

THE ODD HUNDREDS

Introduction

In these pieces we followed the dogma of writing in blocks of 100 words. This was borrowed from Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's book *The Hundreds* (2019). They write in that book that, 'our poems (makings) are exercises in following out the impact of things (words, thoughts, people, objects, ideas, worlds) in hundred-word units or units of hundred multiples' (ix). There is no commentary along the way in this book.

We have followed this rule, drawing on a two-year co-produced project with 60 year 4-5 children in a primary school in inner Manchester. Our work began with an idea of creating a space for a year-group of children to make films within. We worked with two year 4 teachers initially, and our work was collaborative, we planned with the teachers, and hoped that the children's ideas would come out of the work. With the teachers, we planned a week's residency in December 2018, where we spent time supporting small groups of children to make films in class time. These films were then shown at two conferences. In the summer (2019) we worked with the same year group, and this second week saw a further set of films produced. The children moved into year 5. We then sat down with the same groups of children, and asked them about the films. We had a set of questions to ask, and we also showed the films and told stories

together with the children. Our discussions did not go to plan. The discussions were not particularly organised. Some storytelling took place and the children enjoyed watching the films. We asked permission to record using either video or audio or both. The video was a 3D camera. The children were careful about what they would tell us and we were only given permission to record selected moments from the discussions. These we transcribed. We then worked through the transcriptions and reflected on them. Kate wrote her own transcriptions, Steve used a machine. We also drew on reading we were doing at the time and made fieldnotes. We also made scratch notes on the films. Taken together this was a useful dataset, if it could be called that, to learn from.

Our work was informed and funded by a 3 year AHRC-funded project called 'Odd: Feeling Different in the World of Education'. With colleagues Rachel Holmes, Becky Shaw, Amanda Ravetz and Jo Ray over the initial two years we explored, separately and together the feelings that children had about school, and tried to identify ways in which children felt and experienced the world of school.

We present the results of our experience of listening to the films, the talk, and writing reflections in 100 words about what we felt from these experiences. Our hundred headings are learning, dreaming, running, in trouble, weather, form time,

busted, backwards, talking, different to normal and lonely. They came out from the transcriptions and the films and the feelings in the discussions. Some of the original sources from the children come from the automated transcription, that included numbers on the transcript for ease of reference. Taken together, we think this paints a picture of the experience of a school. Children's lived experience of school has been described by Hohti in her co-produced ethnographic work with children as materially entangled, and full of small allusive stories (2015). We found that children produced 'small stories' (Bamburg and Georgakopoulou 2008), such as the one below about the experience of taking a locust off a teacher's back. Their stories were allusive, fragmented and complex, hidden from the panoptic eyes of the teachers. These bits of text are almost 'nothing' (Hackett et al 2020), in that they could be brushed away, as incidental bits of talk. By paying proper attention to the talk and spending time listening, writing, and then writing up the talk in a Hundred, we have tried to pay attention to these fragments. These small stories have an allusive, elliptical, but very storied quality, incidentally subversive. They give a sense of the routines of school and the complexity of being a child, being lonely, being told off and being in trouble. Our feeling is that things were said, but perhaps differently to what we could hear, but they were still there, fragments in the chaotic swirl of the school day.



Is it Art?

Art seems to slip in from the edges and cause a problem. Art and research are not the same. Art can be art just because we say it is. Art develops concepts on its own plane of immanence. Art is not philosophy though it helps to show a path within hyper-chaos. Art cannot be put in the service of research. Art cannot territorialise knowing. Art is neither big nor clever. Art is not good or for good. Art is in a state of immanent collapse, this is its potential for renewal and the impossibility of its becoming. Art is open. I often wonder why we

have art in research projects. If a research project were a zoo art would be an escaped gorilla; projects have cages and areas for different animals, they have zookeepers and visitors. They have exotic things to look at and bored monkeys that perform for the kids. Our gorilla with its sad contemplative eyes escapes by accident he is large enough to do a lot of damage, clever enough to solve problems but lacking much considered intent. Most days he will return to his cage at dusk, pick the flesh from his teeth with a stick.

When we make art with children we do not make an image of adult art. We do not take from art its history or its technics or its styles. When we make art with children we make art in children's space and time. This is what we forget to remember or remember to forget. Sometimes we can make art of a different kind that enfolds from its own plane and finds its own path through the hyper-chaos. When the animals escape from the zoo they do not become wild, though they may remember what it felt like to be free.



Learning

Steve 10:53 Did you learn to do anything or learn anything about anything ?

Girl 10:57 I learned how to do the text part (put on titles in IMovie) you know how we did it, like ages ago I learned how to do that to change text.

Boy 11:05 I learned how to catch a locust off a teacher's back because there's was a locust on Miss MacNeil's back and I was filming it and then I captured it and then I let it fly off - it was next to us - I took a few pictures.

When I asked what you had learned I was wondering what you saw as learning. To remove a locust from a teacher's back is a learning that involves skills acquired over time. It requires you to overcome the fear of insects, then to take responsibility for the life of an animal and finally to make a decision to act. The things that are learned are already known they are practiced within an unexpected opportunity. Learning can be about developing a skill and responding to a new situation. We can own what we learn, it is ours to keep or lose.

I am interested in what we learn on the edges of what we are supposed to learn. The story of the locusts holds much more meaning than the actual event. The locust swarms and eats the crops – it comes as a plague. The locust on Miss McNeils back is a grasshopper or a cricket in my mind's eye. It is stuck in the fibers of a green cashmere sweater on a forgotten hot summer's day. It stands in for a type of learning that is difficult to put your finger on. A counter learning with rather than about something.

Dreaming

I had a dream I got washed up on a massive spoon. Had a dream it was about me having dreams and I was the mayor and ambassador and I had wings and everyone had wings and I tried to wake people up but I couldn't .

The ... most remarkable, and at the same time most incomprehensible, peculiarity of memory in dreams is shown in the selection of the material reproduced; ... it is not, as in the waking state, only the most significant things that are held to be worth remembering,

but ... the most ... insignificant details.

Literacy is re-formed in the process of doing and writing, of feeling and yearning toward something new, something half-glimpsed and ephemeral, made in the moment, something not fixed into texts or formed—something not yet said, but already spoken. Dreams are about what is remembered.

Research distills everyday experiences and makes a story about them. Dream re-telling and research processes share

these characteristics: both

involve processes of re-call and re-assembling. These can be a selective process of deciding, after the event is where meaning is found. But in dreams what is found is both significant and insignificant in equal part.

Spoons are small parts of the everyday. We use them to eat cereal and we learn to drop them when we are small children. The spoon story made the small spoon giant. Now the baby has dropped the spoon..... Oh he's dropped it again! The

idea of a giant spoon re-enacts

that baby world where adult objects are rendered large by the child's size. The total happening of the spoon being dropped. Total happenings enable babies to catch hold of time. We grow up through time, and leave behind the selves that saw the spoon to be giant-sized, becoming insignificant.

(Freud The Interpretation of Dreams, From Hoping, Living Literacies, Winnicott, 1957)



In trouble

12:01 Kate knocks over the camera

12:03 Steve looks cross and irritated.

12:38 child So it's okay because normally teachers don't get told off its true. And when we do something bad in some way or in our work or something the teachers always blame it on us. But they always say that they're going to get in trouble if we do our work wrong but in the end,

We end up getting in trouble.

13:02 Steve So is that why you liked to swap characters with adults?

13:05 Child Yeah it was - teachers are mean except you guys.

Watching myself on 360 footage camera my face is fully visible, on show. All stretched out the scene looks like a renaissance painting of the last supper. Kate

nearly knocks the camera over three times. I secretly believe she must be shuffling things on the table on purpose, she doesn't like the camera she doesn't like the image or the lens. I tell her off with my eyes, there is so much unspoken and unsaid but the kids know I'm telling her off, it is familiar. Children think its good adults get told off it seems fair a role reversal. In one of their films the kids pretend to be adults and perform them. They act them

out. They perform adult authority but they also perform the fun of being somebody else they subvert the performance. The adults perform as children they use the performance as an excuse to remember what it was like to be a child. I remember the sense of injustice where my emotions and feeling were seen as less-than my tears were not fully developed. I wasn't lonely I was just on my own. The wheels on the bus go round and round round and round.

(Lacan, Judith Butler, the movie Big, Foucault)

Weather

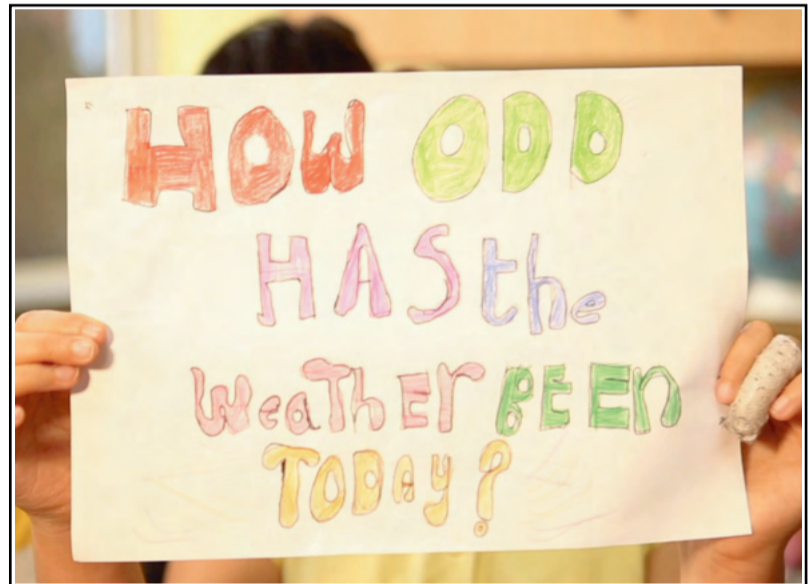
One evening when the sun was setting kids started to play outside and they made a beautiful snowman with hat, gloves and even buttons but then they had to go to sleep. ... then something even crazier happened that snowman started to floss and they all lived happily ever after. A group of children hold up pictures they have drawn, by the rainbow painted wall. Girl: so, it was sunny, then it went to cloudy and then it went to sunny again and then it was a thunderstorm. One boy, the

saluting boy, does this in a more exaggerated way. The weather is an example of the 'now' in that it offers us surprise. It takes us into a realm of what is happening now. How now. This event-ness of the weather is a coming-into-being that is both micro (snowflakes appear) and meso (it snows) and macro (snow clouds). Weather can be a comfort or it can feel like a point of disintegration. It can provide beauty but it can also be a source of danger. There is a connection between things

that the weather reveals – it is a collective source of ongoing experience. Playing outside is weather dependent. Where do the days go? The fife-and-drum of the storm. Afresh, afresh, afresh. Coming into being. The house has been all out at sea all night. We experience the weather all our lives, as small children, growing up, as adults, and it is an unspoken part of our daily life. Oh its raining again. Now it is sunny. Now it snows. In difference the weather re-assembles itself constantly, never quite the

same, always slightly different from the day before. Where is the weather and where does it go?

(Bloch, Traces, Massumi, Semblance and Event, Marianne Moore, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes)



Form time

Is something normal something that fits a form?

Are the odd bits of the day the bits that feel different to the normal?

Is normal different for everyone or is there a collective understanding of what feels normal?

Is it good to be outside formal education? Is the form made fit for purpose if it keeps collapsing?

When something seems to go off at a tangent does it break the form or shift it in another direction?

Is education a form?
Is knowledge a form?

Can we feel accepted if the form of education makes us feel odd?

Steve 3:58 So do you think it was different? So why was it different? Because I don't know, I spent one day when we first came to school doing your work. I did a bit of music and a little bit of philosophy. It seemed like you were doing quite a lot of other stuff as well the normal stuff anyway. Does it feel a bit like it's all maths and English?
Child 4:23 We always have Maths and English in the morning. In the afternoon, we sometimes do Maths and English. Depends what day of the week it is.

What school feels like and what school is are different and dependent on how we feel. I feel safe at Alma Park I feel that the young people are safe, I feel that things are being valued and looked after. I think this care is in the fabric of the school, beneath its skin, beyond its

curriculum. When I first saw a deaf child sign and show me how to say pig; I thought that we are all hard wired for meaning making. The school is a sign for care it takes care and is careful. Care is a form.

Steve 4:35 Do you still do hot topics like Vikings or Romans?

Child 4:38 In topic? We were doing the Mayans now we are doing natural disasters and North America, which are going to join up eventually, but now they're just separate at the moment.

Steve 4:49 Natural disasters in North America? What are they going to join up with?

child 1 5:01 Donald Trump

Child 3 5:02 I rubbed it out again, because I did it very faintly in pencil

Child 1 5:05 He is an unnatural disaster.

So it was a bit different because it felt different. A topic is in a way a form, like the Romans or the Vikings or the Mayans culture. A form can sit on an imaginary timeline. Sometimes the timeline is a woven mesh or mess. Not a clothesline with neatly pegged out separate washing or epochs. Education remains odd because the world it prepares children for is odd. The world does not follow lines or categories that are hung out to dry. Everybody knows this but everyone has to dry his or her washing in order to be able to cope with going out. Trump is an unnatural disaster.

(Tim Ingold, Maria Bellacasa, Witkin, Bergson, Derrida, Kungfu Panda)

Folding tongues

I can do it sideways.
Turning the tongue sideways.

We get to jump on the table
which we don't normally get to
do in school and its very funny

I'm only a little old lady - do
you remember that. Its odd at
first,

I get bullied, because he
makes the face switches and
that is online – so it is the
online stuff.

So it's okay because normally
teachers don't get told off its
true. And when we do
something bad in some way or
in our work something the
teachers always blame it on
us. But they always say, yeah
they always say that they that
we get that they're going to get
in trouble who if we do our
work wrong but in the end we
end up getting in trouble

Riverrun, past Eve and
Adam's, from swerve of shore
to bend of bay, brings us by a
commodious vicus of
recirculation back to Howth
Castle and Environs...

The fall
(bababadalgharaghtamminarro
nkonnbronntonnerronntuonnth
unntrovarrhounawnskawntooh
oohoordenenthunuk!)

School is odd because they
don't let us like have treats,
skittles, teachers handing out
skittle we got biscuits.
Slide backwards.
I really like that one

Odd movement
Upside down-ness
Things going a bit wrong
PlaytimeAnd weather

(Goffman, James Joyce
Finnegan's Wake)



Talking



Steve12:00 You speak
English, Spanish, Urdu

Child 12:03 French?

Child 12:07 And a little
bit of Punjabi

Child 12:11 It's like an
Indian like a rude type of
language Indian, but they
think it's not rude

Child 12:21 Punjabis
think its not rude the
language but it is

Child 12:28 is it talks? It
doesn't have swears

Child 12:56 one time he
swore in Urdu thinking
nobody speaks his
language but nearly
everyone speaks his
language

Child 12:58 when you

came you could speak in
Urdu to tons of people
because more people
speak it than English. My
brother was inspired to
make his own languages,
...

When I was on holiday, I
said stop saying to me,
you can think of this in
your mind not out loud, I
need to sleep. You know
about the weird words -
you could tell them to
make a movie about that

Do you speak Urdu to
each other? Zanib does.
It's because it's private. If
you don't want anyone to
listen, nobody will know.
Me and this girl and I ...
we have this really weird
joke (don't say) it's just all
the time

and we're just doing
it...Language has been
granted too much power,

it's not meaningful. The
birds spoke in Greek.
Babbling hysteria. Words
have no meaning. My self
is in this language. In the
secret world of
languages, languages
shift and multiply using
underground tunnels in
which meaning is secretly
made and re-made,
crossing, hybrid and
diverse. The cool web is
not what it seems.
Languages are made and
re-made in the corners of
our minds, they are used
for secrets and teasing,
swearing and joking. At
our school we speak in
the middle of many
languages, we cross
languages and make up
new ones.
(Barad, Woolf, Freud,
Wittgenstein, Ofelia
Garcia and Li Wei).



Different to Normal

Child 4:35 Walking about actually there is a tons of odd things, but then if we hadn't been working with you on the odd project, we wouldn't of recognized them. I used to think everything is normal. Now and I did this, I thought like now when I walk around everything is odder and it made me feel happier.

Child 4:58 This guy who was sometimesI used to see on the street, just walking around all the time, what I thought it's what he did every single day. He doesn't actually do that all the time.

Everyone has a different idea of what is normal.

At Alma Park school its normal to speak many languages. It is normal to sign when you sing. It is normal to have tennis balls on the feet of chairs and tables so they do not make lots of scratching noises. For lots of children it is normal to hear the world through a transducer that is implanted into your scull. I sometimes wonder if we pretend to kids the world is much more normal than it actually is. I see the same man every time I go for a walk.



Running

I was running down the corridor and a teacher told me to stop running, I carried on running, another teacher told me to stop running then I was fast walking and then I banged into a teacher. Karen was running later in the day. We get to jump on the table which we don't normally get to do in school and its very funny every day when you walk around walking about actually there a tons of odd things. Now and I did this, I thought like now when I walk around everything's odder and it made me feel happier. For the first time ever did not do my reading-while-walking... I missed my next run session. As we

jumped the tiny hedge because we couldn't be bothered with the tiny gate to set up off on our running... for a moment, just a moment, I almost nearly laughed.

Running is serious. In Milkman it is an escape from a world in Lockdown, during the Troubles. In the Odd films, people run, while dancing, while playing football, they jump and dance the floss. The move between movements is made closer so that the separate-ness of running, jumping and dancing is challenged. Running could be seen as a collective way of being, [children] do not interact with external objects so

much as correspondence with them. When children

run they are not thinking then doing, they are thinking-moving and they are enacting thought in movement. This might not be intentional and is a different kind of meaning, possibly removed from representational thoughts. Autotelic practices are internally motivating in that the activity is the goal and the reward in itself. Running is autotelic because it defines cognitive concepts of learning as sequential and sensible. Running must be tamed, produced as sport, have meaning, stopped.

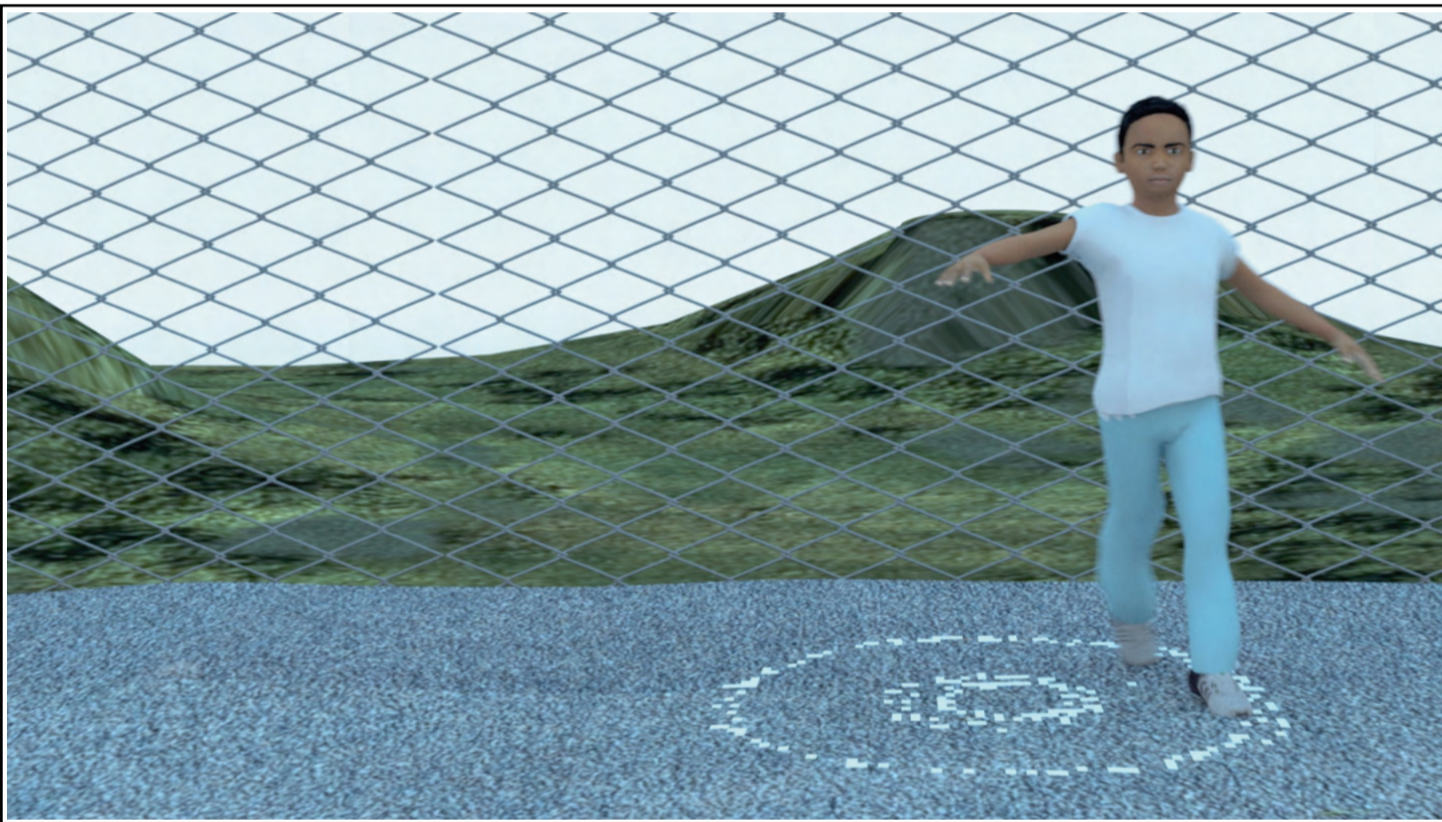
(Abi Hackett, Anna Burns Milkman, Pauliina Rautio)



Busted

When the girl told me that we were odd for asking them what felt odd at school her eyes accused me. I saw this in the moment of accusation, I saw it again watching the film and cutting her from my edit. I was taken aback on both occasions by the authority in her eyes the direct and personal sincerity of the accusation. Our crime was to cross an imaginary line; in showing an interest in the world of the child we were drawing attention to something that is theirs. Once a territory is identified it can be colonized. (Deleuze, Foucault, Lacan. Barad)





Lonely

This is the books, they never get read, so they keep complaining that nobody is opening me and I never get my daily stretch,

student 8:08 just before hometime because there is no one that is very quiet. It's kind of like creepy. It's like creepy the dog.

Unknown Speaker 8:15 The lights are always switched off.

Unknown Speaker 8:20 and the cleaner is unusual because they just clean up and stuff.

student 8:24 every time it's like lunchtime there's like at least like two people that

could just hit chatting at the end of the day just so silent Sharpies feeling lonely in the classroom.

There are quite a lot of moments when a child reports noticing they are themselves on their own, like going to the toilet or being their own in the afternoon. Carrying your own self through school is an

interesting experience, like having a cup of water you can't spill. Learning how to be alone, where to be alone In the corners of the playground In the toilets in the middle of the afternoon Secret thoughts, private. Who can hear your thoughts? Where is the self that you carry like a raft through the day?

(Jung, Storr, Freud).