the world, actions of resistance, and renewal and time for reflection.

Whatmore (2006) articulates, the importance of returning to and theorising on past material experiences, describing these returns as an exercise in turning over pebbles. A fairly repetitive and mundane action but one we can all appreciate and know what she means without having to labour the point. Turning over pebbles is similar to what I described above about knowing in your bones. It engenders a more thoughtful, poetical approach, an act that is reminiscent of those childhood learning experiences (Rautio,2013). It is rare for a child to not know what a pebble feels like (although this may be changing) or not to have called out or been reproached in the playground for thinking they are the only pebble on the beach! No pebble is the same, yet we all know what a pebble is and what goes into the process of making a pebble; nature - not humans- working over millions of years.

This analogy is also different to usual approach of the 'steppingstones' analogy which suggests a linear progression, one step at a time, giving the illusion of walking on water!

Materialist recuperations is that this return to the livingness of the world shifts the register of materiality from the indifferent stuff of a world 'out there', articulated through notions of 'land', 'nature' or 'environment', to the intimate fabric of

corporeality that includes and redistributes the 'in here' of human being. (Whatmore 2006, 602)

The quote above clearly puts the understanding the material reality our embeddedness, situatedness and action in a sentient world is ultimately a metaphysical one too.

Material Bodies

Paying attention to the human body on the one hand reminds us of certain universal truths about humanity (and other bodies) bodies for example need to enact certain functions to live well; such as digest food and water, absorb oxygen, maintain optimum body temperature (homeostasis). We need to exercise muscles and keep bones from crumbling, ensure brains are healthy, and attend to emotional needs such as care of each other. Those who are unable, or need to learn ways to put these functions into action to ensure flourishing (De Ruyter,2004) are (one would hope) or should be helped by those that are able to, in ways that are attentive to individual needs . Attending to the materiality of bodies helps us to attend to intersections of adverse power dynamics on those bodies who are not composed in accordance to the constructions of Humanist and patriarchal thought, (Lorde,1988; Butler,1993; Midgley,2010; Ahmed,) who are not doing as they are 'told' with regard to whole heartedly cooperating with the hegemonic neoliberal and capitalist ideals being imposed upon us. (Salleh,1993; Lorde,1988; 2017; Cameron, 1989; Plant,1989; Thoreau, 1996; Midgley, 2010; Jackson, 1999; Apffel-Marglin, 2011; Failie, 1996; Haraway, 2016) to name but a drop in the ocean. (I do not mean we are literary told to ascribe and adhere to this ideology, this form of telling and disciplining or 'teaching' will be discussed later). A hegemony that is, that has appropriated an ecological truth and spiritual understanding in terms of our presence on the Earth as

global and interconnected (Watts, 1971; Plumwood, 1999; Kemmerer,2014)
manipulating this way of being in the world with half-truths into the all powerful
economic and monetary prerogative it has become at the expense of universal
flourishing for humans and the natural environment.

Chapter Three Literature

Falling through the safety net but not quite drowning

'Revolutions in the intellectual world do not come out of nowhere' (Heckman,2008, p.88).

The Greyhound in the Evening after a long Day of Rain.

Two black critical matching crows,
calling a ricochet, eating its answer
dipped
 home
and a minute later
the ground was a wave and sky wouldn't float.

*

With a task and a rake,
With clay-slow boot and a yellow mack,
I bolted for shelter under the black strake dripping of timber,

summer of rain, summer of green rain
coming everywhere all day down
through a hole in my foot

*

Listen Listen Listen Listen

*

They are returning to the rain's den,
The grey folk, rolling up their veils,
Taking the steel taps out of the tips and heels.

Grass lifts, hedge breathes
Rose shakes its hair,
Birds bring out all their washed songs,
Puddles like long knives flash on the roads.

And evening is come with a late sun unloading a silence,
Tiny begin-again's dancing on the night's edge.

But what I want to know is
whose is the great grey wicker-limber hound,
like a stepping on coal, going softly away...

Alice Oswald (2007)

This is a philosophical project which started life long before I was born but at the same time it has unfolded before me and folded within me throughout my life as well as the moment I put words to paper. This thesis can therefore be understood as an

unfolding, a revealing and application of ideas which manifested within me but not of my volition as such. The foundation for this project draws from spontaneous, unconscious and intuitive thinking and ideas but as the quote above implies this thinking did not just come from nowhere. A life time's 'hard' labour of learning while living, working, thinking in the world I 'created' for myself, but not just my labour that of my teachers and the collaborators, all that have 'conspired' to work on and with me as I live and breathe.

The working definition of philosophy I am using is that described by Colebrook, (2008) in which she puts succinctly, 'Philosophy creates intensive concepts'. In this instance she is referring to the new materialist conceptualisation of matter and it with thinking with and through matter i.e. by drawing on new materialist theory that I attempt to put forth my philosophies/concepts in a non-relativist way. In her essay Colebrook suggests there is potentiality, a vitality in remaining inert, of non-realisation or refusing to be one's self and it is that that somehow frees matter from the human through the human. In this project I counter this analysis. Her theory as I understand it misses the point and therefore legitimises immoral, unethical, disempowering and constraining projects for those socially constructed by (morally questionable) others as less than human - the wretched of the earth (Fanon, 1990) and the natural environment. .

I wish to demonstrate how by utilising our potentiality through our materiality, by attending to practical needs and deeds, that there is no flight from materiality and that we all gain from this. Being mindful of our practical everyday survival is way of learning to think in ways that go beyond Cartesian duality in terms of either or, and the assumption that it is two concepts that need to be attended to in a given situation such as nature and culture, being and becoming. Reality tells us many varying and

interchanging dynamics take place from within and without the individual, from the past as well as the present all coming into play all at once. It is by being aware of this which engenders different, more joyful, thought and action. This fertile ground of the lived life for learning to think differently is not just for the fun of humans to attend to their wellbeing and happiness (important as this is). This is a critical and urgent project with the hope of contributing to the development of thinking which attends to healing and countering the existential crisis of humanity as we become complicit in the destruction of the planet and compromise the survival and well being of humanity and nature. Humanity's 'grey' projections manifested as climate change, species extinction, socially constructed notions of supremacy, war etc.

If we are attuned as bodies to pay attention to our materiality and the materiality around us then we come to realise this very materiality of life is that gives us the material to think, create and innovate and find joy as it provides us with the vitality, the spirit within us (Wilson, 2008) for ideas. For finding purpose and what it is we ought to think and act about which brings together the discursive and the practical as we attempt to put into practice what it takes to live and live well.

Living well is a universal, non-negotiable requirement for all of humanity and all living things. It is by living well we cause minimum harm to living and non-living phenomena be that ourselves or others beyond ourselves. Living well is something that is relational it's an action or reaction that we project onto the world and a responsiveness to how the world projects and affects us. It is therefore an internal and external material reality. One's reality i.e. ones knowing, being and ethics (Barad, 2007) is based on not only what can be learnt but how it is learnt, i.e. it is based on one's life experiences consciously and consciously retained within us as memories, (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008) in the place we are situated (Escobar,2001).

Attending to our materiality in the materiality of place also helps to think and act with locality that is inclusive of our place in the global community. Escobar also asserts 'that places can be thought of as 'disclosive spaces' (p.167), where one can 'engage in the ontological act of disclosing new ways of being, of transforming the ways in which we understand and deal with ourselves...other people and things that produce a relatively self-contained web of meaning' (p.167). Thus, he goes to say this embodied engagement that takes places place compels one to deal with disharmonies i.e. differences, surprises, conflict in transformative and positive ways. Later I will discuss this further in terms of utopia and rural intentional low impact community with nature.

The depth and breadth of all learning is also dependent on how tuned in one is to the learning experience (Quinn,2013) in general. The concept of learning in real life situations cannot be easily measured, assessed or contained in subjects in the conventional sense,. It is almost imperceptible in the conventional sense and it also can be secret (Quinn, 2013), or even not realised immediately as learning experience.

As alluded to above learning from life to create a life well lived has a mysterious and uncanny element to as we work out and work on our purpose in life. Being attuned to the learning gained as we attempt to negotiate our way through life in the place we find ourselves 'teaches us' who we are (Morgan,2019), our ecological place in the world and how to respond to and in the world beyond ourselves. It points to the parts of the world we find ourselves in and that place intra-acting (Barad, 2007) with us. This in turn means we need to attend to the reflexive, rational and reasonable, to our thoughts in an ethical and moral way so that we can ensure our life is rich as result of our passions and feelings.

By being, learning and living in place we are living/acting our 'materiality'. I am inspired to use the spelling of this word thinking with Alamo and her conception of trans-corporeality (2008). She describes trans corporality as way to help us to reimagine a humans place in the world with the more-than- human. Materiality is a manifestation of transcorporeality a different way of being in the world that is committed to the world. It is not maternal, but the roots of mothering play a part in the essence of the meaning and the thinking. It is a way of being based on earth and for the earth but is not an Earth Mother also inspiration will have in part sprung from this concept. Materiality is an ontological concept, a way of living that is based on ethical and practical realities of living. It is (eco) feminist, attendant to intersectional power dynamics and inclusive of the agency of nature (Bonnet,2004) and works hard to create and maintain this social change. Material person is the embodiment of a (post) human (Braidotti,2013,) in practice.

The foundations of a material body are engendered from one's essence (Fuss,2008), yet she constructs herself based on her essences and nature. Returning (Whatmore,2006) to and continuing to learn and act differently but in habitual ways of being (Francoz, 1999) A material body cannot be clearly defined she but knows her gender and is probably queer (Ahmed,2004). Material bodies link up and create community with geographical and affinity groups, with the more-than-human. They develop strong passions over time being sense-able and are consequently deeply reflexive. A matereal person is attentive to the materiality of all others and in doing so finds she is being attentive to her own needs and is not afraid of hard work. A material body means a body that knows her bodily boundaries and has a mind/body of her own but is able to be feel, think, learn and with her body. To help clarify a bit more of the ability of a body Quinn & Blandon, (2017, p.17) quote Black (2011) who

understands the body 'as a material substrate of communication [that] is a dynamic entity which produces a multiplicity of perceptual interactions within itself and the world' (Black, 2011, 3). The body is also produced as the world interacts and enfolds on her. To really know the rural countryside Carolan (2008) asserts is an embodied, lived event whereby we think as bodies in place and on depending on our circumstances which make us who we are.

However not all are as free to (Jones, 2009) live out their materiality as fully as is their right. Intuitively it makes sense that living well means a body, engaged peacefully and joyfully interconnected to the rest of the world. We intuitively advocate and attempt to live well but this needs to be theorised into a reasoned argument (Page, 2008). Part of this notion of to live well is to appreciate that we need to attend to life in diffractive ways (Barad, 2007). The nuances and effects of life is a diffractive experience (Taylor & Gannon, 2018) with many things taken into account from our perspective and from that of the world around us. It is not a neat linear journey taken in isolation and progress does not automatically follow with each step. Probably something most of us first learnt about half way through our second year of life. This dynamic and three dimensional conglomeration of affects and actors is known as an assemblage. Flatschart (2017) informs us that the assemblage of new materialism theory does not include historicity but it only takes a small stretch of the imagination to realise that the memories of our lives embodied within our own material body are a vital and animating part of any assemblage, as well as the historical political implications that effect our day to day life. Take democracy for a start.

Each circumstance we encounter as material bodies is unique and has never happened exactly as this before, although they are fundamentally similar as there are universals to human life such as needing to be loved and to love, to eat, sleep,

enjoy company, seek social recognition that are played out in our day to day life. We could say then that every new happening/encounter is in essence a 'surprise' of sorts although we are generally not surprised because we have seen it all before!

To be response-able in each given situation means to be sense-able to therefore draw on one's experience and (usually unconsciously) recall similar encounters of one's own personal experiences and use the whole body and head to feel/think/feel.

During my time as a Teaching Assistant at a Special School I briefly worked in a class of 6 year olds. One boy I was responsible for with a diagnosis of Down's Syndrome, with quite profound learning disabilities also had no verbal speech I happened to notice pushing another boy's large piece Thomas the Tank Engine puzzle from the table onto the floor while making loud noises in his throat. (he had taught himself to do this his attempt to mimic speech). I did not just rush in and admonish the boy I stood back for a brief moment, relaxed yet alert and allowed myself to assess the situation. Then it occurred to me that what he wanted was to learn to do the puzzle himself. The mystery solved and once the other child had completed the puzzle we did it together. Once it was complete his guttural sounds were softer and he smoothed his hands across the puzzle over and again which told me he was happy with his achievement. I wonder if I was able to empathise because in part I was drawing on my own long held desires to learn at Higher Education Level and the numerous setbacks I had encountered. I was certainly drawing on my experience as a mum and as having worked as play leader in a Pre School Play Group combined with about eight years of experience of working with non-verbal young people with severe and profound and multiple cognitive disabilities, and the opportunity for the added reflection the academic work on Special Needs Education I was now happily studying at Higher Education Level gave me.

[W]ork of compassion...acknowledge[s] the complex tripartite nature of it; whereby it not enough to notice and recognise distress and disturbance in another, or to show empathy or sympathy towards another, but it requires an action that has at it's heart an effort to ease the troubling affect. (Haynes & MacLeod, 2017, p. 182)

Haynes and Macleod (2017) importantly point out in their research concerning Dangerous Knowledge by drawing on work by Vanden Eynde (2004) and Lilius et al (2008) that a specific way of responding to these situations is 'the work of compassion' (182). Something that had not overtly occurred to me as such prior to reading this article. I generally feel compassionate towards one and all without thinking I need to cultivate it or reflect on it, this provided me with further food for thought for the material body.

However I feel one still has to be cautious of dispensing with one's compassion, (Ahmed, 2004) or responding to requests for compassion. One needs to be mindful and be responsible to be able to protect oneself and others and know the difference between those who are genuinely deserving of compassion or not. The young people I had the good fortune to work with and those who unintentionally cause harm or are genuinely sorry that they caused harm and do not do it again are very different from those who use compassion as a ruse or 'emotional blackmail' to covertly continue to gain power over or intentionally cause harm. In situations like this perhaps one needs to remain compassionate of oneself, so as to prevent the feeling of hate or allowing an excessive feeling of anger towards those who do you wrong to fester.

After all not everywhere is safe despite the assumption that certain places ought to be safe, especially if they promote themselves as safe places. Following my field work at an eco-community a warning post (Lewin, 2018) on the Digger and Dreamers face book page geared towards vulnerable young women to be alert to personal violations in eco communities as they seem to be attracting a certain breed of disreputable people who find these places easy target as it is also almost impossible, (bad vibes) to speaking out in private or even to be believed in such peace loving places compared to normal life.

Part of life learning to live well from the mistakes we make and negative affects we encounter in the assemblage/baggage of life. To be able to feel a sense of remorse, shame is important, but one must also be resilient to these mortifications and not to judge ourselves or others too harshly, not to try to be too pure as this then becomes a violation on ourselves and is projected to others. Getting on with life means there are other things to think about and these mistakes must not hinder us.

This exploration into living well is therefore an exercise in informal learning as something that is part of the interconnectedness of life. The hope is to not simply add to knowledge but to subvert conventional thinking on education and learning and therefore contribute to education theory and development. Bringing our matereal bodies in the mix for thinking about learning and thinking with bodies means I can think about the significance of individual bodies as well as how bodies respond to affects, feelings, thoughts and the kinaesthetic actions. Taking risks and experimenting with allowing for the nature of the thinking to be different will allow for different and rethinking. If we imagine that that we think as bodies (Carolan,2008) this could help us to appreciate more in the Spinozian sense of what a body can do as part of nature and as nature itself.

The (post) human learner in the context of this study is a decentred human being, one who is able to critique the assumptions of the humanist project yet realise the importance of the emancipatory aspects. Hyman (1997) has highlighted how this critiquing is in particular the project of feminists, peace educators and ecologists. Iron-ically it was this very this assumption that adversely affected me as result of myself having these self-same assumptions.

Drawn by the desire to be better educated to improve my practice in contributing to the learning for sustainability previously based on my intuitions and a life time of experience, (which now meant that working with different people with learning difficulties differently) I found myself caught up and beaten up in an epistemological and ontological maelstrom; all of which was beyond my ken theoretically; although I could sense something as result of my learning form life. However, a negative affect can uncannily have positive and unimagined effects of which this project is evidence of.

A post humanist is aware of being inextricably connected to nature but not constricted by the negative affect of nature connections and in doing so does their best live out thier life differently to engender the flourishing of nature and humans. Part of this work is also attending to a post human ethic (Salleh,1996) by paying attention the exploitation of the post human in a post human age as result of excessive scrutiny by those 'greys' lacking any sense of moral or ethical being. Therefore people are still being taking advantage of as they labour on collective and personal emancipation projects (Moore,2015; Taylor,& Gannon,2018).

This hopefully is an emancipatory project a 'decentred' (Taylor,2017) authorised contribution towards learning for social change, human and nature flourishing. It is

also a 'feminist kill joy' (Ahmed,2010) interventionist moment, a negative affect with the hope that it will continue have a positive and joyful outcome for the readers.

By the happenstance of being emplaced and embedded ecologically one is by default in those betwixt and between (Mahdi,1987) places. A (post) humanism possibly that reminds itself it is essentially animal (Cudworth & Hobden, 2015)!

It lunch time, the dining room is noisy and loud noises cause the student I am working with to jerk her upper body. She is sitting in her wheelchair in a quieter corner of the dining room while the clatter of knives and forks and the exacted chatter of young people is to be heard although she did contribute verbally her body and her presence was her communication. . Another day in the life of the student and myself, sitting opposite her picking up the food in a spoon and placing near enough for her to place her lips over and eat and enjoy the food with dignity. Except that this time I force fed her. Without properly concentrating I pushed food in her mouth only to find she spat the food out and began to cough -she scowled. She put me back in my place, 'told' me what was what for not being careful. This was a thoughtless error on my part. I felt mortified and sorry.

It was an important lesson in one of those in between places Yet the young woman's Her learning experiences were so different from mine she is clearly a very vulnerable young person that could be an easy target for those who wish to use her vulnerability to bolster their own power. The Winterbourne View travesty (Hill, 2012) is testament to this form of behaviour. .

This incident also provides an example of a learning as a body in an assemblage, a learning in the direct experience of real life as part of the lived lives of the people concerned. A lived, felt example of interdependent and relational, interconnected,

affecting and affected and reflexive conglomerate of reality of a non-scientific, spontaneous enacted learning experience and way of knowing. Bodily nature (Alaimo, 2008) Learning that is out there and in there-life.

Alaimo and Heckman argue for the agency of nature and for a material feminism

that reconceptualizes nature in ways that account for “‘intra-actions’ (in Karen Barad’s terms) between phenomena that are material, discursive, human, more-than-

human, corporeal, and technological” (Quoted in Guaard,2011)

Learning from life, from one material human animal to another while attending to basic needs such as eating a meal is essentially learning from (human)nature. What else is it? It’s not magic, it’s not putting people in a laboratory situation and observing them and then telling people this is what need to do to behave, telling people this is how we must communicate because I have observed and recorded it in a lab etc. Crucially it is not learning about life/people, what food is, how to eat by watching television programmes, or reading theory and taking this theory as an absolute template.

A genuine concern for me working with those with SEN was the credulous and suggestable nature of young people with severe and multiple learning and reasoning disabilities who readily believed television was truth. It was something that I took into account in my 8 years’ experience of facilitating and initiating learning opportunities with the young people in post 16 FE and with an after school residential life skills project with a small NGO. These were people whose next transition was not university, or college but getting on with adult life. Despite their learning

disabilities these bodies are one's pushed away from services and state, support made to negotiate their way in the complexity and maze of neo liberal social care; to be at the mercy of those who set themselves up in small businesses as enablers or the faceless large agencies that administer their 'care'. Something I would not wish on any with neuro typical development.

Living well means attending well to the interdependent and cooperation of the individual and the collective, to their personal preferences and needs. A need for one to have the freedom *to* (Jones, 2009) exercise the living of life that allows for their full materiality (Heckman,2008). A relevant and positive life and fosters flourishing which at the same time allows for a sensuous relationship to the world, (Abrams, 1997), cited in Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008).

Learning to live well means learning from each other from our natures and about our natures and how to change those natures, it is also a dynamic learning from the nature of interacting with the land and nature. Being in close proximity broadens what it is we to know about such the importance of good soil, it deepens and intensifies the feeling, learning and knowing process. Post humanism reality is living and creating a life that is emancipatory (Cudwoth & Hobden, 2015). Being free to live a life devoid of other's hatred or prejudice and free to learnt live well with the earth.

Part of the learnig to think of certain opportunities of living well not so much terms of freedom from or escape (Morgan,2019). We need to think in terms of living well that affords the freedom *to* do something that attends to our flourishing which also attends to the flourishing other humans and nature as normal part of living well and human development. For an ecologically aware individual (Freyers, 2004; Hall,2011) who delights in nature; to be able to have the freedom to spend concentrated times

in the natural environment with particular friends as well as being someone who is a family member, is an indication of a flourishing and healthy family relationship. If one allows one's self to think in terms of escape from one's children and wife, (unless they are being domestically abused). The dynamic is a centred human and not the decentred post human. Thinking with the concept of Escape and how this might affects bodies helps to see it could give a negative connotation of the family to the family. As bodily affects project from one body to another this could have unwitting and unintentional adverse effects on the other family members. Being mindful of the body and not the head helps one to be sensitive to how the different bodies feel. Being aware of the interconnectedness and one's as part in the assemblage rather than focus on individual needs does not deny the individual of their subjectivity but it creates an emancipated one with minimum undue negative effects.

Woven into this thesis is an exercise (for myself and the reader) in the erudition of learning for the sustainability and wellbeing of the planet, the human and the more-than-human as the overarching living well concept. In the next section I will invoke Essentialism, 'Utopia', (Sargisson, 2012; Clark, 2012) a rural intentional low impact community Place and nature connection.

We are living in times of escalating existential crisis for humans and nature and the planet and manifestations of that crisis are made in the first instance and projected from and onto other humans, escalating and spiralling towards young people and the less educated. As powerful humans harm the planet less powerful humans are physically harming themselves and each other, and possibly do not really know why. This crisis is one we cannot buy our way out of nor can we just leave it to nature experts, technical experts, governments or mental health services to patch up. It is very much 'up to you and me' (project collaborator, 2017).

Chapter Four Analysis



Figure 1

Path through woodland. This is the route to and from the gardens, chickens to the communal area. A meld of more-than-human and human intra-action (Barad,2007) to create this soft path. When it rains a lot it becomes very slippery and sludge like as it is a clay and steep it therefore has to be negotiated slowly.

Prior to this study memory as something to be returned to (Francoz,1999) on numerous occasions (Whatmore,2003) for the purpose of learning and becoming was not something I had considered with any depth or breadth for myself or in general.

The more often the thought or written of the word,
memory came to me
it began to take on a life of its own,
it became vital, animated as if it was something separate,
yet part of me - similar to the notion of soul.

Memory is our anchor, our animator and our witness to who we are.

Memory is what makes us function.

What would we do without Memory, who would we be without Memory?

My mother has lost most of her Memory

sometimes she remembers who I am and sometimes not.

It makes her bewildered and frightened, unable to function.

It is as if she has lost herself in her own body.

Yet she is still very much present in her body.

Memory matters.

The putting into action of this study provided me with many opportunities that evoked personal memories, my own and the collaborators in this project. Memories are not just recalled in the mind but also in bodily actions. The mundane skills I had learnt as a dialectic between the farm and myself many years ago such as walking on mud, came back to me as I walked over the soil in the wood in a way that felt more like I

was gliding across the ground, so as not to put too much pressure on the soil and get myself muddy, slip or stuck. It was the soil asking me, (affecting me) to take care, not to be too heavy footed, reminding me of its presence and insisting I take extra care of it-to tread lightly on the earth. I was not consciously recalling a specific time or even thinking about past experiences of walking in the mud. Memory did the work for me as it became activated and then activating in the present, in a way relevant for the situation of walking through the woodland carefully.

Reencountering and thinking with memory means the past is (usually unconsciously) included in ones thinking processes. The past matters for the present and by default that translates into the present matters for the future. Appropriate past experiences, encounters and events are therefore essential for good thinking and functioning for our and others flourishing in the world.

Following on from my field work I returned to the community for their annual open day and to share some of my thoughts and findings with them and the visiting public. This experience stirred new and recent memories of my time here.

Yesterday I drove up to Somerset to visit the community, catch up with the people [place and the nature and the general moods and dynamics and interactions, Barad (2007)]. It's always quite emotional [for me]. The place is so beautiful and there was still a strong summery feel in the air. The sun was shining and it was very warm. (Research Diary, 2018)

Very conscious of the long drive to the community, preferring to keep long distance driving to a minimum, The steep, singular Ham Hill, appeared before me. Standing as it does in contrast to the surrounding flat land of the River Parot basin. Free of my vehicle I was soon immersed in familiar sights, sounds and smells as I followed one of several paths leading to the community. Keeping an eye out for indicators which

tell me which way to go next, the larch trees denoting the boundary of community land, the steep bit telling me to take a right here, the treeless valley ahead saying take another right and then the houses themselves telling you, you have arrived. I was affected with a certain apprehension which I felt consuming me but then it dissolved as feeling of joyful nostalgia - a sort of longing of the place people and experiences of my time living here as Memory crept up upon me. Springgay and Truman (2015) refer to memory, past events as queer archives of feeling with the affect following on from Memory and it is this that affect which is enduring and is the powerful agent, in that it is the feelings of the memory that produces a different knowledge which they term a counter-knowledge. Queers archive of feeling produces a subversive dynamic focused on a future it has a shifting dynamic one that transmutes something i.e. knowledge into something else it is then

a form of counter-knowledge production, as a dynamic that unlocks, or liberates the archive. As an archive it is not rooted in a fixed notion of a past but rather a futurity and urgency, shifting between fields of destruction, subversion, and regeneration. A queer archive of feeling seeks to share the affective tone of a process or event rather than relay strict chronologies or typologies of identification. The affective tone of an event outlives the event. This shifts the function of the archive. Rather than an archive encapsulating what happened, the archive creates invitations to re-activate the event's core propositions. (Springgay & Trueman, 2017, p.860)

O'Donnell, (2017) citing Tamboukou (2016) also suggests that memory is an embodied activity and not a mental one and she warns how it can become caught up in habitual behaviours which have become 'rigidified, desiccated, or become too certain of themselves', (826). This is an important reminder of how memory could become a negative effect, it also links to the concerns mentioned above that can lead to exclusive, fascist or other harmful behaviours towards others and to one's self. On the other hand habits of mind could be evidence of the good

enough nature of the individual concerned, habits learnt over time are recalled in moments of reflexivity (Francoz,1999) allowing for a differing but similar action based on the habits of the mind for example a caring child or a female environmental activist (Moore,2015) and put into appropriate action.

As I the explore memories of the research collaborators and myself, the above ideas help to understand if and how we might be affected by our memories in how and what we are thinking and it what motivates us. The unconscious connection we have to our memories as we conduct thought in the present could mean our thinking be much more enhanced if we consciously invoke and honour our past experiences and memories on what it might mean to live well on the planet within our own immediate locale.



Figure 2

Part of the work during my stay was to build the wooden fence in figure 2. The grass in the orchard invited its self as perfect grazing but the sheep, horses and cattle needed to be contained for safety and convenience. I took the photo in figure 2 during the 2019 Open Day. I had been admiring the now built and up and running cider house which I had a hand in helping to build. I found myself looking towards the orchard and was moved by the sight of the gate with two bodies resting. An iconic, nostalgic rustic dance an interplay between time out, gate, rural scene (the orchard)

and slightly slumped bodies. I recall the day I had a meeting with the community that would finalise if they would collaborate with me or not. A warm sunny day in March, the meeting was outside in the communal area as I spoke to them about the project and they asked me questions the birds were singing and buds were forming on the trees. To get there on time I took a taxi from the station, 'is that the place where people go to reflect?' the taxi driver asked. He then told me how his father used to farm in the area many years before but had to sell up. It was quite likely that nostalgia tugged at me to take this picture. Leaning on the gate reminiscent of a more benign and populated rural past. A time of local food production, stalls by the roadside, local markets etc. A time free from the imposition of supermarkets, of mass produced processed foods, of ever larger industrial farms and farming methods.



Figure 3

It was lunch time a break from work in the communal area. The yellow leaves floating down every now and then reminded us autumn had arrived. This picture from a political perspective captures a moment in the present, they are living out a life that was envisioned by many people that have made the community happen, these visions came from past experiences, real and visceral but the intention is for

an experiment into living well now with the future in mind. From a personal perspective the bump showing through her top with the baby inside in the present, a result of the bodily transformation, a material one as result of the of the intermingling of the materiality of her and her partner in the past. This materiality also transforming their minds affectively and cognitively as they are being prepared and prepare themselves for their emotional transformations as mother and father in the future. As they begin to prepare for a transformation in their movements and actions as the child and the child's wellbeing as they face their intentions and responsibilities of bringing the child up to flourish as best they can despite the unknown ahead of them all. Sophia close to the age I was when pregnant while living on a farm.

Living on farms was the closest I came to living with nature, domesticated and wild, (until I stayed at Tinkers Bubble). It was the late 70's early 80's. I was wanted to live in nature and became more interested in the concept of sustainability and living well was my interpretation of this (along with other people). I kept chickens, I still recall my excitement when the first egg was laid as if this was a gesture from the hen marking me into a grounded new way of being. I grew veg, or bought them from the local farm shop. I decided to learn more plants to forage, as well as learn the names of the flora and the birds, I explored the local area. I loved my dog and the countless lapwings, I joined in with a few village activities to give myself a sense of belonging and community to people and embed myself in the dynamics of the community. I even harboured a wish about bringing nature and farming together in a more harmonious way. Yet very unhappy memories if I allow myself to dwell on those. Even after my daughter was born things did not get better. I felt like a single mother but with a total lack of power, I felt 90. I still managed to pluck up courage to leave my husband. What I thought was bid for freedom and a calmer times ahead became the place of even more terror and dominion. Not having family around or a strong network of people left me even more vulnerable and my husband knew it.

Part of the project in this exploration of learning to live well was to evoke and bring to the present childhood memories in nature. In particular ones that were of special significance to the person as a child and to include any influential adults instrumental in providing opportunities for connections with nature. I interviewed Sophia in her

home. Entering the doorway, greeted by disembodied boots I too ditched my boots to join the crowd of boots and coats in the vestibule. The warmth of the fire creating a welcome feeling. I felt, privileged to be invited into her cosy home. Ivy the dog curled up on the sofa beside Sophia, willow baskets she had made, having learnt how to do this after the death of her mother hung from the ceiling. The fire burning in the stove and a sheepskin rug on the floor. Homes are sacred spaces they should provide the warmth for bodies, a place for precious things human and non - human a place to dwell, a safe space for respite and quiet joy (Ingold,1995). The homes in the community are a retreat from much of the communal day to day living, a place for private and personal poetic and practical expression of individuality and difference. A place to generate and hold onto difference which is such a vital contribution to the community.

Sophia spoke of her mother, who passed on about 6 years earlier, also her grandmother whom neither she nor her mother had known. I was acutely mindful of her situation as a new mother to be without the physical presence of her own mother and her mother also not having a mother and how talking about her past as child may make this difficult for her. I was extremely grateful for her generosity on what she did share.

...well partly it's because of... my mum's approach towards nature connection which was very radical and... spiritual and um very potent and um incredibly yeah very strong, strong reverence for nature... she had 15 acres of woodland...She used to stay in a bender every Friday night for quite a while... just a day and half on her own.

...she has always been quite a spiritual women and in later years Christianity faded away and an earth spirituality came to the fore and,[she] developed more formal practices around that with other people...

Her mother [Sara's maternal grandmother] actually who died when she [Sara's mother] was three was also very into nature connection stuff so perhaps there was kind of as a somehow some sort of lineage that she didn't experience but was in her bones.

In conversation I recorded Sophia telling me about a moment in nature with just the waterfall and environs, her mother and her and herself.

[she] told me how at 8 years old her family went to America for three weeks and one day her and her mother woke up at four in the morning to walk up a mountain. Once at the top Sophia lay belly down at the edge of a water fall. Compelled to do this and of course she was awe struck. Her mother was somewhat alarmed despite her own adventurous and nature connection way of being. Filed notes/ reflective diary

The adventurous trio of women the young Sophia, her mother and grandmother who was mountaineer and leader of exhibitions exemplified a zest for life. A zest for life and vitality also emanated from all the people who lived here during my field work. It seems to manifest in a form of self-assurance, and confidence,

Charlie is most natural and spontaneous... working outside with [her] [she] is very capable and I felt confident with her... Pedro's face was alive and animated when he was telling me about the [new] house [then still in the pipeline]... Around 7.30 one of the long term residents, Mike [gets up early and] makes tea and fill the flasks... there is something very heart-warming about this ritual.

This zest for life Starhawk (1982) suggests is the basic ethic of the concept of what she has conceptualised as 'modern witchcraft'. For me these are women and men who have passion, a love of life and think about what is going on and spend their time getting on and doing life and learning from life, in way that generates a good life. It does not occur to them to think only of themselves, they are here because they care about nature and the future of the planet as a place of mystery yet home for living species yet they are not diminished in any way, they are genuine people. . These people are who they are through their life experiences.

Despite not being overly confident myself, I do allow my love of life to counter this. Reflecting on this I realise that from very early on I learnt to find joy in small encounters in nature, and in positive day to day interactions with people. Is it this inner health that has given me strength over the years?

With the rise of the awareness of what has been conceptualised at post humanism (Braidotti, 2013) in academic work with its foregrounding and inclusivity of our interconnectedness to all things, it is part of our ethical project to remember the importance of individual human subjectivity and to theorise how this fits into interconnectedness of all things in a socially just way, (Quinn, 2013). While hegemonic discourse i.e. neoliberal humanism places value on hyper-individuality, human agency that is not inclusive of other agencies, colonisation, and high consumption it still operates in an interconnected way. This posthuman way of being is new for many people and they wish to embrace it (Gaard, 2014) but It's hard when old experiences jump out and counter this. Taylor, (2016) asserts that posthumanism must be understood as way of 'decentering' the human and not a denial of our individuality and ignoring of other people's humanity. It is a fostering of a humanity which is aware that its becomings in the world are the results of a relational ontology with the world. A marriage between a geo and bio ethic (Salleh, 1995; Whatmore, 2006) whereby humans and nature flourish together as well a 'new way of being' for humans. With these new interconnected understandings we need to be mindful of the possibilities of new, unrealised or hither too hidden power abuses that affect human and nature flourishing. Because as Taylor (2016) notes,

Far from being a future event, posthumanist practices and ways of thinking and doing are already with us. Post humanism is entangled with the philosophical and every day frames of reference through which ethical judgments are filtered and reconstituted; it informs the cultural categories, biological framings and technological procedures by which we make ourselves up as individual humans and as humans in relation to our human and other than human Earthly cohabitants. (Taylor, p, 22, 2016)

For example post humanism is can be connected with new waves practices and while good intentions are meant it is often difficult to critique something in certain situations because any negativity is anathema.

Post humanism must be ethical. Despite so much theory on post humanism the origins of this ecological frame have to come from experience even if this experience is not fully articulated. One cannot read about post humanism in abstract and be a post human. Post humanism is a verb, a process and one has to draw on life experiences and this means including childhood experiences. Personal memories of negotiating our day to day life are pivotal in who we are as they become embodied within us. These are counter memories (Quinn, 2004), counter memories are personal and responsible for our individuality and subject formation. Memory then tells us of the importance of experience and experiencing for the development of our knowledge and how we use this knowledge to further develop thought, create ideas and act upon them and become the people we are as expressed in our day to day intra actions. Memories can also be passed down the generations as affects which are manifested in unexamined behaviours and attitudes from family members as they go about their life or intra action with us.

My great, grand mother, Edith Michell was born out of wedlock, around 1880. She never knew her mother and was brought up by her aunt, who was married to man called Mountain. They ran a hotel in Lincoln. My great grandmother became a governess at sixteen then married my great grandfather, Albert Michell. My great grandfather originally from Kingsands, Rame Head, Cornwall was the son of publicans and before that they were tin miners. Serving in the Coastal Defence Force he was stationed on the East Coast. On retirement from the army he became responsible for the supplies of food for the army in the garrison town, Colchester Essex.

They chose to bring up their children in a freer way. Essentially (now that I come to think of it) creating their own utopia. Living on Mersea Island in Essex which at that time was mainly populated by people living off the land and sea, oyster folk, fish men

and wives, a few farmers. It was also the home of a small community of artists people. My grandmother, Marjory Michell and her siblings grew up with the local children and the artistic community. My grandmother as well as her brother's, learnt to sail as children.

She married my grandfather, Cyril Smith a tailor from the local town, he had a strong passion for sailing. They had a boat named Naiad and taught my mother to sail. My grandparents were renowned for their gardening skills and the beautiful clothes they wore, cut by my grandfather.

During WW2 My grandmother divorced my grandfather and moved away to live in colchester. She would regularly visit her beloved Mersea Island, and every year she holidayed there with her sister (my Great Aunt) it was about 15 miles from her home.

My grandmother used to tell us children she was a witch and as a child I was happy with this. My grandfather insisted on telling us regularly, as we settled down to watch the Magic Roundabout just before bedtime how it was his favourite TV programme.

‘ ... a turn to the past also helps us face up squarely to the possibility that what otherwise exists might not, in the end, be very radical at all’. (Kinna & Pritchard, 2009 p. 278)

A turn to the past is something that is inherent in our humanity and in is explored in this study. Looking at how we lived in the past and how we have become to be who we are now is fundamental. These include personal memories and formal revisionist historical knowledge. Whether it is a way of being and becoming which can be understood as a form of indigenous human nature that is conceptualised as witch craft; an emotive metaphor evoking capability and other ways of knowing, danger and unknown and the past. It is essentially an indigenous way of being which is inherent in all of us as our human nature. It is also a way of being that is expressed in the enactments of traditional work, caring for each other, providing and sharing food, teaching and healing, in way that includes our connection to the land such as growing vegetables, keeping stock, making cider going for walks or spending time at the beach.

Simon Fairlie (1996), a low impact living campaigner, journalist and micro dairy farmer was founding member of this community he remains as a trustee. He tells us that there is a general desire for being settled in a rural way of life, creating the opportunity for local food production and a living made without excessive consumption or long distance travelling a route to living well and thriving on the land (Laughton, 2008). This resonated with my own feelings and actions as a young woman. A way of living is founded on nostalgia of something for that was not. .

It was late 70's I was 18 or 19, I had been working very hard cooking in what must have been one of the first gastro pubs, in a village in the county of Surry. '...West End standards in the quiet of the Surry Hills' was a strap line. Now working in a wine merchants in the county town I spotted a poster of a young woman in nature as I was crossing a road in a stark concrete underpass. I felt a tingling and pulling then found myself beginning to wonder at myself as to why was I not pursuing a rural way of life close nature as I had always felt a strong connection with nature. I had lived a nomadic life was not really sure where to go where I could settle. I was also getting dissatisfied with the wine merchant business, I wanted something more purposeful.
Personal reminiscence of a previous feeling of nostalgia

Nostalgia is a looking backwards, perhaps to something that never really was, these emotions of nostalgia can be brought on by change or loss Zembylas, (2011).

Zembylas, points out how historians can be sceptical of nostalgia as such because it can create a false sense of a past. Citing Shircliffe (2001) he tells us how nostalgia can be understood to distort the historical record as it can be used to gloss over perceptions of one's self, especially involving national memory and past trauma (Zembylas, 2011, citing Pickering & Keightley, 2006).

Zembylas (2001) however argues how, 'nostalgia can be used as a survival mechanism or an existential way of finding meaning to loss and to change in one's life' (Zembylas, 2011 p. 621). These changes in life, for example brought about by war, conflict, (in)voluntary migration are more evident than ever in a modern world

(Zembylas,2011, citing Boym, (2001) & Davis (1979). Zembylas's insight into the use of nostalgia as starting point *for* (his emphasis) critical social commentary and critical transformation of education provides a valuable basis for 'thinking with' nostalgia as something purposeful and generative. Aware that 'claims of a "paradise lost" can be invoked in educational discourses and practices' when concerning nostalgia (2011, p. 642) he points out that this relies on a dualistic model of thinking one which perpetuates a particular way of thinking that implies either good or bad, superior, inferior etc which results in the constructing perceived or imagined enemies. Zembylas (2011) urges educators to think again about nostalgia to think with it in a reflective more thoughtful and careful way.

In other words not to fore close thought and differing possibilities, not to be thoughtless or careless in the very forum i.e. education which has been generated to foster and 'work with' thought. Utilising our own memories combined with collective nostalgia Zembylas proposes can be applied to good effect.

The scene described below is an affect which tugged at Pedro. The incident was not something he experienced as if an automaton just walking past it tugged at him, evoked emotion and affected him. As he reflected on this cycling to his next destination he reasoned this is the place he would like to be to enact out his life.

A couple of women with their young children sat on a picnic rug, while the mothers were sawing down...a small apple tree with a two man cross cut saw. It was a peaceful slower pace. It takes time to get things done. You just have to accept it is going to take longer without mechanisation...

Pedro informed me with the quote above that this particular memory at the very end of his first visit about 9 years ago, as he happened to pass by them after spending a few days at the community on the off chance. Pedro came from a new town in SE England and had studied and worked in IT and had also been a manager. He had

also travelled round the world a lot he wanted to settle down, to use his hands. He had mentioned to me that some of his abiding childhood memories was doing carpentry work with his father as a child. Nothing special he said but it was something he enjoyed doing.



Here Pedro is taking part in the coppicing process a traditional, rural way of managing hazel woodland and acquiring wood to make things or for fuel. This was working weekend and people had come to learn to coppice, experience the community living and have some fun. He is hammering hazel stakes into the ground to encircle the stool (bottom right) then hazel brash will be woven between them. This combination will form a protective basket against deer nibbling the new shoots of the hazel tree before they grow strong enough to be unpalatable.



Pedro living and working hard in maintaining the life he envisioned, one that also cared about. This life is far removed from his upbringing and the life lived prior to the community.

Nostalgia and change is what inspired a group of people from mainly non rural land based backgrounds to form the community. The government of the time decided that a road should be cut through Twyford Down an area of outstanding natural beauty and special scientific interest that the community came into being. The government thinking was to speed up traffic coming from London enroute to other parts of the country to allow for faster business transactions and movements of commodities. This meant the government were renegading on the previous measures taken by the government to protect this area of common land.

Fairlie,1996). reports that the building of the M3 had been subject to protests for a while but it was the cutting through of Twyford Down in particular once it became known to new age travellers who happened to pass by on this down they to wished

to be part of the protest but not only that they used their network and brought in a large influx of protesters who were not local but with a broader interest in nature, the freedom to roam, as well many from the growing environmental movement and sciences that were emerging in response to the threats to the environment. The collective memory of the Twyford down as presented in the media is of protesters of scruffy young people with nothing else to do as the government and media attempted present them as irrational. There may well have been a few who came along to jump on the band wagon to vent frustrations in general but most were there for very good reasons.

This site of destruction and protest was then also a place of transformations when a group of people envisioned living peacefully in community with people and nature and not being dependent on food or commodities that had to be transported long distances and committed themselves to putting it into practice. They had money to purchase some land and those that came to live there as opposed to the shorter term volunteering programme they have.

‘Emplacement’ according to (Howes,2005) is a concept that highlights the of the dynamic of the mind – body in a particular place and denotes how that particular place informs the constitution of a particular ‘mind-body’ (person) as they are (re)creating the place (Howes, (2005) quoted in Tuck & McKenzie (105).

Living close to land in new community that had no structure meant they had to have a lot of motivation, not only to create the infrastructure, to work things out as they went along and to win the hearts and minds of the locals and fight for their cause in the courts.

Could this desirability this motivating force to live close to the land and nature be expressed as a form of eros (Martucewicz, 2005)? Eros as one meaning being 'the life-sustaining force that moves not only in the human community but also plays on us in our embodied relationship with the more than human community' (Martucewicz, 2005, 332). Martucewicz is a Professor of Education, East Michigan University, College of Education with her scholarly interests being on posthuman and indigenous philosophy and its pedagogy of responsibility and a learning for eco justice and sustainable communities. Her work also includes being editor in chief to a prominent education journal and so creating a forum for the bringing together of teachers, community activists, teacher trainers' to develop critically responsive young people to care and work towards community enhancement. Audre Lorde (2007) eloquently wrote of the erotic as, '[as] a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane...' (53). She appeals to us not to be afraid our female power but astutely cautions, '[t]he erotic cannot be felt secondhand' (59), (Lorde, 2007). It is a power in waiting (Lorde, 2007) an ability to be attuned and affected by life and nature. Martucewicz, (2005). She describes how she felt her childhood experiences of 'eros' came back to her as she become involved with the community in their enhancement work in Detroit which helps to explain her thinking.

As I drove home that day, my body still humming, my thoughts were on that love and the idea of place and community that was celebrated at Thirkel. I was transported to another place and another watercolor in process 30 years before... found myself sitting on some rocks in the middle of the Little River in northern New York State, the tires of my bike still spinning where I had laid it in the grassy ditch nearby. I had ridden here, a bit wobbly, with my sketch pad and packet of paints tucked under my arm, thinking that I'd try to get something down on paper about this spot that I loved so much. The water rushed cold over and around my feet, through my toes as I balanced there, dipping my brush into the stream to dab at the dried squares of paint in my case, dripping greens, gold, blue... (332-333)

The people of Detroit she worked with wanted to make changes to their broken community once the mo of motown had be removed and left an economic and social vacuum. This small region in Detroit wanted a peaceful, relational and flourishing community, depicted by the children as they understood it in their paintings and articulated by the adults in their organising as they worked together to foster change. The older folks memories of living in rural settings perhaps when they were young helped to evoke such desires (Martucewitz,2005) as children, adults, community leaders all contributed to envision, the joie de vie.

An important concideration of being accepted to live at tinkers Bubble is based on what they can give to contribute to and enhance the community. Ed for instance has has bought his enthusiam for and some expereince of tradtional rural skills. He recently rethatched the communal round house. It nows looks welcoming and fresh and the countless unappealing dusty cobwebs gathered over the years on the ceiling gone. He is not a thatcher but his father and brother are and by watching and listening and having some expereince he has been able to draw on his memories of how thatching happens. Ed is also good cooking, although he does not particularly enjoy the domestic duty! and occationally brought a of a pheasant or fish to suppliment the mainly vegetarian diet. When I asked him about a favourite childhood activity in nature as the fire was crackling in the wood burner and my dictaphone on the wooden table amongst some paper for his notes and our cups of tea it was hard for him to say at first. He had lived in very rural setting all his childhood and adolescence so was never out of nature.

Yes in a lot of ways my non-school time when I was a kid was pretty much on my own or with my brother especially. Just doing stuff out in the countryside. I grew up in Dorset up in some hills in a little hamlet so there wasn't anyone near, it was a big country estate –um you know a lot of stuff really. I used to spend a lot of time

at poaching and hunting with my brother. I guess you could say in a way [is a favourite activity]. I used to tickle a lot of trout. I always used to enjoy doing that – getting into the river and seeing what's around and catching things...we would just cook it on the stones...yeah my dad taught us how to tickle and yeah I used to do it with my uncle. Ed November 2017

Counter-memories then are the incorporeal traces/affects of an embodied experience which in our levels of powers we have negotiated and interacted with at that particular time. Our acting in that moment dependent on what is acting on us, our past experiences (previous memories) and knowledge, situation and context. Some experiences are more memorable than others, some memories are an amalgam of experiences and it's impossible to consciously articulate definitive moments.

Counter-memories are ethereal yet embodied encounters of nature and the female which then arise in us (Lorde, 2007) at a later time, in a particular encounter or emotion and influence how we are affected and how we reason.

Chatting to Charlie her about her child hood experiences it was not surprising to hear how she spent time gardening with her father. Charlie requested to be interviewed in her green house while sowing seeds in early March and in her polytunnel on another occasion in May.

Yeah I had a little garden. My dad was a gardener-really passionate about gardening but he wasn't a gardener [i.e. professional gardener] at the time but I would spend a lot of time in the garden gardening with him and digging with him and planting seeds with him yeah... and when I grew up a little bit I had my own patch and then passed it on to my sister when she was little. [I] probably [grew] sweet peas and I think beans – yeah we always grew runner beans and probably chives, sweetcorn strawberries. I had strawberries in my patch. It was very small he also had a veg garden and that was very small because he was into flowers and stuff. I was defiantly a bit of a Tom Boy and yeah gardening and being muddy was quite great. April, 2018

Reflecting and mulling over the memories shared to me by the community members it has become apparent to me how much their child hood experiences, particularly

the one's they recalled to me have affected their life style choices in adult lives. Of course this could in part be because of the sort of questions I asked and what they sensed would be meaningful to me, I was affecting what they thought I wished to hear but the sort of questions I was asking related to their way of life, immersed in nature and making a lifestyle around growing food and maintaining a plantation. The whole community circulated around these fundamental premises. This was the topic of conversation that went on all the time with bodies, soil, vegetables, knives, pots, horses, birds, trees as well as verbal discussions about what to next or the communal chit chat over mealtime or while working together. Charlie announcing her seeds have arrived as she undoes her package emanates a joy in tone, face and the fact that she makes a fuss of her seeds tells anyone present in communal area. Even the quietist short term volunteer sitting there would cotton on to how much growing means to her without having to ask her as a direct question.



Figure 4

Beans for eating, they became bean burgers for supper.

Chapter 5 Reflections

During the last night of my stay in the Douglas fir, plank wood and straw bale guest house known as the Badger House (because of the close proximity to badger sets and runs) I awoke and turned to see if I could judge the time by the level of light from the window. I did not need to draw the curtains as no one walked past that area, it was dark enough and besides having a chance to look upwards to the huge hornbeams with the branches swaying creating a mesmeric sensation, especially at times of waking up was something I have not done since childhood. Having been reminded of this from a conversation with a collaborator. To my delight and surprise the almost full moon was shining between the branches directly onto me. I felt a sensation I had not had before it really seemed as if the moon was communicating with me in a caring way as if it was somehow giving me certain powers I had not had before. In my sleepy state I was very aware that I was having these sensations. I felt a warmth and level of assuredness seep all over my body. I have had a similar unexpected encounter with the sun that is another story... I was no longer just noticing the moon as a beautiful silvery globe in the night sky instead there really was a deep heart to heart connection.

The next time I peeped, this time on purpose the moon had contrived to move on, hidden behind a hill or a trunk of a tree, well out of my sights.

It was the night before full moon which is attributed to lunacy was there another message in this madness. Madness has been adopted by Gale (2018) as a (non) methodology (13) that is a methodology for opening up new spaces (Bird et al, 2015), thresholds for doing research differently for the purpose of learning differently

and for thinking differently about what we are learning for so as not to destroy the planet and all that is on it.

And so the madness I write with and about here, that attempts to make claims to offer a thinking and doing approach to working and becoming in the world, the very process of world making, is one in which selves are deeply imbricated in relationalities that are not bounded by the simply human and that the discursive construction of these selves into categories of representation that classify practice in particular ways needs to be challenged, questioned and ultimately broken down. (Gale, 2018 P.13)

We need to move away from a social constructionist approach which falsely creates an imagined idea of who or what a particular person is, what is expected as correct learning whether this comes from society its self or from bias in science reinforcing perceived assumptions. The danger of this social constructivist approach is the permission to create a violence on the group or individual being 'described', nature and the planet. Not only is this violation but creates a denial of what is of value.

Self-elevating the one who doing the social constructing as the one who knows best (Bakunin, 18. What is particularly insipid about this is the power they have makes it difficult question what is happening. Like the Jimmy Saville case but in academic terms. The other violation is that work from indigenous cosmologies, spontaneous cosmologies, feminist and female knowing are being appropriated and repackaged as new knowledge. New materialists have been critiqued for this () insists that acknowledgement of indigenous thought must be attributed to this work.

Gale's understanding of what might perceived as madness in an enlightened sense in order to reveal hitherto veiled, knowledge and knowing and so deepen our

understanding and commitment to compassionate, and caring ethics (Visse, M. & Niemeijer, 2016) helps to conceptualise a way of learning to live well without destroying the planet, ourselves and each other.

When the violence exposed becomes the origin's of violence then the violence exposed is not revealed. (Ahmed, 2010 p564)

Care ethics is an interdisciplinary field of study that strives toward a more caring, humanizing society. The central questions that care ethics poses are: "what is good," "what matters" and how can we include as many perspectives on "what is good care" in social practices? (Visse & Niemeijer 2016, p.302)

Gale's own insights and his articulations of Barad (2007) and Bachelard (1969) point us to the significance of verbs, action words which help us to think and do differently, by thinking differently I take this to mean not accepting assumptions but also reflecting on where we gain our basis for thinking as one might. Just how 'freethinking' are we? What guides our thinking and knowing? Rather than focusing on the noun 'knowledge' the verb 'knowing' as an action creates a way of conceptualising what, how and why we know. It does this by highlighting the action a process a lived embodied experience (Boardman, 2011). Ahmed and Stacey (2001) conceptualise 'thinking through the skin' as felt way of receiving and processing embodied lived experience and therefore how we know and what there is to know to contribute to or subvert knowledge.

In the specific context of learning and practicing one's 'art' Gale (2018) quoting Bachelard is suggesting that 'knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Not knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge' 1969 xxxii-xxxiii. Gale understands this to be knowing whereby one is part of the world, immersed in the making of one's ontology, epistemology and ethical stance. Importantly it is also way of knowing that is no longer prescriptive, one is no longer totally dependent on a 'recipe' crucially one is

experienced to know what one is doing in order to create and or become in the world. The paradox of knowing in this way seems to come from 'out of body experiences' yet is attributable to that body but is articulated in a form of action be this a painting, a body of writing, a meal, a piece of music. However I must caution here that this 'not knowing' is not a not used as a criteria for choosing not to know or to pretend that one does not know, therefore a disguise for violence()

disagrees that experience is relevant for being different in the world for creating a new way because he believes that no one has experienced what this is to be different and so it is illogical to value experience. However the knowledge of knowing, learning I'm attempting to articulate for the very purpose of I

I was due to leave that day but it had to be slow 'letting go' of the official period of the field work. My time of immersion in/with/on/at/part of Tinkers Bubble. It wasn't so much me that didn't want to leave in a hurry but the place and dynamics that seemed to be holding onto my every cell in my body, only relaxing the fine, invisible gossamer threads a bit at time. I had an extended breakfast outside in the communal area, cleaned the (badger) house (again), made coffee, hung around the kitchen, was easily persuaded to stay for lunch by Sophia only then the threads were loosened enough and I quietly walked down the hill and left.

Spending my time here evoking and listening to the 'stories' of the members of Tinkers Bubble as well as the collective story of Tinkers Bubble I too was attending to my story. I spent three months living in the woods known as Norton Covert, it was hard by conventional standards, but not as hard as it would have been when the community was first set up. There is running water from the spring, Tinkers Bubble (possible corruption of Chinkwells Bubble) which feeds the stream that is a tributary

of the Parrett. The houses all have wood burning stoves and there is no shortage of wood, one just has to collect and process it first. Tea is made first thing in the morning and food is prepared for lunch and supper using much of the vegetables grown in the gardens. There is a good kitchen space. Listening to the sound of the birds, the black birds around the communal area, the regular squawking of the rooks across the valley after sun set just as the light goes in one's immediate vicinity pulls one into the continuity and interconnectedness of nature as a part of the 'community' one dwells in. The people who live here with such vibrancy, those who pass through, those who

Am I attempting my own version, a female version of Walden (Theroux) developing my own theorising/imagining on 'living well'? I put this as a question because we are not so sure as yet of how things around us work on us, how the world makes us (Watts,1957). In the numerous positive ways as well as the negatives such as how we are mis-represented and thus have create a world in that prison or somehow negotiate a way out it, or trapping ourselves the glass cages we create for ourselves as consequence of the external forces mis-representing us.

My grandfather lived in a cedar clad bungalow on the east side of an Island known as Mersea in Essex. He was a brilliant tailor yet he did not want to be tailor but a sailor. To join the navy and help protect his country and democracy as result of the First World War. However he couldn't he had to have a kidney removed at 17 and stayed and worked in the family firm and developed his love for gardening, growing food and above all sailing his boat Niad instead. Sadly, his marriages were failures my grandmother divorced him and his second wife, my step grandmother bottled all the fruit and vegetables, cooked on the Aga and made whole meal bread but she

could not give love, not to her sons (it was my mother who looked after them), to her husband or her step grandchildren.

His legacy (amongst many) embedded within me in my memories of encounters and interactions with him and expressed in my being and becoming.

I love the water but do not sail, as young child in the constant seeking of and immersing myself in water in my imaginings I was a fish. (I determined at the age of four I would learn to swim which I achieved). It was family joke that if there was a river I would fall into it. I also loved climbing trees, my pet animals.

I'm uncomfortable with Deleuze's descriptor of assemblages as machines one can plug into (Adams, St Pierre, 2004), as if we really do have that choice of what counts, as if we can pretend something is not relevant simply by not 'plugging' into that particular thing. Machines cannot be accountable in themselves and so there is an implicit assumption that feelings and emotions, our humanity does not count.

That is not to say that I do not appreciate the value of the notion of 'assemblages' and that machines are not part of assemblages that affect us (Bennet, 2010).

Deleuze helps to articulate the concept of our interconnectedness beings in a philosophical way that helps us to appreciate we are not the total formers of ourselves. At the same time this does not mean we do have any agency or will into how we allow ourselves allow certain things to affect or influence us.

As a young child, before I went to the convent school, I remember having the thought that I did not want to or have to worship God. I felt and still do feel very uncomfortable with the effect of worship to me it feels like a denial of one's soul an inhalation of one's very being. As a consequence I, along with numerous others, have developed my own understanding of spirituality as spirituality emanating from everyday life, a form of Eros that is creative, shared and self-perpetuating (Mathews, 1998; Martusewitz, 2005) which must not be dwelt upon too much, otherwise it becomes too contrived and so loses its spontaneity, it's 'magic' or affect. Even though I appreciate the purpose of religion and can grasp some of the concepts from

the teaching I affectively removed much of the assemblage of religion from influencing me (Bakunin?)

Tellings from Tinkers Bubble

Community is... trees, fire, soil, birds, women, children, men, tools, chickens, eggs, spring water, dwellings, cider etc etc

I sense a vitality, energy and awakedness that is within the people who live here.

Sleeping and living under the trees provides a deep sense of calm and security. Trees provide a place for birds and give of a particular aura and energy that we humans absorb.

Being outside in amongst nature in a positive and purposeful way seems to have a positive affect on thinking.

The apple trees remind me of the cyclic nature of time, the seasons and our life rituals. They tell me of the many inextricable, symbiotic dances between nature and the humans. It makes me think how different am I?

Living amongst and supporting and being supported by biodiversity is part of the experience here.

Bodies keep moving, get strong and keep warm with work.

Mundane work is 'mindfulness in action' and... it's much easier to do it in community!

Working with the soil is constant reminder of the presence and value of soil. It affects a groundedness and an empowering sense of humility.

The making of meals and sharing cider every day in community feels like a ritual and celebration of the day's work.

The making of homes from the wood that is grown, felled and sawn with your own hands must be testament to a spirit that cares about planetary sustainability and that can surely only be fully appreciated in the doing.

The place, the nature and the people are keepers and tellers of a conceptual and literal space to a new way of being and thinking.

Action and the experience of acting in the world are undervalued as a form of communication of learning in itself; I wonder why we have forgotten the purpose of learning?

Conflict is understood as a positive. It opens up thought and understanding in ways that can positively affect the individual and the community.

Consensus is paramount.

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