

## Academia's Breath: Oxygenating Academia One Creative, Embodied Breath at a Time

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### ABSTRACT

Australia is one colonised country in the Global South trying to live differently with our 'morbid symptoms'. The global South's Academy has a neoliberal coating that hopefully can be perforated – even if slightly – with intentional and unintentional shifts in how we do academia that allow oxygen into scholarship with some different scholarly processes. The health of the planet, where we are inextricably linked to planetary health, calls for care within and between academic bodies – (non)human bodies, water bodies and bodies of knowledge. I have examined some old academic notes (blogposts) playfully to understand creative blogging as one hopeful way toward an academic sustenance. This entry listens like a record to select blogposts through the voices of feminist black scholars and First Nations informed expertise in the post qualitative, new material turn. By re-experiencing and expressing the sustaining nature of academia to date there have been some practical possibilities spotted for an academic to do academia differently. Entangled with the unceded lands and waters of Australia's First Nation people's – the Boonwurrung / Bunurong – a moment of everyday, academic emergence asks – an academia that plays out one creative, embodied, oxygenated breath at a time – how would you do that?

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## Preface

This entry into this *SOTL in the South* special issue on ‘Doing Academic Differently’ is written as an active encounter with doing academia differently. With creatively composed blogposts (or posts), which are diffractively written through the voices of black feminist and allied scholars, this creative piece engages flows of affect in everyday life, and watery and earthly worlds. Beyond the human – conscious of colonialism in Australia – it attempts to speak as and to the global South, to say: academia is being done differently already, pass it on.

This entry uses seven creatively composed blogposts<sup>1</sup>, and Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of reading it like a record (Deleuze and Parnet, 1986). Unedited, the posts themselves are published largely without ‘fixing’. Left unedited they remain in the process of forming, already enough (Rautio 2013), in a time and culture that imposes attention on processes that focus work towards certainty and better. This piece has a focus on work remaining with uncertainty and breath. The posts ‘in the process of playing out-ness’ preserves their prioritising the creative, as was what happened when they were made.

Each post is in play, and imperfect. Where a piece of writing is not explainable yet (like an abstract should be according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987)), the posts are met this way too. The previously created posts ‘play’ into academic prose at this writing time along with what arrives while listening to the voices of black, feminist and allied scholars. Where writing relationally can produce “a guidebook for our movement and our whole species” (Gumbs, 2020: 7), this piece is written producing potential guidance as some meanings meandering out (met more as maybe than certainty). This wordplay-provocation activated by feeling thinkers, the title, and the concept of breath asks: How are you doing academia differently?

Multiple blogposts and their meandering prose are exhibited as tracks (Track 1 – 6) followed by a response (Off-Track 1 – 6). Re-reading (or re-hearing) each Track in the present, the Off-track hears theorists within the context of ‘doing academia differently’. The emergent experimental prose that follow with some academic convention are comfortable going slightly off-track from traditional Academia. Each off-track response includes aspects of the past (the unedited poetic text italicised)

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<sup>1</sup> Blogposts are extracts from a private electronic blog and any errors are maintained preserved in the poetics of writing made with movement in an embodied, reflective moment (see Crinall, 2019).

and the present (edited, conventional, academic prose) as it intersects one or more of the concepts of 'doing' 'academia' or 'differently'.

### Seven tracks on 'doing – academia – differently' with blogged breath

#### Track 1.

##### **Rain on II**

23 November 2013.

I write the above in this moment.  
Each line is a pulse  
And a new line  
A new breath  
The lines are formed when I press 'return'  
They are their own punctuation  
I guess  
The words are bounced from me to the page  
From  
In  
Amongst  
The space between my body and mind  
They  
Body  
Mind  
Work together  
They seem to be in conversation  
One spills  
Rests to let the other spill  
Notices its rant returns to ask  
the body  
Where are you in this moment  
This is the slowed down version  
As the post grows  
The line is blurred  
Until the writing is a dancing particle of light  
If you like  
Shining  
So you can see  
Between  
In  
Me

*Off-track response 1: A new breath*

Our 7 and 10 year old child companions are on their sixth day of a cold  
 I have a unit to complete edits in two and half weeks  
 And its slabs of text I'll struggle to leave alone  
 Casual academic contract number 5  
 I'm so excited to facilitate a subject: Human societies and its environments: Curriculum and Pedagogy  
 and spent yesterday between tissue tending and towel drying  
 drawing together an assessment for the second year primary educators in training  
 The first thing I do on inheriting this role is playfully shuffle its title  
 Maybe I'd call it  
 "Pedagogies for humans  
 as societal environments:  
 A curriculum"?

For now I'll get to know it  
 and  
 breathe into it  
 with the theoretical frame I've inherited so far

A cough calls  
 "I'll be there in a sec!"  
 and place the computer down.

An academia that plays out as *A new breath*, one creative, embodied, oxygenated breath at a time – how would you do that? Australia is one colonised country in the global South trying to live differently with our 'morbid symptoms'. The global South's academy has a neoliberal coating that hopefully can be perforated – even if slightly – *So you can see*

*Between*

and intentional and unintentional shifts in how we do Academia are allowing oxygen into scholarship with some different scholarly processes. Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2020) has composed *Undrowned: Black feminist lessons from marine mammals* and it's here open on 'listen' (15). To attend an urgent query: "How can we listen across species, across extinction, across harm". Gumbs' poetic meditations breathe in and out a request to change our understandings of vision and visionary action that "throws something out there and seeing what comes back" (2020, 15). It conjures a sense of listening to ourselves and each other as though those voices and whose they are can matter less. Listening itself as a creative act is being asked for across cultures. For Gumbs, "listening is not only the normative ability to hear, it is a transformative and revolutionary resource that requires quieting down and tuning in" (2020: 15). Maybe a subject called:

"Pedagogies for humans  
 as societal environments:  
 A curriculum"?

Could start with quietly listening across?

In place of looking back up at the first track, I leave those words of mine there and quieten down. Words wash the page when Australian First Nations poet and academic Evelyn Araluen writes. In *Dropbear*, “poetics riff off other writings” (Araluen, 2021: 97). I’ve opened Araluen’s *Dropbear* (2021) at “decolonial poetics (avant gubba)”:

“when my body is mine I will tell them  
with belly&bones

do not touch this prefix  
or let your hands burn black  
with your unsettlement  
there are no metaphors here

when i own my tongue I will sing  
with throat&finger

gobackwhereyoucamefrom  
for i will be  
where i am for...”  
(Araluen, 2021, 97, author’s formatting)

I’d like to play with Araluen’s poetics written for a decolonising that sounds out people’s health as viscerally connected to their place where they ‘will be’ and ‘am for’ and it needs paying attention to their displacement past before moving forward. Global health, where we are inextricably linked to planetary health, calls for my attention locally, within and between bodies – (non)human bodies, water bodies and bodies of knowledge (see also Margaret Somerville in Crinall, 2019; Elizabeth Grosz in Somerville, 1999). Being with her voice on black bodies of (un)sustenance is unsettling, importantly so. How to breathe life there? Beyond listening, I don’t yet know.

*Track 2.*

**just keep going**

July 17, 2013, 1:07pm  
don’t change it just keep going... Margaret offered  
Here’s the pause  
I don’t want to upset the work  
that has accumulated so far  
It feels bulbous and  
separate to me now  
Sent out like a macrocystis gas float  
on the gently folding sea surface  
What comes next?

*Off-track response 2: The hearing of breathing*

I have just sent this first section to a scholarship companion and responsive friend. I've asked:

Will love your feels including discomfort and worry. I'm okay if you note it isn't landing well. With all the sickness here, it hasn't had a lot of time to breathe. I'm wanting to submit this piece conscious to listening loudly with it and take the chance to add something different from here to the issue on Doing Academia Differently – it's for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South Journal based in South Africa and a special issue on doing academia differently (Bozalek and Newfield). Mostly I wanted to sing these women's voices into spaces where people are listening. Main feedback is as you are already watching for – not appropriating, or becoming expert at demonstrating a practice of listening out loud (and quietly) – feel shifts from sustenance as self-care to community care? visceral embodied mothering scholarship life out loud too? Raw, uninterpreted/able, a little more seen. These things push me forward to submit something knowing that something will be more than nothing.

Sarah

What's next? As a first generation, Anglo-Indian woman whose family came later to Australia, and mother, I've been taking some time to work out how to speak without speaking over scholars who are First Australian and First Nations voices we all need to hear more. With a commitment to merging motherhood and the academy without guilt, fear, shame and resentment, I'm seeking a playful academia at present that creates something new and different in a space of sustenance that is underpinned with ethics and attention to those not given so much voice, so much power, so easily. Emerging from with/in motherhood on the unceded lands of the Boonwurrung/Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation it matters who I listen in to. For Deleuze, in *Dialogues*, "abstracts find the conditions under which something new is produced, a creativeness" (Deleuze, 1986, in Deleuze and Parnet, 1986: vii). I wonder passed this to ask myself: Do we need a new kind of academic creativeness with hearing as speaking?

New material academia is becoming more familiar with rough, messy processes of theorising (e.g. Barad, 2007). Feeling out a kind of education we can all breathe in and out with for planetary health, where we are the planet (see Rautio, 2013) – what does that look like? Karen Barad's agential realism is becoming well known and supportive of scholars drawn to staying with complexities, and remaining in indeterminacy as academic movement (Barad, 2007; 2010). Agential realism asserts matter – what we think with and live with – can be simultaneously contrary to itself, and points answers back to specificity where there is more 'bothness'. More than one way. Listening as speaking – Track 2 above – reminds me to *focus on the oppression* (Kotsanas, in conversation) in place of looking back too much to what Academia hasn't done yet. With specificity, we could never

know that is true. *Don't change it, just keep going* (Somerville, in conversation) – what will that look like, sound like, what will it do? And what will you all make of an academic piece that retains permission to be 'abstract', singing out creative pieces with scholars I can hear?

Somerville and Perkins (2010), in *Singing the Coast*:

explore the Aboriginal Gumbaynggirr people's experience in maintaining the stories and songs of their New South Wales homeland. By taking up the metaphor of singing to capture a quality of voice, this remarkable record examines the particular qualities inherent in the coastal group's songs and considers their universal sense of knowledge, understanding, and openness. This revelatory compilation is an indispensable read for those interested in understanding more about Aboriginal culture and engaging with the landscape (Perkins and Somerville, 2010: n.p.).

As I read this, keeping on going, focusing on oppressions, I hear the words in a new arrangement: *compilations can be indispensable reads for those engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture for more understanding about the landscape*. Chelsea Watego (2021) has written *Another Day in the Colony* for 'blakfullas' not for me. Cass, my responsive friend, scholarship companion and I swap notes on how to listen and hear her words – whether to look away and avoid that colonial urge to accumulate and acquire, to feel better about doing more, and instead remain uncomfortable and accountable. Watego is reminding her community of First Australians and First Nations people globally who are listening – there is a war, seemingly unending and significantly, the everydayness of our existence as people, is to be on our terms.

I've received an email: Please make these required amendments: Replace 'Indigenous identity' with 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures'.

Who's asking, I don't know. A note to do ask asked, and to find out more.

In the pillows of books about me, Chelsea Watego's *Another Day in the Colony* (2021) asks me to check – is my pile of books “a pristine artefact on display” (11)? One of “those quaint, exotic, ancient representations of a supposed former self that also reside on coloniser bookshelves in lieu of the Aboriginal skull that once resided there” (11)?

*Track 3.*

**gasfloat**

June 23, 2014, 9:30am

The small, kelp-gasfloat-sized embryo in my womb is now gone

I have slept all day

A frond strawn on sand

weary from the physical business  
 letting go of a developing life  
 I am thirsty for the nest  
 warmth of a bed  
 rest that happens there  
 This shift from life to notlife  
 death is has been so swift  
 I notice  
 the process of bodyplaceblogging  
 is as swift as it is  
 slow  
 threads  
 sentences  
 body slipping phrases out at the pace of the mind  
 I come to the end of a blog-reading  
 I notice the threads becoming stacks of shorter sentences  
 singular words...

*Off-track response 3: Breath lost*

Re-reading Track 3 takes my breath away. Did I share that in an academic publication for colleagues and those unknown to me to read? One reader, a father of a child's friend sent me pages of words activated by reading *Sustaining Childhood Natures* (Crinall, 2019) (Ben, in correspondence). Ben asked among other things – 'did you mind sharing things so personal?' I remember pausing at this. I hadn't felt it to be mine once it fell into the blog template. Rupi Kaur, artist, poet and performer (2020: 60), wrote on "after feeling disconnected for so long",

"mind and body  
 coming back together – Home Body" (n.p.)  
 "why does everything  
 become less beautiful  
 once it belongs to us" (Kaur, 2020: 60)

No longer belonging to me, this blogpost and I just pause and float a little, *a macrocystis gasfloat* on a tide of now. There's a little more at its tail / tale end.

...It occurs to me  
 a slowing down to the pace of the breath  
 from the pace of the brain  
 it is this conversation itself  
 moving between the pace of the mind to the pace of the body  
 sustenance is activated?  
 here  
 we can hear the body  
 spend time  
 the  
 body



xknows<sup>2</sup>

Jane Bennett (2020) writes about words as poetic art or ‘wordworks’ that can know (and remain with) uncertainty more comfortably than philosophy. In these precarious times, scholars, allied and black, are writing avidly amongst hefty academic workloads to sing us into healthier systems and out of systems altogether (e.g. Graham, 2014; Martin and Mirraboopa, 2003). *So we can hear the body*. Iorio, Hamm and Krechevsky (2021) composed an example of the purges of scholarship being breathed out lately calling for everydayness to enter scholarship – little and big – so children, as citizens of now (their term), can live in amongst the preparation for a future they / we don’t know with certainty will be (Watego, 2021). Who *xknows*, might this make room for *spending time with the body*?

Track 4<sup>3</sup>.

*An ethico-onto-epistemology of water*  
 Thursday April 14, 2016, 5:15pm  
 I step down into heathland now  
 Walking home  
 Vivi searches for nipple  
 And wipes a wool strand from her nose  
 Two birds flit at me  
 fringe falls like a wind sock on body  
 I have just read about Margaret spinning wool sun sits on eyelid  
 golden dress  
 I smoke breath  
 Puff  
 draw one after the other  
 My addiction...

*Off-track response 4: Practicing breathing toward justice for...*

bell hooks’ ‘all about love’ (2001) states: “It is no accident that when we first learn about justice and fair play as children it is usually in a context where the issue is one of telling the truth” (2001: 33). Her preoccupation is love - to return to that love birth knows. “When I was a child, it was clear to me that life was not worth living if we did not know love” (2001: i). It occurs to me that an ontology of

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<sup>2</sup> The formatting of these creative blogposts as ‘centred’ is deliberate act of putting the moving way of examining theory through everyday encounters on the move in unfixed ways first. Blogposts are unedited with typos left. Sometimes I feel compelled to change a thing and let that happen too.

<sup>3</sup> Some blogposts have photographic elements omitted for publication reasons. Contact author for multimodal versions of each blogpost.

water, as in knowing with water and ethically emerging in relation, holds life-making love close? If so, no wonder its, *puff! Addictive*.

I would like to acknowledge the first custodians and significant persons of this rare wet healthland where I write from right now, and where I live and work. On Boonwurrung Country, this unceded space on the south pacific ocean's edge is home to my body but not with the sovereignty the Kulin Nations' Yallock bulluk people deserve. The onto-epistemology of water is one that inextricably originates and emerges with waters, lands and peoples of the First Nation of Boonwurrung Bunurong peoples on Yallock Bulluk Country here by southern Australia's Kulin Nation coast. The creativeness of the blog knew this all along, but naming it is essential and until now, I have not. Audre Lorde (2019) wrote a poem about nature as strange displacement, and that those of us that have swanned in and made a home here is heavy on chest, and I sit with it. Not justify or excuse – name and notice.

### Outside

In the center of a harsh and spectrumed city  
All things natural are strange.

I grew up in a genuine confusion  
Between grass and weeds and flowers  
And what colored meant  
Except for clothes you couldn't bleach  
And nobody called me nigger  
Until I was thirteen.  
(Lorde, 2019: 63).

A floating pause returns while I write this. *not looking away*. Is Lorde's poem, heart-breaking, and a conversation out loud with her heart so it doesn't break? I can't know. I'm listening.

Miriam Ungunmerr (in Ungunmerr and Isaacs 1999, in Paton and Brearley, 2009) –

We are like the tree standing in the middle of a bushfire sweeping through the timber. The leaves are scorched and the tough back is scarred and burnt, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree we have endured the flames and we still have the power to be re-born. Our people are used to the struggle and the long waiting. We still wait for the white people to understand us better. We ourselves have spent many years learning about the white man's ways: we have learned to speak the white man's language, we have listened to what he had to say. This learning and listening should go both ways." (Ungunmerr, 1999, in Paton and Brearley, 2009, n.p.)

Is this emerging Academia that works differently with words dancing differently like Araluen, Gumbs, inspiring responses that call us to feel more, listen more? How is focused breath as a response?

The Faculty of Education Unit notes I have inherited (referred to above) recognise the essential need for ‘heart’ in social science and history, geography and civics and citizenship studies. Maybe hooks knows *what’s next*? On page 12, hooks is aware of a lack of public policy and conversation about ‘the practice of love in our culture and in our lives’ (hooks, 2001: 12). Ontologies that want to make room for love, they are not new. I’m thinking back to reading *Body/Landscape Journals* by Margaret Somerville (1999) and the ‘ode to love’ in the back pages. They are the closest thing to a conclusion in her book written with the philosophy of Elizabeth Grosz, asserting the body’s right to know places with wondering, what happens then? An emerging body of philosophy from women who are accomplices to Aboriginal voices being sung, as Somerville is, are staying in this messy questioning, not comfortable concluding, and also, inviting love. Re-tuning in to Track 3 – *gasfloat* – I consider that it doesn’t too much anymore, because loss and grief are essential songs to be sung between women. This is a post of love? Not only self-love, but community love for all of us who lose and have lost? I pass this on to the Academia that needs to hear it, from Kornfield via hooks (2001):

it is possible to speak with our heart directly. Most ancient cultures know this. We can actually converse with our heart as if it were a good friend. In modern life we have become so busy with our daily affairs and thoughts that we have lost essential art of taking time to converse with each other (Jack Kornfield in bell hooks, 2001: xiii).

In this light, the creative blogposts’ are abstract poetic partners, and do not need to be read as explanations.

...What is this pantomime called he asks me?  
An ontology of water?  
Margaret and I spoke of the ethico-onto-epistemology  
The political nature of this posthuman work  
Toward a justice for...

What are they then? A colleague once told me she believed there was no data. Dissolving data leaves intentions to love. The trickle of words at the end of this track are pooling at a non-verbal pathway of dots (Crinall and Vladimirova, 2020), *toward a justice for...*

There are myriad invitations for others to converse between these pages and my window-lit body tap-tapping right now. My responsive friend and scholarship companion messenger’ed – *send later iterations?* – this highlights an Academia that is always on the move, quietly listening and conversing, meandering what-ifs and what’s next? The movement into water above takes me to open black feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2020), who writes poetically as an academic in *Undrowned*, relationally in the posthuman mode with cetaceans of the sea and rivers: Are we still

breathing? In terms of whether Academia in the post qualitative turn still has room for data, love and breaths, we'd better make room for all?

*Track 5.*

Thank you to those of you loving and evolving vulnerably  
Your newness is an example, who expect me to be who I need to become.  
Thank you for ignoring the lies I tell about myself. (Gumbs, 2020: 23)

*Off-track response 5: This breath is not composed by me*

This track is not composed by me.

Summerville, Campbell, Flantroy, Prowell and Shelton (2021) collaborated to creatively compose a set of publications into an academia that was short of Black women's voices:

Qualitative research consistently centers Eurocentrism through courses' integrations of ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives. This literal whitewashing was a source of great frustration and confusion for the authors, four Black women, who found their identities omitted and disregarded in qualitative inquiry. Using Collins' outsider-within concept and collective narratives to center their experiences, the authors seek through their writing to actively repurpose and re-engage with qualitative scholarship that generally seeks to exclude Black women. (Summerville et. al. 2021)

When I began my PhD, I was asked early, *Where are you in this?* It was an everyday affair, so said the blog creating with other materials as the work moved along. It was a time of switching from competition to collaboration and an early beginning to commit to practice that was not excluding.

*Lawson Street life*

Bodyplaceblogpost, October 20, 2016

I have looked back over my shoulder from my spot at the kitchen table again. It is dark now

Hail pounds on the window

I cannot see it

But I know what is there

It is Lawons street

Her epidermic (skin layered) swales line each side of the

Visceral gravel road

Itself a giant replica of a long intestinal tract to me

The rigid structures

Shading water

Oxygenating surrounding air

These are the swamp paperbarks

Arching up to the sky

Like Edith's ribs as she reaches to draw branches down  
 Hi, I am a tree  
 Like her ribs, their trunks support oxygenation  
 Holding the finger-nail leaves that send life our way  
 And we  
 We exhale to the sund of the shriekethrush  
 While walking Lawson street to the sea  
 We send life back

Emerging scholarship is looking back into the relational, foregrounding relationships, already always so strongly central to Australia's First Nations and their various cultural perspectives (Graham, Martin and Mirraboopa 2003, Hamm and Boucher, 2017; Hamm, 2019). The track above brings the *sund of the shriekethrush* and the sound of others. This typo is partially sun, and partially sound. The warmth listening brings, like *trunks support oxygenation*, how do we send life back?

Gumbs (2020) asks, what does it mean to function as a group in a changing environment? I see collaboration and with *I am a tree*, I also hear "what does it mean to function as a changing environment?" She adds, "how can we organize ourselves to combat the imbedded isolation of late capitalism?" I see cells in rows exchanging oxygen and more, and I play with her words with my eyes, and hear: *how can we oxygenize ourselves to combat 'I'?*

I still don't know *the* answers, and sense asking the questions is one important way post-qualitative scholars can keep dangerous certainty at bay. Gumbs, like Track 8's *I am a tree*, thinks with other life on how we can sustain each other's natures? Gumbs calls for the "dolphin-informed replacement of the patriarchal family with "schools" of unlearning (Gumbs, 2020: 51) and so I offer into this edition the singing of a practice of undoing by returning to breaths between whatever it is that is taking them now that I am noticing. If bodyplaceblogposts, and their formation of 50% of my doctorate and my urge to use more is anything definable, it might be that they are places where love can breathe, and that the paper, or the white space (or black space on my phone), is potentially a skin we can write onto with breaths and gifts for academic colleagues and scholarship companions, so we can breathe, and listen and do better together?

In the Ngungikurungkurr language, deep listening is called Dadirri (Ungunmerr-Bauman, 2017), and in Yorta Yorta, it is Gulpa Ngawal (Hamm, 2008, in Paton and Brearley, 2009). In Boonwurrung it is *Yhanaghal gnarnga dha* and this word emphasises it is "very important when the Elders are passing on knowledge to children. If you don't listen you miss part of the story and it won't be repeated" (Stewart-Muir, 2022, n.p.). Tuning in and listening here focuses me on how important, the work

words do. Bennett's (2020) 'wordworks' bring them closer to art than rational, explanatory knowledge for acquiring that they are not. As an academic, and colonial settler of the colonial settler era (Watego, 2021), hearing Summerville et al. (2021) speak to qualitative research, and Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt (2020), I'm reminded there are gaps in allied philosophies of the new materialisms (Rosiek Snyder & Pratt, 2020) that are not listening enough to First Nations scholars or communities for who the crisis to come is a white person's worry, when the crisis was here long ago (Whyte, 2018). I propose, black feminist scholars of the poetic kind are already birthing part of a new academe. I unwrap and unravel my old habits and listen to them for climatic health and well-being for planet.

*Unwrapping, unravelling*

June 1, 2013, 11:18am

As I read through the posts

Backwards

I re-experience the production of this book in a distilled form

I've never been good at remembering film storylines and can often rewatch and

Experience surprise and wonder

Rereading the artinwateryplaces blog is a little like this.

I stretch through each post

Reaching for the next

Just one more

Just one more

Hold on to breath and bodily fluids

To follow the thread back

Various stories

Laced so neatly through the journal entries.

I react to certain posts with interest

More intrigue

Guts pull forward eyes squint

May even read twice

Look at it twice

So pretty

For hooks, "At the moment of my birth, I was looked upon with loving kindness, cherished and made to feel wanted on this earth and in my home. To this day, I cannot remember when that feeling of being loved left me" (2001, ix). Her text is drawn back over everyday life looking for love and where it originates and lives. *Looking backward*. At first, I resist the looking backward as a where to go next. The what's next and just keep going of above have been a swift pull. But if I do go backward, I hear hooks again on birth, and what birth does. Black women writing scholarship in prose and poetics with hearts and for hearts, with the planet and for the planet, are they re-birthing academe? Watego (2021) rejects defeat and even hope, neither sound helpful in an 'unrelenting violent' war

on your body. Being with the vulnerability sharing birth and death in academia might bring, I'm compelled to share the post on one child's birth.

*Track 7.*

*Day dot*

April 16, 2016

I am sitting quietly in a still morning while baby sleeps and family potters

I am delving back into vivid memories Vivi(d)

Diving into Vivi-birth like a mermaid in a rockpool

feel that smooth water caress my face to think of all the times Edith and I have flicked our heads and tails up into still pooled water

breathe enter birth space

Bladder cramps in night

I move from sea of family to sleep in

Edie's bed

Give up on sleep and get up

Edie draws a baby being born over breakfast

The birthing place is so far from home

Let's do a practice run just in case

My face is smiling round apple cheeks and I pile into car I enter my watery meditation I am water it washes through me midwife

Anne says go for a walk come back later

No!

I turn and parca and clear

This may not look like labor but it is. I say

Surge

Surge

Dive

Surge dive I am a cormorant diving into the soundless sea with each surge I disappear from the surface and reemerge pleased with my catch I know, there is now no time to look for spaces mag in newsagent

Let's go

Leave bags, that's right, don't exasperate the busy staff who think I have so long to go I stop told by my body with closed eyes

I breathe deeply and watch the waves crash over me again

Water flows back through and over my head

Out and down

This is my way of moving through

Baby is coming I cuddle belly rub

Given a small space of our own I listen to the waves I hear a woman next door we prepare for birth together women united by sound shrouded by cloths two different pools

She is with her family I can hear them talking 5 cnn2pget a room

Shower now

Water rolls down and over and I am in a wave that is relentless

It pushes me down

Heavy on my whole body

Arm wraps belly

And then a stillness slackly guides me to the western port blanket laying on the floor

You may do what you need I have done my work in the watery sea and I am content  
 And away wegthe test  
 No!  
 the intervening is like the glisten of the sunlight on sea surface  
 Swim up here for breath!  
 It tells me I want to wash the baby out wash the baby out  
 I push looking down at the earth raised like a mountain, a bridge an internal firework a display  
 of colour and explosive is the only work now water is dissipating evapourating  
 washhhhh I see only through the sensations of my body a gush!  
 And slip, slink, slide, I raise my hand and cradle  
 A head!  
 A small, curved, warm  
 head  
 To quietly cup your head is my job  
 No one is here  
 It is my job  
 I am your mother  
 I breathe once more from with for everything I have  
 The top of my head washes breath down over my body and out down below  
 Dadaloop  
 A lifeful dark shape  
 Look Down!  
 I am told  
 There she is a little life  
 Tiny body  
 I take a breath and look to vege patch sprouting all sorts of green almost ready fruits  
 A pumpkin and a passionfruit hang and I cannot wait to eat them  
 Here she is  
 Vivi  
 Life  
 Slipped from my body like a fish in water  
 Onto the floor  
 Look down they tell me  
 A rocking pool of beauty  
 A body a baby  
 Lipbldy na dbaby  
 there are four flies sucking matter from the screen my skin the couch and air my eyes are  
 tired now with all this screen work and looking inside  
 breathe and head lays back to sound of clucking honeyeater time to feed my baby

*Off-track response 7: breathing, its my job*

This *unassisted* birth but for the breath is heard by me while our other child sits behind me in the  
 sun on a step, shaping *warm*, backyard retrieved clay from the Kulin soil into curved womb-like bay  
 shaped pots. New ways of being the earth in the hands of childrensoil as is childhood's nature  
 (Crinall, 2019)? I listen to this post against current musings and hear *there's nobody here/ I'm your  
 mother/ its my job*.



I'd like to relieve that burden and offer that the sounds of someone listening are the first moment I know I'm not alone as a mother academic emerging, attempting playful doings differently. Open beside me now is a chapter called 'breathing' room from the recent scholarship of feminists remembering to take breath seriously in a profession that is prone to shallow, paused breath over typing keys that ask, please wait a second while I finish this sentence...

Bosanquet, Cahir, Crimmins, Free, Luzia, Mantai and Werner (2020) tell stories about living with and letting go of academia and motherhood" (3). They are "breathing in theory" including reading the theoretical works of Luce Irigaray who is here with me via *The Way of Love* (2002). Bosanquet et al. (2020) held their ear to Irigaray who was saying:

to cultivate the divine in herself, the woman, in my opinion, has to attend to her own breathing, her own breath, even more than love" (Irigaray, 2004: 165, in Bosanquet et al., 2020: 5).

As an emerging academic doing academia differently, I'm trying some things out, including breathing. Breathing while listening. In the tall book tower now I see the 'un' smiling (*u*) and frowning (*n*) in Grosz's *Becoming undone* (2011) and Gumbs' *undrowned*. I've left hooks (2001) open on a page where she too speaks of feeling to be drowning in knowing that:

we can never go back. I know that now. we can go forward. We can find the love our hearts long for, but not until we let go of the grief about the love we lost long ago, when we had no voice (hooks, 2001, x).

On *undoing* via early post-qualitative or process philosophy and its move away from the dangerous certainties that could not hear creative de-colonising calls, St. Pierre says:

Looking back now, I know I read Deleuze so early in my doctorate program that the ontology of humanist qualitative methodology could never make sense. For me and others like me, that methodology was ruined from the start, though we didn't quite know it at the time (St Pierre, 2021, 3).

No longer fixating on academic knowing, listening back to Gumbs – "it is your breathing that we need" (Gumbs, 2020, 27).

An aspect of academia that focuses on breathing might also be what we need? (Re)encountering these highly personal aspects has been uncomfortable for the reviewing academics and uncomfortable for me. These unhidden moments of my everyday life first expelled into a doctoral dissertation and a published monograph, are expanding further here – and maybe it's a kind of lungs over love – a possible attempt to *look inside / and breathe* (above in Track 7 – *day dot*)? Jane Bennett (2021) engages Walt Whitman's poetry as "an array of words able to induce a stutter or lag,

a delay before a vibratory encounter becomes translated into a bite-sized nugget of human experience” (Bennett, 2021, x). Breathing is vibratory encounter between body and place. And this kind of wordworking might be understood as a kind of poetry of body and place. My inclination or requirement that I write with poetic arrays of words outside of the rules of linearity and causation are understood with the above scholars and thinkers to be more examples and partners in the *process* of making something come alive, and that requires a breath in and a breath out? A look in and sharing it outward.

On the process nature of these bodyplaceblogposts, Bennett is moved by Ferguson’s kind of ‘process’ when linking process philosophy to poetry. A process which is not the same as sequence but a ‘fluency of becoming’ requires features that move it through fixed congealings. A vulnerable wordwork then must be shared outward in the process of becoming just like a breath, for surviving (Gumbs, 2020)?

For Gumbs, in *Undrowned*, “navigating contexts that seem impossible for us to breathe in” (Gumbs, 2020, 21), and adapting our relationships to them by breathing (as bodyplacewordworking?) for survival is a must:

BREATH IS A PRACTICE OF presence. One of the physical characteristics that unites us with marine mammals is that they process air in a way similar to us. Though they spend most or all of their time in water, they do not have gills. We, too, on land are often navigating contexts that seem impossible for us to breathe in, and yet we must. The adaptations that marine mammals have made in relationship to breathing are some of the most relevant for us to observe, not only in relationship to our survival in an atmosphere we have polluted on a planet where we are causing the ocean to rise, but also in relationship to our intentional living, our mindful relation to each other (Gumbs, 2020, 21).

If this academic poetic writing has been a practice of presence and a kind of writing dispersing breath, I see I might have co-created a place for love to come later between bodies of knowledge and bodies of water now breathing in and with the wordworks dispersed between the academic prose. This could be one fluent way of becoming the process philosophies can draw on that hopes to aerate academia for survival in the process?

I don’t know how a reader will receive this. I decided breathing this piece out as the aerating, fluent experience of still surviving academia it is writing about – as the something different I’ve become accustomed to writing with into this special issue on ‘doing academia differently’ – I must do it.

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Thank you, my children, for okaying your presence in these published reflections still. Your father and I considered the ethics of inviting your presence here and decided your absence from academic narratives was just as risky.

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The guiding, fierce academic and motherly companionship of Cassandra Kotsanas is here via the exchanges of our happily messy co-workings-out and conversations. Thanks for reading this first, Cass.

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