



Eye-to-Eye with Otherness: A Childhoodnature Figuration

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Abstract

Taking a narrative approach that follows Haraway’s (Staying with the trouble. Making kin in the Chthulucene. Duke University Press, Durham/London, 2016) call for making kin with growing awareness of a looming 6th mass extinction of species, the chapter focuses on multispecies encounters to consider what

The story is a hen and child story. They are the main actors and we thank them for their ability to call us to attention. Chickens and child are members of Gloria’s kin and we hope that we have captured their encounters in ways that agree with them. And Ena, thank you for sharing worlds for a time.

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childhoodnature as a concept can do for research. The intention is neither to focus on what can be learned from multispecies child-animal encounters, nor is it an attempt to document such encounters in “real life.” Rather, the chapter experiments with the porosity and liveliness of materialized thought (the text) as it gives form to an event (the multispecies encounter) across time and in place. The intention is to speculatively imagine a childhoodnature figuration of a hen and a child as a lively encounter that ripples through time/place and that generates unexpected lines of inquiry. The chapter experiments with a speculative approach to explore new ways of thinking and doing multispecies relationships as “earthly encounters” that matter to politics and ethics of sharing worlds. This, we argue, is an essential task in the midst of loss of diversity as it opens spaces for new imaginings about sharing worlds through kin-making in childhoodnature research.

Keywords

Speculation · Kin-making · Figuration · Stories that matter · Multispecies

Introduction to the Experiment

The intention of this chapter is to be experimental. In order to move beyond well-rehearsed habits of thinking, doing, and perceiving the self with the world, the chapter encourages playful imaginings and speculating with a toolkit of concepts, perceptions, and figurations. In the search for new tools that give rise to new stories, the focus are encounters with ideas, affects, and experiences which breathe life into the exhausted forms and habits of thinking and being with the world that we inhabit most of the time in our everyday life.

We tell a story of EnaSilva, or rather, we create the figuration of EnaSilva as a possible childhoodnature figuration. EnaSilva, as figuration, is more than the child and the hen that appear in the narrative. EnaSilva is an attempt to generate alternative imaginings as it aims to express aspects of the complex, “internally contradictory multifaceted subjects we have become” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 26). As a figuration, perhaps it is also less, and more, than what appears in the narrative that follows, in the sense that EnaSilva intends to undo some of the assumptions about child-animal relationships. Speculation is the method we use to rekindle imaginations about what may or may not happen in the encounters between hen and child, but we also make use of interpretation of what we think we notice and observe. This interplay of interpretation and speculation with a childhoodnature figuration creates spaces for us as writers to go beyond what we think we know, and we hope it does something similar for readers.

It seems that new times, and we argue that we find ourselves in dangerous new times where nothing can be taken for granted, need new ideas, new imaginings, and new figurations to cultivate spaces for diversity in a seemingly narrowing world (Bauman, 2015; Morton, 2010). Childhoodnature is a new imagining, and the idea of EnaSilva is an attempt to see what such an imagining can do for research. EnaSilva as a childhoodnature figuration seeks to steer clear of interpretation as representation of “what really happened,” of individualization, and of romanticization (Taylor, 2013). EnaSilva, like



Fig. 1 EnaSilva in the making

childhoodnature, is not a representation of animal and child play or of nature learning with animal-others. It is, perhaps, an attempt to bring into being a transformative possibility for becoming-other without becoming familiar. It is an attempt to keep distance from the known and the assumed in order to create space for further becoming and for inviting the unfamiliar into the conversation (Kristeva, 1991). EnaSilva is not so much an entity of sorts but a vibrant figuring of place, time, and life itself that remains open to ongoing imagination and speculation. Every encounter with this figuration is another figuring which then creates more possibilities for further becoming (Braidotti, 2011). EnaSilva is a figuration that, if successful, sprouts multiple others. Childhoodnature itself is such a figuration and EnaSilva is one of its sproutlings (Fig. 1).

To be upfront about experimentation: this is not the fruit of individual labor nor is it devoid of power relations. There are many threads that make this text, and so the text is a collective endeavor where some ideas take hold whereas others fly by. Threads of this contingent assemblage include places, things, other texts, animals, coffee and food, computers, people, air, talk, atmospheres, movements, and mobilities. This contingent assemblage is a map of power relations in itself. It left traces, such as this chapter. The assemblage contributed CO₂ emissions through the use of computing power. According to this blog, (<https://www.custommade.com/blog/carbon-footprint-of-internet/>), global Internet usage produces more CO₂ emissions than air travel. Writing this chapter in April 2017 coincides with a terrifying milestone in earth history when:

the Mauna Loa Observatory recorded its first-ever carbon dioxide reading in excess of 410 parts per million. Carbon dioxide hasn't reached that height in millions of years. It's a new atmosphere that humanity will have to contend with, one that's trapping more heat and causing the climate to change at a quickening rate. (Kahn, 2017, p. 1)

The point of paying attention to the assemblage is to heed Foucault's (1977, 1991, 1994) reminder: there is no innocence or purity. Every action causes something; and every human action is political because human action is always embedded in power relations. Crossing a historical carbon dioxide threshold at the time of writing this chapter belongs

now to the assemblage of this childhoodnature chapter. The other point is that childhoodnature research may have entered the age of speculation altogether as no one knows what crossing a line like the one crossed in April 2017 means for life on earth.

It might help to consider this chapter as a specific materialization of complex ecologies that overlap at times and in places with such force that our human presence and perception were called, temporarily, to attention (Haraway, 2016). The text is a capture of these fleeting moments of an emerging ecological sensibility that begins to perceive experiences across the human self, other embodied matter, and materialities. This is a horizontal experiencing of self with the world rather than a vertical one; the vertical experience of self is one where the human cognitive mind dictates what counts as individualized perception and experience, whereas horizontal perception is less focused on the individual cognitive mind as the fount of all knowledge-making (Bennett, 2010, p. 10). This text is a framed expression of an emerging vertical ecological sense-ability.

The notion of ecological sense-ability draws on Bennett's (2010) suggestion to change perception from a vertical to a horizontal perspective. Vertical perception, it seems, comes naturally to humans. To some degree it is an evolutionary outcome of walking upright, and historically it has intensified in postindustrial cultures which now give preference to the sense of seeing over all other senses (Rose, 2007). Perceiving the world through the eyes which then shapes social interactions is commonly understood as being at the core of social cognition (Itier & Batty, 2009). According to neuroscience, human and monkey brains, in contrast to other species, may be "hard wired" for a social gaze which enables selective responses to other faces and bodies, including following others' gaze (Emery, 2000). This hypothesis underscores the belief in human exceptionalism based on evolutionary biology which, following Darwin, "has become more and more essential to our ability to think, feel, and act" (Haraway, 2016, p. 62). Human exceptionalism is highly problematic, especially if it is tied up with a sense of entitlement and a reductionist understanding of Darwin (Grosz, 2011).

Moving away from an understanding of humans as somehow superior to other species is a wicked problem because humans have been so successful in marking their presence on earth through domination and decimation of nonhuman others (Kolbert, 2014; Latour, 2014; Yusoff, 2013). This makes Bennett's (2010) suggestion for a change in perspective from vertical to horizontal truly revolutionary. It is almost unimaginable to forego interpretation of social interactions of all kinds based on seeing-as-perception. From a vertical and upright position, the human gaze is the direct entry to cognition in most encounters in everyday life. What happens if the mighty human brain is no longer the seat of meaning-making? What happens if human perception of the other and meaning-making of the encounter happens through the soles of the feet, the palms of the hand, and the knees in the dirt?

The Place, Time, and Life/Death Itself

The story begins with a description to generate a sense of place (Dovey, 2010; Duhn, 2012) for the EnaSilva figuration (Fig. 2). Place: a house under ongoing renovation in a semirural community in Victoria, Australia. The house has a fenced



Fig. 2 Horizontal ecological sense-ability in the making

backyard and is surrounded by trees and birds, by natureculture, including the wind, foxes, cars, chain saws, and other heavy farm machineries. Ena was a hatchling in a clutch of seven from a nearby farm. The entire clutch, all female, were bought by Silva's family who wanted to establish a small chicken run to support their daughter's sense of living with animals and to benefit from the hens' egg laying ability. They also liked chickens and wanted to live with them and see them thrive under their care. Despite best intentions, the hens have experienced violent deaths in their backyard chicken community, both through foxes who found their way into the chicken hutch and also through Tina, the rescue dog, who joined the family about 3 years ago. Tina was gentle with Silva but ferocious with chickens and bit two of them to death. At the time of writing, Tina has given up on her chicken killing, and the foxes are kept out of the backyard with improved fencing.

As adult observers who are also part of the childhoodnature storying, we are time travelers and place shifters. Memories of the encounters shape the story (Gloria was there at the time), while imaginings of the encounter then overlay the story (Iris was not there at the time but imagines the event, based on her own memories of other places and other child-animal encounters). The materialization of EnaSilva as a figuring/story/text/trace is an earth story of cantankerous human-animal kinship over time and place. Earth stories matter because of the asymmetry and the incommensurability of kin-making with other earth beings. Feminist speculative fabulation is political as Haraway (2016, p. 12) explains because "it matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories." Our story has many enfoldings for us, as writers, as readers, as thinkers, as doers, as sacs of flesh (Plumwood, 2008), as hosts to myriads of microbiological communities (Tsing, 2012), as organic/inorganic vibrant mattered assemblages (Bennett, 2010), and as tiny specs in an unimaginably vast cosmos (Tito & Reinfeld, 2007).



Fig. 3 EnaSilva in a “moment of encounter. . . affective encounter.” (Bear, 2011, p. 302)

The encounter in Fig. 3 seems to be close to what Bennett (2010, p. 122) calls “one matter-energy,” chicken and child, and child and chicken coming eye to eye horizontally as fellow lively creatures. Silva is young enough to not be “too human” in the sense that she does not seem to care about demonstrations of human exceptionalism and superior cognitive function. The hens probably consider themselves as advantaged in this encounter, as they know how to quickly flutter away if the situation requires it. Silva can only watch and learn. It takes her a long time to move, compared to the swift hens.

As we speculate on possible stories of these matter-energies, we begin to see and unsee how this affective encounter unfolds. It is important to the EnaSilva figuration to point out that this is not about a flattening of difference. The figuring that EnaSilva enables is a mapping of power relations as much as it is a mapping of strangeness and incommensurability. Chicken and child and child and chicken share the vitality of matter-energies and of being in the world right now. But their worlds are incomprehensible to each other and to any observer, as perception of “reality” differs across species. Yet there appear to be momentary affective encounters where tiny sparks or molecules or breaths are exchanged across matter-energies and where worlds are shared (Irigaray, 2008). EnaSilva are more than a child and a hen caught on camera (Rose, 2007). These fleeting exchanges between them, caught in the image as a frozen moment in time and place, generate excess that flows outward as generative impulses to imagine what else is possible to think, to feel, and to do. Speculation feeds on facts, too, as factual knowledge supports meaning-making as a political and ethical task.

Some facts are about being kin in shared worlds. EnaSilva are earth beings in this place, and they get to know one another over time (Latour, 2010). They even share nourishment as both like oats. Their bodies share physiological similarities, such as blood, inner organs, a face, and a physical and social need to be with others and to have kin close by. Their bodies have chemistry together as half of their genes are shared even though their bodies look very different (Potts, 2012). Yet one body can

be made killable (Haraway, 2016) to nourish the other. It is kinship and yet it is more dangerous for one to be close to the other. Time works differently on the two bodies. A year for Silva is a decade for Ena. Silva has a life expectancy of 90 years. Ena's life expectancy as a well-cared for hen is possibly 10 years. As a mature being, Ena is a much more experienced earthling in their early encounters than Silva. While Silva will experience aging, Ena does not age in a human sense (Potts, 2012).

Cutting Together-Apart

Kin is a wild category that all sorts of people do their best to domesticate. Making kin as oddkin rather than, or at least in addition to, godkin and genealogical and biogenetic family troubles important matters, like to whom one is actually responsible. Who lives and who dies, and how, in this kinship rather than that one? What shape is this kinship, where and whom do its lines connect and disconnect, and so what? What must be cut and what must be tied if multispecies flourishing on earth, including human and other-than-human beings in kinship, are to have a chance (Haraway, 2016, p. 2)?

Gloria's Narrative #1 EnaSilva shape their kinship and both multispecies flourish on earth, they do have a chance, they had a chance, they connected, and there were moments where the lines connected and disconnected. It is when we begin to see how the child-human – nonhuman – lines tie together, because for Silva, Ena might not be a chicken, Ena is kin and is a family, and what matters is that she learns to act responsibly. In acting responsibly, in Ena being domesticated, Silva's emerging eco-sensibility is shown by being on Ena and May's level. She is keeping a distance but seeking kinship, a shared gaze, and a response that ties them together. As Bennett (2010, p. 103) explains nonhuman bodies participate in "conjoint action." Nonhuman and human bodies are vibrant material that relates in affective events. As Silva leans to get closer to Ena and May, as Ena and May keep their distance, they respond, and they affect each other. These are "intelligent improvisations" (Bennett, 2010, p. 96), Ena and May make decisions in the vibrant matter that surrounds them and that make them. They are responding to unprecedented situations "in real time and without predetermined outcome, to each other and to the collective force of the shifting configurations" (Bennett, 2010, p. 97). In this event they are seeking closeness, seeking kinship, and making ties as they collectively respond to Silva calling them to come close to eat oats as once they came close to the window.

Making kin? Making it up? The intensities that create this text were so forceful that they cut through everyday habits of thinking and shifted attention to make details matter which may otherwise have gone unnoticed. For instance, both of us have had many previous encounters with children and animals, yet as we began to tell a story that would help us to create this text, the animal/child events that are familiar to us in principle started to become blurry to the extent that they lost their initial form. When we studied images and short video clips of child and hen, hen and child, it was no longer obvious what we thought we saw. Once perception began to

blur, new shapes emerged, and imaginations began to whisper possibilities that were not there before. Did the hen just encourage the child to come to closer when she turned her head? Or was that an illusion? Did the child's fingers mimic the hen's beak when the child tried to pick up oats from the ground? Was the hen teaching the child how to do this? Are the child's and the hen's body mimicking each other's posture? Was this a shared moment of emerging horizontal ecological sense-ability for hen/child/adult hand-on-video camera? And then the desire to explain "new insights" and to speculate to give them permanence and solidity arises. How does sharing worlds look when hen-child kinship awakens ecological sense-ability? How to balance porosity and impermanence *and* solid knowledge to create ethics and politics for shared worlds?

Facts: Who Is "a Chicken?" How Is a Chicken?

First of all, Ena did not see Silva as the Silva that humans see. Chickens' vision accentuates contrast and brightness, and they sense motion through their vision in much more detail than humans. Their color vision is also very different to human color perception as they have the ability to see ultraviolet light in addition to red, blue, and green. The extra spectrum means that chickens see everything completely differently to humans. Chickens, like other birds, can look at the sky and detect gradients of ultraviolet which assist orientation. This and other well-researched information about chickens can be found on a blog by a veterinarian who cares deeply for the welfare of chicken, both in industrialized poultry farming and in backyard farming. His blog ([mikethechickenvet, 2014](#)), is an example of what Haraway (2008) refers to as staying with the trouble of companion species living and dying. Going back to what the video and the images (see Fig. 2) seem to show: hen and child bodies are engaged in postures that appear as a delicate dance where movements are similar yet different for each partner. Yet this is an entirely human story. The world looks different for chickens.

Gloria's memory of the encounter: Silva wants to feed the "gallinas" (chickens) oats, she calls to them, "Gallinas come," and she almost cries at not having their attention this time. They are not very keen to come closer; her mother, Gloria, says maybe they are afraid. Silva persists and walks closer to feed them oats; she leans in for closeness. Maria and Ena feel at ease and they come closer for a couple of minutes.

More Cutting Together-Apart

What we saw in the photo (Fig. 2): *Ena was turning her head toward Silva, and she was coming closer.* Yet what Ena would have sensed and seen is so essentially different from what Silva would have seen and sensed that it becomes increasingly difficult to speculate on what exactly happened (Fig. 4). In addition to perceiving each other in very different ways, Ena's ability for facial recognition only becomes



Fig. 4 Cutting together-apart: speculating on how the shared world looks through Ena’s eyes. (See also Fig. 2)

possible at a close distance of about 20–30 cm. When Silva said, “Gallinas come!,” she was inviting the hens to get to know her face and to lock eyes in kinship across genealogical and biogenetic categories (Haraway, 2016). We know each other through our faces, and turning toward each other is one aspect of being hospitable with the other (Irigaray, 2008; Levinas, 2004). This is also true across species, even though humans have a hard time recognizing faces of other species. For many humans, faces are most recognizable if they look similar to what is most familiar. The less familiar, the more strange and challenging the other becomes (Kristeva, 1991). Critical race theory tells us as much (Sleeter, 2017). Chicken faces look all the same to humans. To chickens, all chook faces are distinctly different from each other.

Chickens know the faces of fellow birds, as chickens are able to memorize over 100 chicken faces even after months of separation. Chickens also recognize the faces of other non-chicken, including human faces. Chickens have turned away from people they dislike (Potts, 2012). When Ena turned her head toward Silva, she was most likely recognizing Silva’s face. She then moved closer which means that in this instance she sought being close to Silva, even though she was not keen initially (see Fig. 2, Gloria’s memory of the encounter). To make matters even more complicated, Ena has the, for humans, disorienting ability to use each eye independently, with a focus on different distances for each eye. This is important, should there be hawks or other birds of prey overhead. Speculating again, this might mean that Ena’s kinship making with Silva was much more complex than we thought. It is likely that Ena was less focused on locking eyes with Silva than we speculated as Ena was literally keeping one eye on the sky above.

Silva got to know Ena from her very first weeks on earth. When Silva was born, Ena was already an experienced hen, while Silva only just began to make sense of the world around her. Here is another little known fact about chickens. “Three day old chicks are capable of identifying a whole object when part of it is obscured – a feat not accomplished by human babies until four to five months of age” (Potts, 2012, p. 39). In case this matters to any kind of speculation of hen-child kinship, it is

intriguing to note that when Silva and Ena first met, Ena was way ahead of Silva in terms of cognitive abilities. Perhaps it matters, because chickens are stigmatized as particularly stupid, as lacking courage and in general as unworthy of attention as intelligent, capable fellow living beings. This of course makes it more palatable to keep chickens in abhorrent conditions and to treat them as nothing but dead meat, even while alive (Potts & Haraway, 2010). The stories we tell matter.

Most of the stories we continue to tell without questioning them, particularly stories of conquest and domination, are stories that create a specific capitalist-globalized human-centric world rather than shared worlds where differences are valued. Indigenous people know this, and many people from minorities also know it (Adamson, 2012; hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006; Sykes, 2008). These anthropocentric stories continue to perpetuate global material cultures of suffering. Chicken and humans have been tied together in an unholy alliance ever since a housewife in the US Midwest discovered the basics of industrial poultry farming in the 1950s (Potts, 2012). Chicken and human stories are a type of horror story that came into existence through a tide of postwar intensified industrialization. These stories are told as stories of affluence and general progress when in fact they are materializations of greed, cruelty, and suffering on a massive scale (Silbergeld, 2016). Only a few gain financially and millions upon millions of others pay with their lives. This includes humans who die of the consequences of pollution of soil, air, and water as a by-product of industrialized farming. It includes entire species that are wiped out by intensification of farming practices. It includes small holdings that cannot compete with mass produced meat, grain, and produce in general (Foote, Joy, & Death, 2015).

The story of EnaSilva perhaps also matters because “when it comes to friendships, chickens like humans, are all different” (Potts, 2012, p. 49). In a human-centric world, chickens’ individuality is dismissed as anthropomorphic at best and as misplaced attachment to a purely material resource at worst (Bear, 2011). Research tells us that animals are sentient beings who, just like humans, have personalities, communities, problems to solve, and things to celebrate. In short, they have their own lives. Animals, and plants for that matter, communicate, make decisions, and care for each other (Halberstam, 2010; Marder, 2013; Ogden, Hall, & Tanita, 2013; Pedersen, 2010; Power, 2008). Just like humans some do it better than others. Ena likes to be in close proximity with Blanquita and Maria. They tend to hang out together, and they look out for each other, sharing their world (Irigaray, 2004). Chickens have clear preferences and dislikes for fellow birds which make it all the more heartbreaking to consider the conditions of factory-farmed hens. But chickens’ ability to be kin with others, including humans, is best described by the story of Mr. Joy (Tomlinson, 2009), a rooster who over the course of his life cheered up people in nursing homes with his charismatic presence. Mr. Joy and his female human did highly effective educational work by demonstrating that chickens are intelligent, empathetic, and funny beings. Their work together changed the way in which people regarded chickens by undoing the story of chickens as nothing but buffalo wings or chicken nuggets (Potts, 2012).

Fig. 5 Kin-making: “I have a dad and a mum and a dog and four chickens”



Gloria's Narrative #2 Silva changed her body movements as she learned from Ena's wisdom, Ena's agency, and Ena's intentions and her negotiation of space. Is this what kin-making involves too? Potts (2012) explains how chickens are able to demonstrate forms of agency and self-determination. Extending the idea of agency, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explain how in a posthumanist perspective agency and intentionality are not only attributed to humans but to nonhumans, and as Barad (2007, p. 23) explains agency is a "complex network of human and non-human agents... specific sets of material conditions that exceeds traditional notion of the individual." Making kin, being family between multiple species, involves understanding a complex network of differences and EnaSilva's own display of agency. This can be seen in Silva's drawing of her family where her chickens are like relatives (Fig. 5).

Late Hen: Child Time

Gloria's Narrative #3 Ena for the past days comes to the window; Silva's father says, "Ena is going to die soon, I can feel it." Ena comes to the new living area (to say goodbye? We speculate – to search for food/sustenance/ease of pain?); the adults wonder when death will happen. Ena looks as if life is leaving her body. Ena is not in close proximity to her hen family; instead, she stays close to the window. Silva feels: "Ena looks sad." Ena and her sisters lived very different lives to Silva;

her four sisters Blanquita, Tomasa, Rosa, and Clara were eaten by the fox. May was a mother hen twice and now has six daughter hens. Early in the morning Silva's father tell Silva's mother – Ena has died, "I have put her in the drum" (for a latter burning of her body. What to do with a dead hen who is kin?). Silva is listening to the conversation.

Silva: "What happened to Ena?"

Silva and her mother sit in her bedroom as her mother says: "Daddy has told me just now that Ena died."

Silva cries, "I am going to miss her, I am sad, I don't want her to die."

Mother: "Ena came and said goodbye, we are sad too."

Silva cries and she doesn't ask about Ena's body. Ena's body is burned. Silva, weeks later, asks: "Ena, where is Ena." Mother says, "where do you think Ena is?" Silva says: "She is in the moon, in the stars." Mother: "Her body is back to earth, back to the moon and the stars." Ena's body is gone; Ena is remembered. Ena is remembered; her last sister May is the last living hen of all the six sisters. They are all remembered. Ena dies when Silva is 4 years old; Ena dies when she is 5 years old.

Speculation: What Does a Hen Know About Death? What Does a Child Know?

It is easy to criticize our use of language when we refer to Ena and her sisters. The idea of sisterhood is a human idea, based on genetic kinship which then releases a plethora of social and cultural associations, emotions, and meanings. Referring to Ena's sisters, for instance, generates echoes of Woody Allen's (1986) movie, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, or of memories of family events, books, or it may even generate a sense of melancholy for missing a sister in one's life. Would this be different for Ena? What happens when Ena's relationship to other chickens are described in human kinship terms? Common knowledge about chickens is that they have a hierarchical pecking order which can be brutal and even lead to the pecking to death of flock members. Again, it seems, this is more of a reflection of cultural bias against chickens than fact, or perhaps it is true for situations when chickens are stressed to their very bones, as happens in factory farming conditions. Potts (2012) argues that chicken have caring relationships with others, to the extent that in one example when a hen died the other hen stopped eating and died within a week of losing her companion. What do we really know about the lives and deaths of those others who share time and spaces with us? What worlds do we share?

This chapter does not dwell on the event of death that seemed to have put an end to EnaSilva as a figuration. Instead the death of Ena exists as another cutting together-apart of story and matter (Yusoff, 2012). EnaSilva lingers in Silva's ongoing becoming with the world. Is it possible to intensify EnaSilva's presence by creating a space for ongoing EnaSilva becoming in Silva's life? What happens when Silva experiences humans around her who continue to remember Ena as a lively being whose presence added joy, sorrow, care, community, and existential fear to this world? What stories become possible to tell and to live if EnaSilva is more than a fleeting multispecies'

encounter? What if EnaSilva is an ongoing lively figuration that forges a path for sharing worlds even though Ena and Silva's shared physical presence has ceased to exist? What becomes possible once EnaSilva has its own presence in the story? How to magnify the invitation to share worlds, to invite multispecies becoming, and to create ongoing conditions for flourishing? This chapter does not answer questions. It invites readers to consider possibilities and to imagine shared worlds with less suffering and more joy. What stories are worthy of telling and living?

The chapter is an experiment in writing and living. How to create a text that still breathes and keeps its own life force? Our experiment desires to produce a text that is porous and invites further storying, more speculation, and a spreading of lines or waves that may do, as well as undo, with a cutting-together-apart disposition to knowledge-making (Barad, 2014; Ellsworth, 2005; Ingold, 2016). Politically, we see this as a contribution to the ethics of flourishing (Cuomo, 1998) and to the Spinozean ethics of living a life in the pursuit of an expression of our innermost essence – this essence is the joyful affirmation of our freedom, our desire to persevere, to endure, and to become capable to express adequately what it is that we are doing to flourish by sharing the world (Braidotti, 2011; Irigaray, 2008). As Braidotti points out, it is no longer possible to reduce ethical life to bios as the human/nature, now molten, binary of Enlightenment philosophy and modernity's politics. What is required now on a planet where perceptions of time and space seem to spin and twist, noticeable to human senses as climate chaos – floods violently reshaping landscapes where there were no floods in human memory, unseasonable heat or cold or droughts that kill the last nomadic tribes, wild animals and plants who rely on seasonal change that is predictable to some extent? How do we protect biodiversity when time is running out? Latest research paints a dire picture of our futures, with mass extinction well under way and climate change already out of control (Kolbert, 2014). Unless we learn quickly and radically to share worlds and to create worlds together with humans, nonhumans, and more-than-humans in all their forms, there might be no world, shared or otherwise, to come. And yet there is great hope in taking up the challenge for new stories, new imaginings, and new thinking and doing. If not now, then when?

The world invited us to become and we, for once, were open to the invitation. The shared worlds that appear in human stories can go unnoticed, and this chapter attempted to pay attention to the ways in which other worlds become visible in kin-making, for moments in time. Authorship is the privilege of being able to attend to specific threads, waves, or lines and to care for the intersections that tell a particular story. An emphasis on narratives seems important to kin-making as stories hold the self and others in the world. Stories enable the knotting together of mind and body, self, and others and open up possibilities for new perceptions, new imaginings, and new alliances.

A Few Final Words

The attempt to think through kin-making as an experiment in horizontal encounters with difference has opened a space for us as thinkers and writers to push our own imagination and speculation. Another outcome is that our perception has changed. It

is getting more challenging to ignore the sense of horror when faced with images of battery-farmed hens, now that we know chickens a little more intimately. EnaSilva makes it impossible to not at least sometimes shift the deeply entrenched anthropocentric gaze and imagine how multispecies encounter might look/feel/be sensed from the other's way of being. The notion of kin-making across species is troublesome. There is the "danger" of anthropomorphism – but how convenient to ignore animals' individuality and their ability for expression, for perception, for learning, for being, and for becoming at a time when animals are exploited for profit at a never-before scale. One of the risks to take now surely is to have the courage to engage with "nature" on new terms and to experiment with kin-making as new forms of multispecies' alliances for sharing the world. As Haraway (2016, p. 4) reminds us, "we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all." There is more at stake than teaching children to be kind to animals. EnaSilva is not about kindness. We suspect that EnaSilva is fierce and curious and only beginning to feel her own power. Hot compost piles recomposite matter in a furnace of becoming. EnaSilva is only beginning to heat up, and we are curious to see what else is possible in this kind of naturechildhood thinking and doing.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Childhood Animalness: Relationality, Vulnerabilities, and Conviviality](#)
- ▶ [Greedy Bags of Childhoodnature Theories](#)
- ▶ [Posthuman Theory and Practice in Early Years Learning](#)
- ▶ [Re-turning Childhoodnature: A Diffractive Account of the Past Tracings of Childhoodnature as a Series of Theoretical Turns](#)
- ▶ [Unplanning Research with a Curious Practice Methodology: Emergence of Childrenforest in the Context of Finland](#)

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