Article:

Magic(al)ing in a Time of COVID-19:

Becoming Literacies and New Inquiry Practices

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Abstract

Magic is an unlikely topic for an article on reimagined methods in the time of COVID-19, yet, it is what we have spent a year talking, thinking, and writing about. Over a year, we embarked on a reading/thinking inquiry about magic and literacy and their combined strength in locating literacies as embodied, relational, and sensory. Magic has the potential to frame literacy moments as socio-material instances filled with affective flows and intensities. The concept of magic(al)ing fosters a space to not only rethink literacy but also to explore humans in relation to literacy. Defining magic as sparks of life that are ever-present and come to the surface when epistemologies and ontologies meet, in this paper, we ask, how does magic materialize during a global pandemic? Kuby returns to an orange-paper-frog-puppet (see Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2016), a magic(al)ing moment that she often comes back to when thinking of the be(com)ing of literacies, especially in the uncertain times we find ourselves in now. Rowsell returns to a flowery artifact by a little girl who took part in a makerspace study in April 2019, speculating on how the same research could even be conducted during lockdown. We also think-with new, unexpected data produced during COVID-19. As we engage again with these magic(al)ing moments, we explore the guest editors' question: What methodological approaches are possible, and which kinds of research collaborations are appropriate? As researchers who focus on matter and people across contexts, COVID-19 confounds us and in writing this paper, we speculate on new researcher futures.

Ideas are a disembodied, energetic life-form

(Elizabeth Gilbert, *Big Magic*, 2015, pp. 34).

I (Candace) remember researching in Tara Gutshall Rucker's kindergarten classroom, in a school district about 2-hours away from my home, on Wednesday, March 11, 2020. As a department chair, I am a member of my College's leadership team and on this day a quick meeting was called by the Dean. This felt different – an urgency, a quickly called meeting – this was not typical. I wasn't able to attend due to my schedule in the classroom, but I remember touching base on my drive home with the associate chair from my department who informed me that campus leaders cancelled all classes on that Thursday and Friday in order to give instructors time to move their courses online due to COVID-19. Our semester would finish completely online. This was unprecedented. As a parent, I was also following communications from the school district, as my daughter was in 1st grade. Trying to figure out what would happen for her learning, for our health and safety (our family and more broadly, globally speaking), and the university. There was so much uncertainty, stress, unknowns, anxiety about what was happening and all that we didn't know and/or experienced, yet. Realities and relationships were coming into being and it felt quick and demanded lots of flexibility.

I (Jennifer) remember when lockdown started during the week of March 19th, 2020 in the UK. I finished up my workday at the university and made my way to Temple Meads train station in Bristol. There was virtually no one in the School of Education and very few people in the train station. Heading into London, the train was empty and anyone on the train gave you furtive, nervous stares and avoided eye contact. Eerie, apocalyptic, and uneasy is how I remember it. I

remember a nervousness in my body and I was anxious to get back to my family and shelter. Reflecting on it, it was not magical at all, but it *was* otherworldly and not a sensation that I had felt before. It started me on a journey thinking about unfamiliar terrains and darker forces. Magic became a bit more real and within reach.

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Magic is an unlikely topic for an article on reimagined research methods and methodological imperatives in the time of COVID-19, yet, it is what we have spent a year talking, thinking, and writing about. The concept of magic(al)ing fosters a space to not only rethink literacy but also humans in relation to literacy. Defining magic as sparks of life that land on your shoulder like fireflies or embers, guided us in connection with our literacy research. There are moments during fieldwork, analysis and writing when epistemologies and ontologies meet and, in this article, we draw on experiences during COVID-19 in relation to our research, and ask, how does magic materialize, specifically, during a global pandemic?

We prefaced the article with our first impressions of the pandemic lockdown and of course, everyone has their own story. What emerges from these tapestried coronavirus stories is an overall sense of the extraordinary and the apocalyptic. The isolation and seclusion felt in home spaces. The heart-sinking sense of doom watching or reading the news. For some, it was peaceful to be at home with family and not commuting or traveling, but for others, who actually got the virus, it was scary and for those who struggled financially and lost jobs, and/or parents trying to balance work and home/virtual-schooling, it became anxiety-ridden and stressful. There has been

something unrecognizable about this period of history, some connect it to when wars started, this challenges our sense of space, time, bodies, and senses. Though older generations say it is no where near the feelings and fears experienced during war. Yet, with all of this foreignness and unfamiliarity comes questions yes, but also possibilities and openings.

So it is that we have taken on the notion of magic(al)ing to guide our research since March 2020. Magic(al)ing involves the things that we know and things that we do not know. Magic(al)ing invites relations that exist in obvious and mysterious ways. Magic(al)ing signals new forms of thinking and being across spaces and places. Magic bypasses the known and taken for granted, stretching into the unchartered. Magic resists social conventions because it allows for the extraordinary. Magic(al)ing centres on affective bonds and sensory connections that carry with them vitality (Boldt, 2020) and that affirm the material world in microscopic, maybe even cosmic ways. Magic opens. Magic complicates. Magic extends and expands. Engaging magic as an analytic puts into practice the idea that interventionist methodologies that are mystical, unearthly and risky are required in research when such a radical sudden change happens (see Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2020, for discussion on interventions). In light of COVID-19, researchers need plans for now, and, for alternative methodological futures. Our thinking is inspired by developments in the evolving field of futures research (Priyadharshini, 2020; 2021) that prioritises the methodological and ethical challenge of how research should not just (attempt to) mirror the present, but also to elicit new hopes for the future.

As we engage with magic(al)ing, we call upon the guest editors' question: What methodological approaches are possible, and which kinds of research collaborations are appropriate? In this

article, we provoke researchers to consider during *and* after COVID-19 what counts as research and data production? The reality is that producing data needs to come closer into our everyday lives and our lived experiences. The days of traveling to far-flung places or spending hours on end in classrooms and other sites may well be over (or at least altered) and if this is indeed the case, then there needs to be an opening up and encroaching into new spaces, realms, and orientations. It is for this reason that we push researchers to consider putting magic and magic(al)ing to work on data production and analysis. To theorise magic(al)ing we draw on three concepts: monism, spacetimemattering, and bloom spaces. These are all post-philosophies inspired ways of explaining the ways that bodies move across physical and ephemeral practices to make meaning, relationships, literacies, *and* magic(al)ing.

As researchers who focus on matter and people across contexts, COVID-19 confounds us and in writing this article, we speculate on new researcher futures. At first we planned to write this article around the revisiting of 'old' data given the focus of the special issue, but in our conversations we found 'new data' in our lives, perhaps unexpectedly, or magically. Thus, we revisit past and present to extrapolate potential differences between now and then in relation to magic(al)ing. Going back into previous research has given us a landscape view of possible differences between producing data and analyzing it during the pandemic vs. before. What revisits allowed us to do is to juxtapose the variable conditions that we live in now and how to seize this uncertain moment and build on its affordances (and of course constraints) to grapple with new research practices. Thus, we focus on both 'old' data and the 'new' literacies that came to be during COVID-19. Candace returns to an orange-paper-frog-puppet (see Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2016), a magic(al)ing moment that she often comes back to when thinking of the

be(com)ing of literacies, especially in the uncertain times we find ourselves in now. While schools are closed children are learning virtually at home, the orange-paper-frog-puppet seems so distant and not possible as classrooms full of children and materials are not in existence now (at least in Candace's community). Thus, Candace explores literacies from being home with/by/among her 7-year-old daughter, Lydia Ann, during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Jennifer returns to a flowery artifact by a young girl from a makerspace study in April 2019, speculating on how the same research could be conducted during lockdown. Curating this research study was important for Jennifer because the research involved deeper engagements with nature, sustainability, making and designing within a research space. These practices stand in stark contrast with what researchers can do right now in terms of research. Although it is certainly viable to be in nature with children, it is harder to coordinate hands-on work with trees, bugs, and then move to inside spaces making objects, passing scissors and craft materials, and consoling younger children. In order to continue research during COVID-19, Jennifer turned to social media, specifically Instagram as a research forum during lockdown. In particular, she became interested in an Instagram feed called *Girls in Isolation* which presented collages of women of all ages and stages portraying their experiencing of isolation during COVID-19. Jennifer came across Deanne Mitchell (pseudonym) when she asked for Instagram volunteers to share their views on their images. Thus, we decided to juxtapose our new COVID-19 research with research from the past. We begin by conceptualizing magic(al)ing, then revisit 'old' data, move on to thinking with 'new' data, and finally discuss why magic(al)ing matters for researchers during COVID-19 and beyond.

The Coming to be of Magic(al)ing

As we began our thinking on literacies and magic, Candace had driven alone frequently to visit

her parents as her mom was dying with brain cancer. Candace had many 11-hour car trips to

listen to audiobooks alone. She found herself fascinated with Elizabeth Gilbert's (2015) book,

Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear. Gilbert states:

> …when I refer to magic here, I mean it literally. Like, in the Hogswarts sense. I am
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> referring to the supernatural, the mystical, the inexplicable, the surreal, the divine, the
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> transcendent, the otherworldly. Because the truth is, I believe creativity is a force of
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> enchantment—not entirely human in its origins…I believe the creative process is both
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> magical *and* magic. (p. 34, emphasis in original)

Both, magical and magic, hence, we write magic(al) as one word. And as we see magic(al) as a

lively, creative force, not entirely human, we write magic(al)ing. A definition of magic is "the

power of apparently influencing the course of events by using mysterious or supernatural forces"

(Google dictionary). While this is magic as a noun, the dictionary also has definitions of magic

as an adjective and verb. And one definition of magical as an adjective is "beautiful or delightful

in such a way as to seem removed from everyday life" (Google dictionary). When we link these

words together, we are able to think of magic as simultaneously a thing, a doing, and a/effectual

in the everyday, perhaps mundane, life. And the notion of supernatural causes us to pause and

consider the human and more-than-humanness of magic. This connects to Gilbert's (2015)

writing on ideas and magic,

I believe that our planet is inhabited not only by animals and plants and bacteria and

viruses, but also by ideas. Ideas are disembodied, energetic life-form. They are

completely separate from us, but capable of interacting with us—albeit strangely. Ideas

have no material body, but they do have consciousness, and they most certainly have

will. Ideas are driven by a single impulse: to be made manifest. And the only way an idea

can be made manifest in our world is through collaboration with a human partner. It is

only through a human's efforts that an idea can be escorted out of the ether and into the

realm of the actual. (pp. 34-35)

A planet inhabited by ideas, as life-forms, who seek to be made manifest. So, while ideas are

real, perhaps in a virtual sense, they collaborate with humans to be brought into the realm of the

actual. This reminds us of Deleuze's (1966/1988) writings on actual and virtual, yet both are real.

As Smith and Protevi (2018) write about Deleuze:

...there is not less but more in the idea of the possible than in the real, just as there is more

in the idea of nonbeing than in that of being, or more in the idea of disorder than in that

of order. When we think of the possible as somehow "pre-existing" the real, we think of

the real, then we add to it the negation of its existence, and then we project the "image"

of the possible into the past. We then reverse the procedure and think of the real as

something more than possible, that is, as the possible with existence added to it. We then

say that the possible has been "realized" in the real. By contrast, Deleuze will reject the

notion of the possible in favor of that of the virtual. Rather than awaiting realization, the

virtual is fully real; what happens in genesis is that the virtual is actualized...The virtual is

the condition for real experience, but it has no identity; identities of the subject and the

object are products of processes that resolve, integrate, or actualize (the three terms are

synonymous for Deleuze) a differential field. The Deleuzean virtual is thus not the

condition of possibility of any rational experience, but the condition of genesis of real

experience. (pp. 5 & 6)

Thus, the idea of magic(al)ing might seem not-real or pre-existing the real, however, if we think

of magic(al)ing as something more than possible it becomes realized in the real. Thus, the virtual

(of magic[al]ing) is fully real. Magic(al)ing is appealing as movement beyond boundaries, maybe

even conceptual boundaries of reality. As Allison (1987) writes (translating Spinoza), we can

never know what a body can do. In this case, an idea-body. Possibilities abound.

Another article that helped our thinking about magic and the doing of inquiry is Maggie

MacLure's writing on divinations which brings to the fore the magical qualities that can and do

emerge during data analyses that even moves beyond her theorising of data that glows (MacLure,

2013), to document dynamism and magic in data. Quoting Elizabeth Grosz, MacLure says: "She

(Grosz) equates ideality to 'a kind of magical or religious thinking that seeks the orders of

connection that regulate the universe itself' [Grosz, 2017, p. 12] and commends Nietzsche's

challenge to science" (MacLure, 2020, p. 2). There is a remarkable similarity between

MacLure's rendering of ideas seeking connections in the universe and Gilbert's contention that

ideas float around and land on people who either choose to take them up or ignore them and the

idea moves on (Gilbert, 2015). MacLure conjures a sense of magic out in the world ready to be

divined and accessed as "the incorporeal and unrepresentable *sense* that subsists in/as virtual events, to counter-actualize and creatively replay it [divination]" (MacLure, 2020, p. 3). MacLure argues for a form of analysis that is bespoke and crafted to "the contours of the problem at hand" (2020, p. 5). The tricky thing about this divinatory form of data production concerns its ability to carefully and respectfully capture complex forces, while at the same time, "be prepared to make the unwarranted leap toward an unpredictable landing" (MacLure, 2020, p. 5). As we continued to read and think about magic(al)ing inspired by Gilbert and MacLure's writings, several theoretical concepts sparked our understandings and inquiries: monism, spacetimemattering, and bloom space and pedagogical encounters. We share these below as ways to conceptualize magic(al)ing and also put them to work with literacies data that follow.

Monism

There are connections between our framing of magic and Spinozan monism centered on substance which cannot be divided. Mind and body, human and object, Spinozan philosophy maintains that "substance" has "an infinity of attributes—and the latter to God as the modal system" (Allison, 1987, p. 46). The infinity of attributes imply both Spinoza's account of mind-body relationships and "the order and connection of ideas is that same as the order and connection of things" (Allison, 1987, p. 7). Spinoza claimed,

> I shall treat the nature and powers of the Affects, and the power of the Mind over them, by the same Method by which, in preceding parts, I treated God and the Mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies. Part 3, Spinoza's *Ethics*. (Allison, 1987, p. 7)

Herein, there is no separation between mind and body, existing together and entangling material and immaterial experiences. Monism rests on a belief that there is one whole experience which fuses mind and body, the substance which in Spinozan philosophy is God (God in an open way such as nature as God). Thinking about magic and magic(al)ing as informed by body and mind draws in a Spinozan logic. That is, with magic(al)ing, you cannot separate mind from body. As Grosz (2017) argues, "Spinoza's attributes are *at least* two, and two that are irreducible to each other" (p. 64) and magic as attributes swirling about our everyday moves to the extremes of mind and body, but without a separation or dualism of the two.

But, what is monism in relation to our experiencing of COVID-19? As researchers, how do we abide within COVID-19 research without physicality and the whole time on screens, with masks on, and creating distance? In this foreign apocalyptic environment: how can we adapt our inquiry practices to this unfamiliar terrain? The lines, planes, and bodies we formally knew need reimagining now. We began the article with our moments of experiencing COVID-19. When it dawned on us that something was qualitatively different from before and that we did not have a way of explaining it. With a bit of time other discoveries ensued such as the awareness that the research methods that we knew, with our body and mind, had to change and to change irrevocably. In an apocalyptic mindset, one goes to these places. Drawing out a union of mind-body and relating it to COVID-19 times, as researchers, we have an entirely new relationship to the act of conducting research. Bereft of physical work in sites (such as schools) and relying on virtual methods of fieldwork, there is also a reliance on senses, sight, feelings, and speculation in quite altered ways. What unfolds in our accounts of 'research during COVID-19' (albeit it

modest, impromptu, serendipitous in nature) is an embodied experience and a much less

artifactual one: a monist one. Thus for us, monism gets us to insert our mind/bodies within online

experiences and interactions and monism animates the lived properties of conducting research

during COVID-19. However, bodies exist before perception. Thus, when engaging with affect

theory, it is important to acknowledge that affect happens prior to and outside of perception. In

conceptualizing magic through monism, there is a dynamism and vitality to Candace's thinking-

with Lydia Ann and Jennifer's work with Deanne: a building up of attributes across minds,

bodies, screens, expressions, and somatic rhythms. Gilbert's writing on magic gives us a

language for epiphanies and inspirations on ideas landing on us during fieldwork (and even

questioning what is field work) and the notion that ideas either stick or move on depending on

our reception to them.

Spacetimemattering

Affective intensities produced from magic(al)ing involve bodies as much as spaces, times, and

matter. As we entered into conversations on magic(al)ing, we found ourselves revisiting data

from our past projects and publications. For example, for Jennifer, the paper crane (Maynor in

Artifactual Literacies; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010) and a newer flowery artifact from May 2019. As

we've engaged in thinking/writing about magic(al)ing we find ourselves talking a lot about time,

space and matter *and* at the same time discussions on the fluidity of time, spaces, and all kinds of

matter and bodies such as humans, digital technologies, COVID-19, artistic materials,

photographs, and so forth. We think of Gilbert's writing above about ideas and their movement

over/with/through spaces, times, and living bodies. Karen Barad's (2013, 2007) concept of

spacetimemattering helps us to conceptualize magic(al)ing. While Barad uses the term matter,

we invite you to replace matter in the following quote with 'ideas' or even 'magic(al)ing'.

"Matter doesn't move in time. Matter doesn't evolve in time. Matter does time. Matter materializes and enfolds different temporalities" (Barad, 2013, p. 17). Matter does time. That seems like an impossibility. Barad thereby invites readers to imagine new imaginaries or possibilities for time and matter and space. Hence, she writes *spacetimemattering* to illustrate they cannot be separated or thought of apart from each other.

In discussing quantum leaps of waves and particles and how atoms behave in the apparatus of a which-slit detector experiment, Barad philosophizes about identities and phenomena as not inherent in relation to spacetimemattering. Barad (2013) writes:

> *...the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the 'past' and the 'future' are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetimemattering...all are one phenomenon...*Neither space nor time exist as determinate givens, as universals, outside of matter. Matter does not reside in space and move through time. Space and time are matter's agential performances...There is no inherently determinate relationships between past and future. *Phenomena are not located in space and time; rather phenomena are material entanglements enfolded and threaded through the spacetimemattering of the universe.* (p. 28 ,emphasis in original)

Thus, if we are thinking about literacies and see literacies as not located in space and time but rather come to be in entanglements, relationships, and enfolded through spacetimemattering, it

forces us to think ontologically about literacies. What are literacies? How do they come to be? What do literacies produce? And this connects us to monism, as discussed above, and magic(al)ing in that literacies do not exist a priori, but rather come into being in the lively intra-actions of bodies (human-bodies, idea-bodies, discourse-bodies, etc.). As Barad (2013) writes, "Change is a dynamism that operates at an entirely different level of existence from that of postulated brute matter situated in space and time; rather, what comes to be and is 'immediately' reconfigured entails an iterative intra-active open-ended becoming of spacetimemattering" (p. 29). Thus for us, spacetimemattering helps us consider the past/present/future relationalities of magic(al)ing.

Bloom Spaces & the Pedagogy of an Affective World

Bloom spaces as discussed in the introduction of *The Affect Theory Reader* (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) and in the afterword by Kathleen Stewart are provocative in our thinking on magic(al)ing. Stewart's (2010) notion of bloom space helps us to theorise magic because of its emphasis on senses and being in the middle of life, but also a puncture, pause, and something qualitatively different in a moment and then you move on. Bloom space is an "ever-processural materiality" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 9). Bloom space is immanent, ephemeral, liminal and always in-process. In this way, it is very hard to grab onto, but you know it when you experience it on an embodied, mind/body level. Gregg and Seigworth maintain that bloom space has a neutrality about it. That is, it is neither good nor bad, but instead bloom spaces are about the surplus and the not-yet. What is central to bloom space is that they are moments of intensity and awareness *about* intensity, and it is experienced with both your mind *and* body. There is something here, as Gregg and Seigworth (2010) recount, about the "intense, strong, unprecedented states" (p. 10).

Bloom spaces reach into what Gregg and Seigworth call *the pedagogy of an affective world*. As researchers, pedagogies of an affective world are hard to capture, but they are shared experiences that envelope moments. This is not to say that they are experienced in the same way, but that they are a pause and importantly, they involve human and more-than-human entanglements. Matter and body, equally involved and implicated, bloom spaces call on minds, bodies, and senses to take notice. Within bloom spaces there are passages of intensities "(whether dimming or accentuating) in body-to-body/world-body mutual imbrication" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 13). As is clear from these definitions, senses and sensory worlds play substantial roles. Bloom spaces are, according to Gregg and Seigworth, full of angles. "Everything depends on the feel of an atmosphere and the angle of arrival" (Stewart, 2010, p. 340). The angles imbue in bloom spaces complexities and dimensions. Stewart (2010) writes,

> All the world is a bloom space now. A promissory note. An allure and a threat that shows up in ordinary sensibilities of not knowing what compels, not being able to sit still, being exhausted, being left behind or being ahead of the curve, being in history, being in a predicament, being ready for something—anything—to happen, or orienting yourself to the sole goal of making sure that nothing (more) will happen. A bloom space can whisper from a half-lived sensibility that nevertheless marks whether or not you're in it. It demands collective attunement and a more adequate description of how things make sense, fall apart, become something else, and leave their marks, scoring refrains on bodies of all kinds—atmospheres, landscapes, expectations, institutions, states of acclimation or endurance or pleasure or being stuck or moving on. Affect matters in a world that is always promising and threatening to amount to something. Fractally

complex, there is no telling what will come of it or where it will take persons attuned. (p. 340)

This quote stuck with us—as a sensory freefall—which is how we fe(e)lt with COVID-19. We've felt so much cognitive not knowing such as for Candace having vacations planned for summer 2020 and vacillating back and forth on whether or not we should cancel reservations or wait to see what happens. For Jennifer, meeting old friends, family and newer colleagues and experiencing the COVID-19 dance of high compliance/less compliance; anxiety/peace; awkwardness/ease and all of the binaries experienced as people figure out within any given social moment how to act when we all feel so uneasy about getting a virus that we still know so little about. Did you ever think that you had to question whether to hug your daughter? It has put all of our attention on reinventing our ways of being. What is consistent is that it is foreign and that it does not have a template.

Although the Stewart quote was written years ago, we find the notion of a bloom space and pedagogies of an affective world productive for us to consider in our research, especially during COVID-19. We feel exhausted, we feel we can't sit still with the amount of work that piles up due to this global pandemic, we feel we are in a moment of history working towards anti-racism and injustices, and we find ourselves feeling ready—at any moment—for something else to happen. Just leaving one's home to do something as normal as grocery shopping is full of new ways of being, doing, and thinking. It is a lot. In addition, we find ourselves as literacy scholars, continuing to think, read, and research, but it feels different now.

Magic(al)ing Then and Now: Revisiting Data

So, we decided to take a nostalgic turn and revisit. Revisiting is a term taken from anthropology and strictly speaking, describes the process of revisiting an earlier site of research (Burawoy, 2003). Taken from the work of Burawoy (2003) who wrote a comprehensive review of different types of revisits. According to Burawoy, time can either be attributed to how the researcher constructs his or her research (including drawing on different types of theory) or how change impacts internal or external contexts. Jennifer worked on an edited book with Sefton Green (Sefton Green & Rowsell, 2014) where literacy researchers went back to older research to revisit participants, sites, findings and methods. In this article, our revisits are brief and taken from a satellite view in the context and urgency of COVID-19. Revisiting data from another time and place, a different world, that throws into relief a need for new analytical practices. But, we have also both by serendipity and interest, produced new data during COVID-19 that sheds light on magic(al)ing in the contemporary moment. In a sense, it is the past 'revisiting' data intersecting with the newly produced data during COVID-19 that we are thinking-with in relation to magic(al)ing.

In some ways, we need to untrain or unknow (Vasudevan, 2011) methods that we rely on, hold dear and preferred analytical frames to enter a methodological fog and to experiment (St. Pierre, 2016). Questions, issues, theories that once seemed settled are not quite so resolute. For instance, long-held researcher beliefs like: We need to be IN a context to have an ethnographic gaze; or, we can't feel and sense moods, feelings, agendas without being IN the field. Snaza (2019) talks about "dwelling with haunting" that can unsettle and put our attention in other directions and

push back at questions (p. 21). The sensations that have emerged during COVID-19 are not familiar to us and they resemble what Berlant calls a situation: "a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence" (Berlant, 2011, p. 5). Abiding within this fog can be uncomfortable because it is so foreign, which is why we both returned to data that felt familiar. Thinking with magic and magic(al)ing as a framing notion to data produces new analytical considerations.

First Revisit: Magic(al)ing Orange-Paper-Puppet-Frog-Riley-Flies

For Candace, she found herself entangled again with the orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies that opens the book *Go Be a Writer!* (see Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2016, pp. 6-31). The video clip of a second grade student (7-8 year olds), Riley, creating an orange-paper-puppet-frog during one of the first days of school during Writers' Studio time, is one Candace uses as a data example when teaching research methods classes and/or in conference presentations (see Figure 1). Each time, it produces new insights and wonderings—there is so much to think about/with the recorded interactions.

[Insert *Figure 1: Orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies*]

Why think-with the orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies coming into being as magic(al)ing? Initially, Candace and Tara (the classroom teacher, Tara Gutshall Rucker) felt drawn to this moment, one of those times when you feel in your gut something is happening here, and make sure the recorders are on (not that recorders 'capture' the moment, but serve as a tool to further explore the moment). There is a literal stickiness to this clip as there are many moments of tape

sticking to Riley's hands, desks, and other bodies and the frog's tongue leaps out to stick to 'flies' (human-becoming-fly-bodies). And the clip seems sticky in an affectual way of bodies (nonhuman and human) coming to be. And while at the time we first analyzed this clip we weren't focusing on magic(al)ing, Candace wonders how magic might provoke new thoughts about literacies and the coming to be of orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies. How might thinking about monism, spacetimemattering, and/or bloom spaces shift our thinking about these literacies coming to be? One might call this moment a pedagogy of an affective world, a moment that spans across past/present/future, physical and virtual spaces, during a pandemic, to consider the mattering of the orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies.

Candace also is caught by the sheer physical environment of the classroom and human bodies in the video clip. Watching it during COVD-19, Candace is caught off guard that people don't have masks on and they are sitting so close to one another, even touching each other in playful moments with the orange-paper-puppet-frog-Riley-flies. It seems jarring and then Candace remembers this was years ago, before COVID-19 changed our ways of being together. How would orange-paper-puppet-frog come to be today? Could it? How does social distancing in classroom spaces in COVID-19 and in virtual classrooms change what is possible for literacies? What does a COVID-19 world restrict and what does it make possible, at the same time?

Second Revisit: Magic(al)ing in Nature

For the second revisit, Jennifer returns to a study in April - May 2019 that combined sustainability and environmental awareness with makerspace work. Over four Saturdays from

9 AM - 3 PM, children in the Niagara area came to the Brock University's Centre for Multiliteracies to go for nature walks, collect artifacts in nature, talk about Indigenous histories and entitlements to land led by Ashley Do Nascimento (PI of the *Making Sustainable Futures: Children Intra-Acting with Nature in Makerspaces* funded[1] research). The research team was Ashley, Jennifer, and Jack Warner who was 16 at the time and had been involved in makerspace pedagogy since he was a child. Every Saturday started the same way: children and teenagers from 4 - 16 years of age arrived at the Centre and put away their things. We then talked about themes of the day such as water and sustainability. We showed images, talked about environmental stories, and had group discussions. Then, most of the group went into the escarpment for walks (as seen in Figure 2) when we talked about bugs, logs, played with sticks and went into storied worlds like pretending that we were the Fellowship of the Rings in Tolkien's (1954) *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy.

[Insert Figure 2: Climbing up escarpment like Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Rings*]

The youngest participant was 4 years old and her name is Bella (pseudonym). She stands out for Jennifer because she was inconsolable when her Mum dropped her off for the day. Jennifer spent time with her and tried to make her feel better by talking to her and that did not work. So, instead, Jennifer sat with Bella and put arts and crafts in front of her. Still, that did not inspire Bella and Jennifer wondered if she should text her Mum to pick her up. Then Bella and Jennifer started to story how she was feeling with objects in front of her: a plastic lion, a bird with purple feathers, pompoms, etc. Jennifer tried to convince Bella that the plastic lion was the little purple

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bird's Mum. Then Bella saw a slightly bigger red bird with a white stripe on its head across the table that she went to get and then told Jennifer *that is the Mummy bird*. The rest of the morning Bella made a series of pictures depicting stories involving the purple baby bird and the Mama red bird. Eventually, Jennifer left her side to interact with other children and continually looked over at Bella to ensure that she was enjoying herself. For the rest of the day until pick up, Bella was fine and when her Mum arrived at 3 PM she lit up and proudly gave her five storied pictures about the baby and Mama birds.

So, why is this magic(al)ing? As a researcher, it carries properties of magic for Jennifer because there was an aha/ember/disembodied idea that arrived with Bella and that dislodged affective and sensory responses. It could well be explained through Winnicott's (1953) theory of transitional objects, but there were also the repertories of practice that struck Jennifer at the time as very Kressian – the stuff in front of her; the *synaesthetic affect* of the purple and red birds; sitting on Jennifer's lap; their conversation about what the Mama bird did for the baby bird, etc. The idea stuck, gelled, entangled with matter, moved and sedimented into an identity text (Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). There was a bloom space that enveloped Bella and Jennifer that had to do with stuff, emotions, and making practices. Some might say that is a fairly mundane early childhood moment, but a close-up view as a researcher told Jennifer that it was unique, different and constellations of matter, bodies, emotions, thoughts, practices, and circulating meanings that gave it allure to be divined later, and yes, it had magic(aling).

[Insert Figure 3: Bella and her Mama and baby bird]

Magicaling on display this specific day with Bella and marching up the Niagara escarpment talking about bugs and nature would not have happened without touch, face-to-face conversations, being in nature, physical work with materials, comforting, and engaging together in nature during COVID-19. Some aspects of the day could be recreated online, however, so many attributes (in the Spinozan) sense demanded being in and of the world with human contact and touch. Jennifer could not have bonded with Bella in the same way online and the connections between the makerspace and the woods would not be as strong in a virtual format.

Magic(al)ing with Data Produced During a Pandemic

Pandemic Making and Magic(al)ing: Wings of Fire, Harry Potter, and Ever After High Coming-To-Be

"Do you have the courage?

Do you have the courage to bring forth this work?

The treasures that are hidden inside you are hoping you will say yes.*"*

(Gilbert, 2015, p. 7, emphasis in original)

We have been home over three months now, due to COVID-19. In the first few weeks of the shelter in place/home school adjustment, I noticed quickly Lydia Ann (pseudonym chosen by her) becoming addicted to audio books. She's always loved to listen to books, but now that she was home all day, every day she found herself having a lot more time to listen. She could listen all day long, to an eight hour book, if we let her (it has happened before).

She's also always loved making. Making with all kinds of materials.

She's been most fascinated of late with the *Wings of Fire* book series. I am not even sure how and where she learned of this series but on our library app, she started downloading and putting holds on book after book. I think at this point she's probably listened to all 20+ books, each 2-3 times. She told me, at her funeral, she wants the song, *Legends Never Die,* which is paired with a Wings of Fire animash, to be played and sung.

We also started reading the Harry Potter series as a family shortly after COVID-19 sheltering in place began. After each book, we watch the movie. We are almost finished with book three.

What I've witnessed (or perhaps become a part of) is a mashing up of or becoming with materials/ideas and Lydia Ann's subjectivity with/in these. Not only has Lydia Ann downloaded audiobooks to listen to, she has also downloaded and read the graphic novel versions of Wings of Fire.

At some point, she began cutting and painting old Barbie clothes for each doll (i.e., Barbie, Monster High, Esquestria Girls, and Strawberry Shortcake dolls) as a character from Monster High. She found images online using our iPad and set it up next to her paints and fabrics. We asked our next door neighbor who sews for scraps of fabric. These became costumes, along with rolls of scotch tape, nail polish as paints for fingers and faces, make up, pipe cleaners for belts and necklaces, and...and...and...

At some point, she created a mash up Hogwarts Castle with Wings of Fire characters. This castle was built of wooden blocks and small sheets of wood (like dry erase boards), Legos, Barbie accessories (from my childhood and hers), cut fabrics, toys and trinkets from her room, and...and...and... Each Wings of Fire character she's created clothes for had a Common Room, in their Hogwarts Castle, and a classroom to teach their own wizardry. She spent hours dressing and undressing each character and creating new outfits for different events at the castle.

As we go on neighborhood walks, she makes up games for us to play about Wings of Fire. I have to guess the tribe and then the character/dragon she is thinking of. I can ask questions and she answers yes/no. For someone who hasn't read these books, that might sound like a hard task, but surprisingly I do pretty well, probably because I've heard about these characters for months. She quizzes us on our knowledge of Wings of Fire of the two continents Pantala and Pyrrhia. To help us out, she has at least written out a list of all the tribes so we have something to look at when we play these guessing games.

Several times each day, Lydia Ann approaches me and/or my husband, with a laugh or grin on her face and asks us to listen. She presses the rewind 15 seconds button on the library app and replays funny parts of the book. She loves language, always has, and gets the jokes and plays-on-words.

We also have several maps drawn on paper around our house for the two continents Pantala and Pyrrhia. She sketches out the terrain and locations for the sandwings, leafwings, icewings, and so

forth. These sketchings come with stories and retellings of events from specific books but also

storylines across books. Lydia Ann recites from memory, with so much expression, some of the

prophecies, written as poetry, in the books.

I've even suggested we write a letter to the author of Wings of Fire, we started it, but it felt

forced and not of interest to Lydia Ann. The letter remains unfinished (see Figure 4).

Lydia Ann loves mashing up *Wings of Fire, Harry Potter, and Ever After and... and... and...* The

stories, characters, maps and locations, clothing, names, times/spaces, and new stories and

relationships emerge, daily. I find evidence of this sprawled out on our guest bed, across Lydia

Ann's floor, in her drawings, in the games she makes up, in her map makings, and even in her

fiber art and theater camp sessions. She took a weeklong fiber arts camp and of course what she

sewed, wove, and stitched together was connected to Wings of Fire. When her theatre teachers

asked her which Disney princesses were her favorite, she said, "I don't really like Disney

princesses" and went on to tell them about Wings of Fire.

--Free-writing by Candace, June 29, 2020

[Insert Figure 4: Unsent Letter to Tui T. Sutherland]

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My learning with Lydia Ann during this pandemic forces or shocks my thinking about literacies

and magic(al)ing in unexpected ways. In prior years (pre COVID-19), my research focused on

relationships in classroom spaces, never in my home. However, while at home, I wondered about

all the literacies Lydia Ann is a part of making and what this looks like in schools. Is she able to

make literacies in these ways in schools? What are the (possibilities of) literacies? Of magic(al)ing literacies? When thinking-with the literacies I was a part of in Lydia Ann's making, I'm forced to question why I was so intent on having us write a letter to the author. I wonder about the binary of writing vs. other making that is illustrated in this vignette. I felt myself forcing Lydia Ann to sit down and write a letter to the author. This was a 'school' thing to do while doing school at home. Rather than trying to answer these questions, I am inspired by Gilbert and thus want to work with these ideas/questions to see what might become. Or Snaza (2019) writes, "Answers don't really interest me, but questions can disperse energy" (p. 6).

In Snaza's (2019) book, he explores literacy from an ethico-onto-epistemological stance, meaning how are knowing, being, and doing in the world as humans with racialized, gendered, and other forms of Othering identities all coming into being through our knowing and relationalities with humans and more-than-humans. Snaza (2019) writes, "I am going to take literacy as an animate practice" and literacy "is affective more than symbolic or conceptual" and "that literacy is primarily about effects and not conscious events of meaning making or representational constructions" (pp. 4, 10 & 17). These are bold claims especially in a field like literacy education that for so long has focused on meaning making and semiotics and signs for representing ideas/meaning. Snaza (2019) goes on to write about humans coming into being with/in literacy situations and that all life-forms engage in semiotic life:

> Literacy, then, is a contact zone: one in which animal, including human animal…, is
> entangled with a host of matters within the literacy situation. The human, …,is something
> 'intra-active,' emergent: it does not exist in or apart from an environment that animates it,

and it 'becomes with' a host of others…'Signs are not exclusively human affairs. All

living beings sign. We humans are therefore at home with the multitude of semiotic life.

(p. 60)

This connects to previous quotes by Gilbert on the liveliness of ideas, the contact zones when

they ask you to work with them, magic(al)ing.

I think of Lydia Ann's making of literacies as bloom-spaces, magic(al)ing pedagogic encounters.

Gilbert (2015) writes, "The idea will not leave you alone until it has your fullest attention. And

then, in a quiet moment, it will ask, 'Do you want to work with me?'" (p. 36). Wings of Fire,

Harry Potter, and Ever After High inspired ideas that Lydia Ann wanted to work with and she

gave them her fullest attention. Lydia Ann became Wings of Fire, Harry Potter, Ever After High,

and...and...and… As Gregg and Seigworth (2010) write, bloom spaces are neutral, in the sense

that they are full of surpluses of/and the not-yet. Bloom space as neutrality seems like an

oxymoron. How can affect be neutral when it is aesthetic and felt? How can something (Lydia

Ann's making) be neutral but also political, aesthetic, and a/effectual?

The literacies in our home weren't pre-planned or known ahead of the making. In schools we

often ask children to write drafts or create storyboards, rather than having literacies unfold in the

moment. At home Lydia Ann seemed open to ideas asking her to work with them and she was

able to draw on a variety of resources to do so (often without any permission from me, she would

locate the items in our home and just use them). Lydia Ann revised and edited these literacies

with/in each pedagogical encounter of her affective, material, and lively-bodied world.

Spinoza's writings on monism also help me think about Lydia Ann *be(com)ing* Wings of Fire, Harry Potter, Ever After High, and...and...and… as Lydia Ann *knew* these texts/stories from reading graphic novels, listening to audiobooks, watching YouTube videos, and streaming shows. However, this knowing of the texts (in her mind) also came to be from Lydia Ann's bodily being and doing of Wings of Fire, Harry Potter, and so forth with fabric, wooden blocks, paint, dolls, and so forth. Knowing-Being-Doing inseparable — mind/body as one.

Barad's writing on spacetimemattering also helps me conceptualize this magic(al)ing. The physical space of home, rather than a school building, where often children have to ask for resources beyond paper, pencil, markers, and notebooks provided invitations and opportunities for literacy(ing). The spacetimemattering of nail polish, pipe cleaners, fabric from a neighbor, make up, and so forth all mattered in what came to be. Lydia Ann's prior experience with these matter-bodies impacted the present moment of creating and the possible futures that would unfold, the mattering and (re)configuring of the world and literacies. Or as discussed earlier, borrowing on Barad's notion that matter does time, magic(al)ing does time. The chronos or linear notion of time also plays into the becoming literacies, as we are reading the Harry Potter books in order as we have a boxed-set of the books. However, Lydia Ann listened to the Wings of Fire series in the order of books available on our library app. Thus, they didn't unfold in a linear sequence. However, in the spacetimemattering of magic(al)ing literacies, the relationships between bodies (human, ideas, materials) unfold in play-full ways influenced by past/present/future relationalities.

I am told that poetry is obliged to be

mystical, magical, musical and lyrical.

And I believe that the great poetry in

the United States is the poetry that

came out of and still comes out of the

black experience.

Maya Angelou, December 9, 1971

Maya Angelou recognized poetry's magical properties shot through with life experiences that convey the pain, resistance, suffering, and joy of human experiences and prejudice. There is magic and mysticism in her poems about resistance, in particular the quoted verse's power to expose racist cruelty for what it is (and where it is). The notion of magic always felt remote to me (Jennifer), perhaps a bit eccentric and silly. Then, at AERA in Toronto in 2019, I spoke about a research study with teenagers who produced self-portraits and what they told me about how teenagers turned to the world in very particular, quirky ways and my friend and colleague Fiona said, "well *that is magic*." Later that day, Candace and I had a glass of wine together and we had one of our many conversations about literacy research and magic dominated the conversation. In *Big Magic,* Gilbert maintains that ideas literally land on you like embers that ignite or move somewhere else if the timing is not right or the idea is meant for someone else. Building on the

momentum of our AERA meeting, Candace and I met monthly to talk about magic and literacy research.

Then COVID-19 happened and the world changed overnight.

During COVID-19, I went for daily walks and for some reason (more sleep and/or more quiet time?), I began to see magic appear in windows with rainbows and teddies; on Instagram with images of girls sad, anxious, joyful, angry in the feed *Girls in Isolation*; and, in phrases in murals to give us hope like *Through the Arts We Rise* or images of the Queen wearing a face mask. But I also started to be aware of different sounds such as sirens, our neighbour's piano playing, and absent sounds and sights like no planes in the London sky. Now, sceptics might say that these are simply aesthetic and practical responses to a crisis and indeed they are, but I did not see them that way. I am prone to utopian thoughts, so I don't want to make too much of this, but I saw them as eclipsing everyday routines and something far more fanciful but at the same time haunting and yes, apocalyptic. It was definitely embodied and most certainly visible and invisible.

It was during this time in March-April-May 2020 that I decided to document glimpses of magic and apply for ethics to interview girls who posted on *Girls in Isolation*. This specific Instagram feed intrigued me because of its multimodal capacities through light, angles, gestures, objects, and faces to capture what isolation is for women. I found it hard to concentrate on everyday work things during the early days of COVID-19 and I would retreat to Instagram and troll through images to wrap myself up in mind-body experiencing of COVID. The blessed and the broken,

the wistful and the pragmatic – how did I feel this through women's photos? I did, quite powerfully. Every day I lingered over girls' and womens' interior worlds for all to see on social media. I decided it was important to speak with anyone willing to speak with me, so I put a message on the feed. I got one response from Deanne Mitchell who agreed to an interview. I did not hear from anyone else and then I got caught up in online teaching, online conferences, and administrative tasks and stopped obsessing about Instagram. But, the truth is, all that I needed to exorcise magic/magic(al)ing is Deanne.

The magical part of my connection with Deanne Mitchell began before we had our interview conversation on July 9th, 2020. It started in April 2020 when Deanne started posting photos on *Girls in Isolation* when she saw my request to interview someone. As an academic and fellow researcher, Deanne appreciated how tough it is to recruit interviewees and not only kindly obliged, but also, she started posting her own images. This act in itself felt magical. How did we ever end up connecting with each other during this time?

Deanne is an academic at a medical school in the United States and works as a research manager at a medical/health institute. She conducts research and writes on bioethics and systems thinking within health policy. She is an expert on Black Bioethics; she has given TedTalks; publishes widely; gives invited talks and keynotes; and within all of this intellectual work, she is also a poet with published anthologies. What is more, over the past five years, she has turned her hand to photography. So, in July 2020, Deanne and I met online to talk about her photographic practices.

Five years ago, Deanne took up photography. She describes her past photos as 'close-up macro' and she resists street photography because she finds it intrusive in terms of asking people to take photos of her. She prefers taking photos of inanimate objects. This makes her COVID-19 habit of taking self-portraits particularly unusual. What is more, she never took photos in her home before lockdown. Coming from a public health background, Deanne took lockdown very seriously and she and her family did not leave the house the entire time. To process lockdown, she took to her phone to capture images of herself during isolation. Deanne related this image-making to Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie* and the lead character, Laura's illusory world of glass figurines. During COVID-19, Deanne felt very quiet and she went into herself in a gentle way and not harsh in the way that poetry comes out of her (Deanne's words). Invoking Gilbert here and her argument about ideas as magical visits, "Do you want to work with me?" (Gilbert, 2015, p. 36). Similarly, Deanne has artistic ideas come to her like the divinations that MacLure foregrounds and she moves with them.

What Deanne finds really interesting about her COVID-19 photography is how embodied her visual work is:

> But it's kind of strange that I'm doing self-portrait because that's the most revealing thing that you could do is to reveal your face or the other things. I'm kind of doing like abstracts of my body, which is like I've never even thought to do. So, it's like the one thing I have – it's like my family – is my body, so why not find some artistic way of using it. (Deanne, July 9th, 2020)

This more intimate side is borne out in the photos such as the photograph in Figure 5.

[Insert Figure 5: Images created a quieter space during COVID-19]

In her COVID-19 photos, not only is the focus on light and shadows, but the work also has a disembodied feel to it with Deanne's face breaking through the image. Recalling Spinoza, Deanne's COVID-19 photography evokes Spinoza's theorizing of *substance* as a collection of *attributes* of life experienced by body and mind across time and spaces. Even the ways that Deanne describes the act of taking shots exudes a sense of instinctual movements with affective intensities:

> I was just moving my body and not thinking about it and just, you
> know the one thing I probably only worked on was trying to get the
> lighting that I wanted. (Deanne, July 9th, 2020)

Take this interview excerpt and juxtapose it with Massumi's (2002) notion of *capacity,* as a concept drawn from Spinoza's emphasis on bodily "*power* (or potential) to affect or be affected" (p. 15), where the body is conceptualized as ebbing and flowing between movement and rest, rest and movement. Moving bodies are preconscious and presocial (Massumi, 2002) and based on prior experiences being in and of the world. There is a preconscious, tacit feel to Deanne's movements to move her body in ways that seemed apt, right, and natural (Kress, 1997) for her in that moment.

During the interview, Deanne talked about the ways that COVID-19 invited these preconscious, presocial embodied improvisations for photographs. During the pandemic, Deanne has felt vulnerable "like a glass menagerie." Describing lockdown as an emotional time, what grounds her are her family and her photos:

> COVID has been, it's been very dark, playing with light and dark.
> So many of those photographs, it's like one part of my body is
> obscured by dark and then I have a really bright light to my left
> that, you know, displays the left side of my face or something like
> that. And so, particularly in the facial, the face pictures, it's like
> dark and light. (Deanne, July 9th, 2020)

Her photos supplied a bloom space because they happened in the middle of domestic life. Bloom space as magic(al)ing blurs the real with the unreal by creating a liminal space where an idea in Gilbert's sense lights up and takes fire within the mundane and lived (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020). Aligning this quote with Deleuze (1966/1988) discussed above, what comes alive in Deanne's COVID images is a blurring of the actual and the virtual, creating a liminal but real space. As an 'ever-processural materiality' (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), magicaling in bloom spaces is neither good nor bad and instead has an evolutionary feel to it. A word at the centre of these magic(al)ing experiences is **intensity**. Deanne manifested intensity in the ways that she described taking the photos and their impact on the viewer as well as how she experienced making the images. Take this excerpt from Deanne in our interview as a telling example of magic(al)ing in a bloom space: "When I'm taking pictures anywhere else it's like I see

something, it feels emotive, I'm drawn to it, I take a picture. This is like mental/emotional, like, catharsis and kind of like a saviour kind of thing for me."

What surprised me about each of these pictures is that they are selfies. Deanne has an iPhone 11 with the capacity for studio lighting. To take her series of COVID-19 self-portraits, she ensured that she had a bright light to one side and then actual darkness on the other side and she positioned the camera above her. During the interview she talked about '"being drawn into a position" and if she tries it and does not like it based on how her body feels, she moves. There is only one that Deanne shared with me that is completely frontal and she spoke specifically about this image:

> … looking straight ahead is the most vulnerable position that I feel I can be in. But if I'm looking away from a camera, to the side, it just feels safer for me. I think I have one portrait, only one of them that is like straight on to my face. One face is light and the other dark (with a pink filter). All the others my head in some different configuration. (Deanne, July 9th, 2020)

[Insert Figure 6: Single fully frontal COVID-19 light-dark shot]

Playing with lighting, colours, and facial expression, two mirror images nuanced with a filter articulates mind/body aesthetic experiencing of COVID. Spinoza's notion of substance has an infinite purity about it, as essence. For Deanne, her COVID photos became an extension of herself, as she says, "I'm feeling like the pictures are an extension of how I'm feeling or, you know, how I'm viewing the world at that time." The angles, shadows, gestures, and light are

gathered attributes fused within the substance of photography. The closest Deanne comes to a Spinozan monist stance as substance and no limits to the body is her account of how she experiences photography. She talked about the closed-in feel of lockdown and how "I can't go out and escape this area and take my senses somewhere else." In the face and space of all of these senses, she has to deal with them all and image-making has been her main practice of being sentient, ponderous and still (the epistemological and ontological point addressed earlier). The photos on Instagram allowed Deanne to "see people as being connected and how people connect with things more intensely during the pandemic." An insight about Deanne's discussion regarding photography during lockdown in contrast with her object-centred image work is how reliant her photographic work is on synaesthesia, senses, affect and much less reliant on techniques or stances (Rowsell, 2020) or aesthetic effects.

Deanne has moved on from her COVID photo phase, back to inanimate objects. I now follow her and we text back and forth about her images. Magic brought us together.

Magic(al)ing Inspired Inquiry Considerations

"We are not in a position to define literacy" (Snaza, 2019, p. 64).

If we are not in a position to define literacy, as literacies are the "not-yet-known" (Zapata, Kuby, & Thiel, 2018), then we can't profess to know how to go about inquiring to/with/about literacies. Or said another way, if we believe in magic(al)ing of literacies then we have to be open to the not-yet-known of analytical practices. Thus, we close this article with a discussion on how we

are now thinking of the doing of inquiry in relation/inspired by magic(al)ing during COVID-19. What methodological approaches are (im)possible, and which kinds of research collaborations are (in)appropriate? As researchers, COVID-19 stops us in our tracks and commands us to consider literacies, more than ever, as imbricated in the everyday.

We are drawn to how Snaza (2019) speaks of bewilderment as *ways of attuning to literacies*. There are ways of thinking about literature that can bewilder and decentre readers. He describes bewilderment as more than human literacy situations that swirl around us and within us. Snaza (2019) invites scholars to "articulate bewilderment as a directly political phenomenon enabling dispersed, fugitive, and ephemeral dislocations and disorientations that moves us away from Man" (p. 77). He maintains that "bewilderment is a productive way of moving away from Man to dwell in an as-if space" (Snaza, 2019, p. 19). Similarly, in this article, we adopt an openness to enchantments, divinations (MacLure, 2020), magic entangled, braided in with monist mind-body experiences navigating research with others and objects in ways that we truly do not know where we are heading. Monism as a theory of existence that maintains a union of matter and mind, forces us to push against a dualism of mind and body. Dernikos in her research on literacy and gender invokes *allure* in data as a force that pervades and circulates through "institutions of public intimacy" (she draws on Thrift here, Dernikos, 2019, p. 344). Dernikos speaks of forces during moments of fieldwork that have a magical quality to them, "that become intimately connected to that which enchants us, thereby intensifying our sensory and emotional attachments to other people and things" (Dernikos, 2019, p. 334). Dernikos considers these terms and framings within closely analyzed literacy events with children, documenting the unpredictable and affective vitality that can take place in classrooms. We believe concepts such as

bewilderment and allure can shock our thoughts (inspired by Massumi) as researchers and demand us to *do* inquiry differently.

Thus, we have invited readers to think with us, maybe even indulge us. To be open to unknowns, to new ways of doing inquiry. The bubble of what is considered mundane vs. extraordinary has burst. Candace has written about post-philosophies inspired ways of engaging in inquiry practices, specifically in literacy education, that might be helpful places to start for some readers (Kuby, 2017; 2019). Jennifer has asked researchers to consider artifacts as carrying identities and lived stories (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; 2020). Candace thinks about the taken-for-granted aspects of research such as literature reviews, research questions, data collection, analysis, transcripts, and even representation or ways of writing-up research. Jennifer thinks about practical ways of continuing research in schools and the community and about the possibilities and promise of post-philosophies after we move through COVID. Hence, we end with an invitation sparked by Snaza's book, where he quotes Jack Halberstam, "Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (2011, pp. 2-3, in Snaza, 2019, pp. 6-7). We are looking for more surprising, more ethical, more creative, more magic(al)ing ways of being in the world, specifically for literacies and research practices. When an idea, perhaps a new one, perhaps one that would require you to take a risk, asks you to work with it … will you?

<div align="center">**References**</div>

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