

Children:

Global Posthumanist Perspectives and Materialist Theories

Series Editors: Karen Malone · Marek Tesar · Sonja Arndt

Sarah Crinall

Sustaining Childhood Natures

The Art of Becoming with Water

 Springer

Children: Global Posthumanist Perspectives and Materialist Theories

Series editors

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This book series presents original and cutting edge knowledge for a growing field of scholarship about children. Its focus is on the interface of children being in the everyday spaces and places of contemporary childhoods, and how different theoretical approaches influence ways of knowing the future lives of children. The authors explore and analyse children's lived embodied everyday experiences and encounters with tangible objects and materials such as artefacts, toys, homes, landscapes, animals, food, and the broader intangible materiality of representational objects, such as popular culture, air, weather, bodies, relations, identities and sexualities. Monographs and edited collections in this series are attentive to the mundane everyday relationships, in-between 'what is' and 'what could be', with matters and materials. The series is unique because it challenges traditional western-centric views of children and childhood by drawing on a range of perspectives including Indigenous, Pacifica, Asian and those from the Global South. The book series is also unique as it provides a shift from developmental, social constructivists, structuralist approaches to understanding and theorising about childhood. These dominant paradigms will be challenged through a variety of post-positivist/postqualitative/posthumanist theories of being children and childhood.

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¹ A sketch of Bunyip River as a blanket with gouache on paper (July 2013), Sarah Crinall.

*This book is dedicated to my daughters, Edith
Maree and Vivi Mae,
and to the various life matter of the Lawson
street swales.*

Preface: Creatively Re-searching

In Motherhood

When I fell pregnant with Edith, I believed having to stay at home full time with a child might be hard for me. I had always worked in a job I was passionate about. I prepared for five or so years of selflessness. Knowing a family was what I wanted and knowing it would get easier, I left professional work to enter *confinement*: to birth and raise my small child.

When Edith was born, motherhood was joyful immediately. It surprised me to find that I would not need to wait for joy and that I would not feel like a victim or student. I felt like a blossoming woman and fully formed mother who was capable of nurturing a life straight away. There were also difficulties. Motherhood began with the challenge of recovering from an emergency Caesarean and in the isolation of living as a nuclear family. While I tended Edith, I shied away from asking for help. I was unsure what I needed. This thesis is made here, in the challenging, joyful depths of early motherhood.

In Conversation

Winter 2013

A friend has read an excerpt and in conversation yesterday she shared her perception. *It is self-focused, isn't it.* It is delivered lightly and I smiled.

Standing there with Annie, in conversation, I hear a very human construction articulated for me. We do not see ourselves as natural, as animal, or as part of the planet.

In the Material

In Paul Carter's *Material Thinking* (2004), a researcher is challenged to untangle the tautology of the term 'creative research' (p. 9) and create new knowledge as research. Carter works in the space between himself and artists to encounter new

ways of knowing. Drawn to artistic methods and inspired to look differently—researching (for) a sustainable future—I began the process of creatively re-searching the multiple (p)layers, the material, involved in acts of making and (in)habitation.

Phillip Island, Australia

Sarah Crinall

A Note

With Children

This monograph examines everyday life with children outside of a school setting. The children I share my life with, Edith and Vivi, have contributed their paintings, phrases and photographs, amongst the other matter of early motherhood's daily life. Edith (six-and-a-half) has consented to being part of this book, and Vivi (three-and-a-half) loves to hear the blogpost of her birth and to spot her photograph as she flicks through. A question around consent emerges when working with young children who may not understand the academic variety of consent. My husband and I have decided that speaking *without* Edith and Vivi is more problematic than to represent them as agential and vital to these examinations of sustenance in education through academia.

Bodyplaceblogposts

A bodyplaceblogpost or blogpost is a string of academic poetry using written text, photographs and white space. Bodyplaceblogposts have largely been published without any editing to preserve the creative, passionate energy the blogposts were made with—exhibiting them as they were born. On most occasions, I have left grammatical and spelling errors intentionally to preserve the sense of movement, of the moment, and the energy they were made with. The unedited blogposts are, for me, a reminder of what is good enough in a time and culture that imposes pressure to work hard towards better; the bodyplaceblogposts, left this way, are me sitting with the imperfect and continuing to move. On occasion, I notice, I have offered a word in brackets and assume at the time of posting; it felt important to me to do so, so I have left this too. Maintaining the blogposts just the way they are is a ceremony of acceptance, and a practice of the slowness I have come to feel in their making process.

This research refers to blogging in a creative sense. The book is written with 'bodyplaceblogposts'—dated extracts from a blog kept as a private research journal.

All blogposts are my words unless otherwise acknowledged and artworks are acknowledged in-text and footnote.

Photographs

Photographs within the text are not captioned to maintain the flow of writing, referenced in footnotes. Some photographs have been removed, substituted, and others retained from bodyplaceblogposts, for publication quality and offer a further play with time. The photographs are black and white in the printed book and colour in the e-book version. All photographs are taken by me, the author, unless stated in footnotes.

Art

‘Art’ has provoked this research. Exhibiting works of ‘fine art’ and sharing the stories of artist’s relationships with water becomes a conversation with art where I also think *with* art.

Academic Engagement

It has been my intention to think with the literature I encounter in a post-qualitative engagement. There are no summaries or syntheses of the academic literature here. References are provided for further explorations of new materiality and post-qualitative thought.

Chapters

Each chapter is composed of portions of time-stamped poetic and prose-like text and reads ‘out-of-order’ intentionally.

Editing

This monograph has been edited within an intended style and texture. All exceptions to standard spelling, grammar and formatting have been retained at the request of the author.

Research Origins

This publication is written with material produced during the research project titled ‘The Pedagogical value of the Arts in waterway-health education for sustainability’.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the land and waters I have written with here—the place of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nations—and pass on respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

My Children

I extend long tendrils of heartfelt gratitude to Edith and Vivi. This book was born of and with their gestations, births, and our early life together.

The Artists

This work is a collective woven surface made with the words and images of six artists: Robyn Carter, Pip Cleeland, Prudence Clements, Anthi Emmanouil-Playne, Mikala Peters and Karen Preston/Crinall. Each artist openly shared from their artistic world, speaking on ‘relationships with water’ and processes of making. They all generously participated voluntarily, giving me creative license to draw on artworks and words throughout the project in a post-qualitative way, and I am ever grateful.

Thank you to those artists whose artworks and energy influenced the platform of the research vibrantly: Mike Cleeland, Sian Adnam, Charles Mercovich, John Adam, Phil Burrell, Pete Baird, David Winterbottom, Nanette Hulshoff-Pol and Vasy Petros.

The Western Port blankets were made by the loving, giving hands of Karen Preston/Crinall, Bethany Crinall, Madeleine Ward, Samuel Crinall, Patricia Perriam/Preston, Yvonne Crinall/Stapleton, Melanie Lindsay, Emily Bathgate, Angela Foley, Trish Grant, Misha Say, Kerry McGennisken, Kellie Nichols, Lien Sim, Camille Monet, Anthi Emmanouil-Playne, Nia Emmanouil, Mikala Peters, Marg Rowbottom, Rachael Rowbottom, Leanne Rowbottom, Tobey Henry, Mel Myers, Justin Tucker, Prue Clements and myself.

Excerpts from letters written between Anna Vladimirova and me during a collaborative writing process are used in Chap. 3. Anna’s writing friendship/ partnership has been a breath of salty air to my postdoctoral, mothering academic life.

The Editors

The original iteration of this book is a doctoral thesis, *Blogging art and sustenance: Artful everyday life (making) with water* at Monash University and then Western Sydney University. Margaret Somerville, as my primary supervisor, provided oxygenating responses and input into each chapter that became woven with our shared everyday lives. Her supervision was generous and unwavering.

My doctoral thesis takes on a new iteration of itself as this book, *Sustaining Childhood Natures: The Art of Becoming with Water*. This final layer was produced listening with (my) children and water. Karen Malone, Marek Tesar and Sonya Arndt have provided vital and poignant feedback, as editors of the *Children: Global Posthumanist Perspectives and Materialist Theories*. Thanks to Nick Melchior, Lay Peng Ang and the team at Springer Nature for working with this text and all its quirks with energy and patience.

Sue Collins proofread the final doctoral draft and Natalie Hodgkin attended select chapters in the final book proofs. To both I am grateful for their attentive insight, careful to help me keep the manuscript's character. I am indebted to Sue and Natalie for their gentle exactitude and companionship in the submission phases.

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About the Author

Sarah Crinall writes with the material of everyday life in a 1970s Coldon beach house at home on shearwater swampland, between Western Port (bay) and Bass Strait's Southern Ocean. She has been mothering, writing, researching and making on the Australian southern coastal island of Phillip Island, Victoria, Australia, for eight years now. Living with her husband, Paul, and daughters, Edith and Vivi, new practices and daily rhythms have emerged with the research which swims endlessly in the queries *sustainability* provokes.

She writes in the spaces of early motherhood from the couch, at the dining table, and in bed with every day momentary and bodily encounters. As she writes, the words change shape with sheoak and lilly-pilly light dancing on the pine floorboards; storm-blue grey clouds filling the kitchen window; the hum of the fridge, or a singing bird on Lawson Street, in settlement-aged pine trees.

As a marine ecologist, and educator, she began making and using art to make room for people and water to be together in a more embodied way. A young girl asked: *We know you love waterways, but, why should we?* From there she found herself studying a doctorate on the relationship between artists and waterways.

Sarah completed her doctorate, *Blogging Art and Sustenance: Artful everyday life (making) with water*, in 2017. This dissertation received an American Education Research Association (AERA) Award (*Division D Outstanding Dissertation Award*). This thesis is the basis for this monograph—*Sustaining Childhood Natures: The Art of Becoming with Water*.

In the past five years, she has enjoyed making and sustaining every day with others on Phillip Island. With Kerry, and playgroup (the Phillip Island Family playgroup); and Fiona, Dinah and Lien during the inception of a new primary school, Phillip Island Village School, Ventnor. Now Edith, Vivi and Sarah are energised and nourished in weekly 'Barn School' forays with various birds, koalas,

centres, bush reserves, parks and friends: Natalie, Milo, Juni, Cassie, Ashki, Tiami, Rosie, Olive, Ana Sofia, Anya and Isa, amongst others—children and parents gathering and exploring together in shared experiences around Phillip Island in sync with the season. In the spaces, she continues to write passionately with the matter(s) of motherhood and bodyplace lives.

About the Artists

The late Robyn Carter lived on Warneet Foreshore, by Western Port (bay), where she painted daily in her home studio, inspired by the watery world around her and beyond. Exhibiting artwork frequently, Robyn has offered the world numerous canvas platforms of vibrant colour, made from the moving perspectives the living body disrupting linear notions of place, space and time. Robyn used an ironing board as a painting table and created art until her passing in 2014.

Pip Cleeland was brought up in Scotland, and ever since the age of two, she can remember forming shapes and absorbing colour. She is now 49 and has collected a portfolio of images which she expresses through her art.

Prudence Clements has a Bachelor of Arts, School of Social Sciences from La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia. Prue lived in Clifton Pugh's pottery in Dunmoochin, Cottles Bridge, Victoria, for 4 years. She learnt tonal oil painting with Lesley Sinclair at Montsalvat, Victoria. Prue likes to paint the Australian landscape *en plein air* and in her studio, Koo Wee Rup, Victoria. Prue lives on the Bunyip River. Prue has painted gouache and oil paintings monthly, tested water quality and reported health issues for Bunyip River for eight years. Prue and Bunyip River were part of this research project's inception and they still paint together in various locations along the Western Port catchment.

Anthi Emmanouil-Playne lives on Phillip Island. Her passion for women and children's wellness is expressed through an active, adventurous, meandering, shared life. This way of life led her to explore an artistic engagement with Bass Strait. Anthi walks the surf beaches amongst shearwater rookery and sand daily.

Mikala Peters lives on Cape Woolamai, Phillip Island. Mikala makes art out of beach walks and daily encounters with the simple beauty of everyday life.

Karen Preston/Crinall makes artworks that respond to experiences encountered in the environments of everyday living. She is interested in art-making as a way to gather and explore connections between disparate ideas and entities within a common space. Karen lives and works in south-eastern Victoria, Australia. She grew up on the Mornington Peninsula, between the bays of Port Phillip and Western Port. See creatingwesternport.com for more information on artists.

Abstract

In this book, the children I share my life with and the waters of every day have entangled with artists, artworks and philosophy, in a wild and unexpected flow. Water deltas into multiple tangential productions, querying: how we might sustain (our) childhood natures? What happens in the collaborative process of creatively re-searching sustainability with artists, water and children?

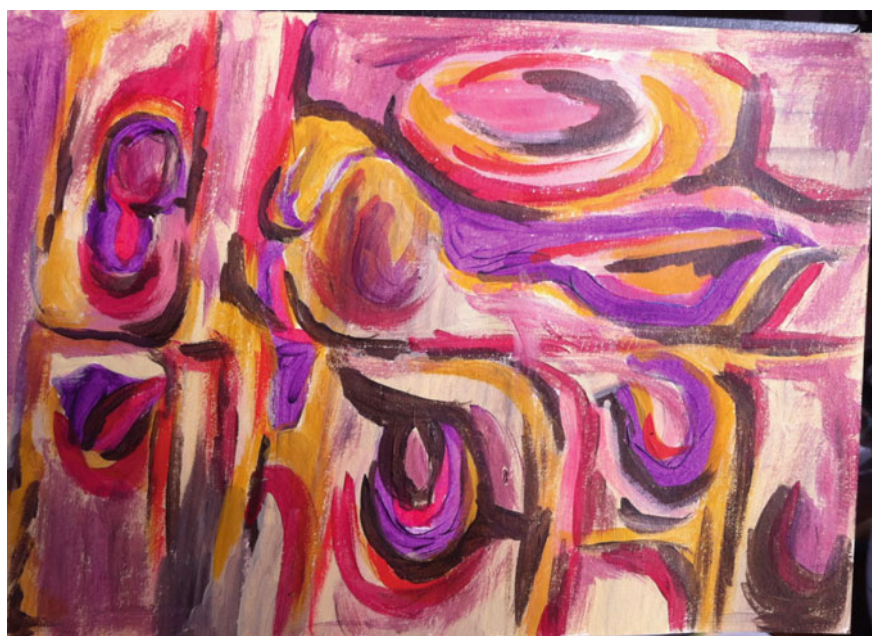
In the local area of Western Port, Victoria, Australia, I engaged in an arts-based post-qualitative inquiry over eight years. As a mother, educator, researcher, marine ecologist and maker, I looked to artists who created artworks in relation to water to investigate how *art-making* might contribute to traditional *science*-based sustainability education. Where I began with the query: *What alternative relationship is negotiated and knowledge attained between an artist and a waterway in the art-making process*, a new query surfaced along the way during the gestation and birth of my daughter, Edith, and later Vivi. I continued musing *how can I sustain waterways if I am not sustaining myself?*

This research emerges methodologies of early motherhood. Artworks, photographs and transcripts of time spent with eight women, including my daughters, entered on a private journal/blog as poetic notes (bodyplaceblogposts). These are encountered backwards on review. Data analysed in the blog is discovered to be data again in the writing process, as a new layer of writing wends around the bodyplaceblogposts in the opposite direction of time, with philosophies of space, place, body, materiality and time. An abundance of matter is played with, including the philosophical materials of Bachelard, Barad, Deleuze, Grosz, Guattari, Kristeva, MacLure, Rautio, Somerville, St. Pierre plus more, and the domestic matter of my mothering, everyday life with children and water.

Sustainability, as a movement, is traditionally defined as resisting the *catastrophe* before the end, sustaining what we have in rations—a *provocation of lack*. New possibilities for sustaining childhood natures—for what is becoming, and unbecoming—emerge here in the making processes of an academic, everyday life in early motherhood.

Chapter 1

Introduction, Water Body, I Am



Winter, 2013

I am sitting by a window at a small desk looking over our garden. I am in our shack of a house. It is a walk from the Southern Ocean's Bass Strait, and the tidal estuarine embayment of Western Port, Victoria, Australia. In the last four years, I have spent time with practicing artists who create artworks of waterways, on

¹This painting, 'Collonaides rock II' (acrylic on paper, 2013), is by Mikala Peters and published with permission.

waterways and with waterways while I critically engage with singing this coastal confluence of rivers, creeks, bay and ocean into health.

Summer, 2017

I am a river her self, washing down a gully, and disrupting banks. Water body, I am washing over rocks. A little of me is left behind and a little of them is drawn into me along the way. I am part of the planet. I am the planet.

Bodyplaceblogpost,² July 22, 2013, 6:31 pm

On the floor



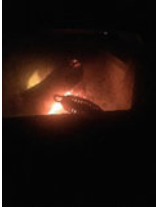
Perched in the dark
On the floor
being quiet.
Looking through the glowing
crevice
of amber in the fire



While subtle crashing waves
and slowly flashing lights
nuzzle edie to sleep.

²Bodyplaceblogposts are largely published without editing. See ‘A Note’ section for more information.

It's a step on from the exhaust fan
And gruff rumble of the bathroom heater
she's lulled off to
over the last two days.



It must be noisy in her developing imagination
She needs
a sufficient sound to dull the endless new words
colours
tones
activities
playing over
that she has learned in the day.
A sweet chirp
she sings out just now
and fades back into a waves wash
wait.
She's growing up
and circling back
perhaps spiraling is more applicable,
with
its
coiling
suggestion of accumulation
her character was immediately present at birth
and mum agreed - she is like an Edith
as life spirals around her
growing self,
the melodrama of her birth
emanates through various holes in the fabric of Edith's everyday.
wonder if she's gone to sleep?
no sounds now though the waves splash on
readying to write this blog into
a story
forming this story is like being

the sea
 swelling up around the stromatolites
 that are the bodyplaceblogposts
 Stromatolites
 Are
 Layered
 Pillars of blue green algae.
 Time-filled oxygen-producing beings
 each layer
 bridging then and now
 from ancient prehistoric times.
 they are
 all similar,
 mostly cyanobacteria and other microbial organisms
 holding, cementing sediment and earth
 delivered by the water.
 Dotted on a coastal landscape
 with the whooshing sea lapping at their bases
 and over their tips in a tidal rhythm.
 Yet
 each pillar is also its own individual shape and character



the fire is so hot.
 It's the only sound around me in this dark.
 The heat, swells outward from its own body
 passing into my toes,
 calves,
 knees,
 thighs...
 And outward into the surrounding places.
 Into the surrounding space.
 The performance of warmth is a necessary element of wellness

as offered by a blanket
or a cuddled pressing of two bodies
sun soaked stillness
and movement.

You may make your own warmth
and you may make your own
sustenance.

Walk to check the baby.

Edith is sound asleep on her belly
surrounded by animals
soft and loved
they follow her and she them
all warm in their shared nest
woven together
in their cross-species nest

Summer, 2017

I am looking through this chapter and pause to play at the current title: *An Introduction*. The portion of the word ‘duct’ acknowledges the movement I want to write with. I see the word *into*. Oh, I have omitted the letter *r*. Where has it gone? Is *r* suspended on a *r*iver, washing wayward in the *r*ain, swallowed up by Lawson Street as it stretches out the kitchen window toward the ocean? Or perhaps the *r* has transformed along with the emerging *r*esearch?

While working in the final edits, Edith and Vivi, the children I share my life with, play inside. Occasionally they wander out to check I am still here. I am sitting at my desk in the Barn watching the wind push the pine trees easterly over Lawson Street swales in front of a grey, summer sky.

Bodyplaceblogpost, June 14, 2013, 3:47 pm

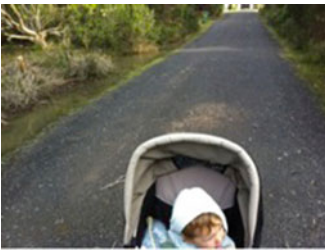
Walking again



The rain has not come today
 At all
 It's sad
 Like she
 The sky did all her crying and



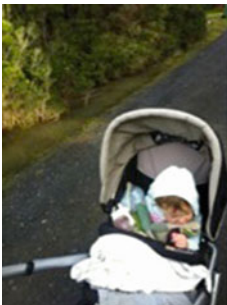
Now
 There are just no tears left.



The dark coldness of today is giving me this impression anyway
 Edith and I rugged up
 went for a walk anyhow
 Down Lawson Street swales
 Brimming with muddy
 Still water
 My ears are ringing frosted
 still
 On the footbridge I run!



Heavy thud thud thud
Frogs so loud
Bonk bonk bonk
Lawson Street
Swales glisten
we make our way
Back
home
the water shines
sun slips out
My blood is pumping
Edith I are dressed in western port
blanket
Edith
peers
out



Autumn, 2018

As I read through this chapter, the letter *r* is everywhere. Reminscing; *r*espond;
*r*espect; *r*eader.