



Entanglements and Response-Ability in Intergenerational Performance Ecology: Part IV

Sarah Hopfinger

Reading *Wild Life* is a matter of reading neither individual humans nor nonhuman materials nor of fixed relations between them, but of reading (and taking part in) the agential movements, energies, dynamics and between of human-rock-thump-sit-child-leap-spin-drop-carry-light-smoke-billow-slide-run-wet-feet-rest. Reading as participation, collaboration, co-mingling and intra-acting (Fig. 1).

I would like to return to the idea of muddles, which I introduced in the first interlude. Part of the muddle I find myself in when writing about, or creating, performance is to do with attending to specifics—the specifics of me, my collaborators (human and not), of the hard-to-pin-down readings, ideas, experiences and concepts. At first, going into the details feels risky, difficult *and* shaky. What if I do not find anything here? What if I do not know what to look out for? What if I miss something? When I begin creating or writing about performance, the generalisations can feel more comforting: there is concreteness, more to hold on to, a sense of a fixed comfortable reading of the work. Donna Haraway helpfully reminds me that the ‘details matter’ as the ‘details link actual beings to

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Fig. 1 Performance documentation 6

actual response-abilities' (2016, 29). Whilst focusing on generalisations arguably fixes thinking and knowledge down, focusing on the specifics *lets us in*. Going into the specifics can allow others, and other readings, to come in—and your readings of the ideas and perspectives in this book are perhaps a case of comingling?

Doing ecological entanglement: reading as active participation in the making and re-making of knowledge.

Your practice of reading this work now is a differential extension of the knowledge-making practices of the research. For me, performance research shows how 'knowledge' is not, in any fixed sense, embedded anywhere or embodied by any *one* person or material. Rather, research and knowledge are (only ever) enacted, and can (only ever) be research-in-process and knowledge-in-the making. The creating, directing and performing of *Wild Life*, the various writing I have published about the research over the past four years including this one, and your process of reading this writing now, are all variegated practices of inhabiting and participating in the ongoing weaves of a dynamic entangled research ecology that materially travels across space and time (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Performance documentation 7

In writing these interludes I am *reading* my practice and my previous *readings* of my practice. Reading my own work—a performance, a piece of academic writing—is often an experience of becoming overly critical: I feel that, really, I have moved on from my thinking and I can feel resentful of returning to my past work. But with Barad’s invitation of a practice of ‘re-turning’ as a ‘turning over and over’, the process of creating these interludes has become an active, alive, kinder practice and, as a result, I think a more response-able process. *How* we think through performance matters—how we write and reflect contributes to what diffraction patterns occur and thus what knowledge emerges. Haraway’s *Tentacular Thinking* shows that ‘it matters what ideas we use to think other ideas. It matters what thoughts think thoughts’ (Haraway, 2016, 34–5). *How* we read across different writing and research *matters*—the atmosphere and approach we (the writer and reader) take influence what kinds of thinking and knowledge emerge. Haraway further describes her approach as one in which she wants to ‘make a critical and joyful fuss... [and] the only way I know to do this is in generative joy, terror, and collective thinking’ (2016, 31). What if reading our own and each others’ work (from within



Fig. 3 Performance documentation 8

and across disciplines) is approached as acts of critical kindness, care and collectivity? What if artistic research attended not only to the ways in which we make art but also the qualities and attitudes with which we return to/over that art? What if we wrote with rigorous tenderness for the humans and nonhumans we are marking and being marked by? Perhaps attending responsibly to the atmospheres within which we re-turn, read and write enables us to develop what Haraway calls ‘attentive practices of thought, love, rage, and care’ (2016, 56). If reading is a world-building activity, then the qualities with which we read and write will contribute to the kinds of worlds we build (Fig. 3).

REFERENCE

Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble*. Duke University Press.