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Caught Up in the Moment: Seeking Magic in Literacy Research

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Caught Up in the Moment: Seeking Magic in Literacy Research

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Abstract

In the public consciousness there is significant capacity for talking about how experiences move us, how we get caught up in things, and the ways in which what we imagine impacts on who we are. In this chapter we explore ways of considering the "magic" of what people get caught up in as a means through which to undertake literacies research. Thinking about magic to consider the embodied, relational and sensory nature of literacies, what enchants us, how we become through interaction, and the magic of the everyday as well as the magic of research processes. Considering the impact of imaginaries, engrossment, and affiliations on our day-to-day lives, we examine what is gained from starting with them when we come to investigate literacies and language. What cuts across differing contexts, institutions, behaviours, permissions, relationships, modes, media, and logics, and is sustained throughout these shifts. We use terms relating to magic that have currency in everyday life in westernised societies, as a heuristic for thinking about how to navigate the ways in which theory and practice are divided by the rational processes of academic research and rhetoric. We consider the familiarity of the ineffability of everyday life and consider the ways in

which the theoretical apparatus of institutional research asks us to frame this through the written, rational, and admissible.

Caught Up in the Moment: Seeking Magic in Literacy Research

> *It functions to remove us from what we are doing and place us somewhere else.*
>
> —Pahl and Pool, 2022, p. 63

Reading and writing appear differently when we apply frameworks that consider the embodied, sensory, affective, sociomaterial, neurodiverse, relational, and hopeful dimensions of practices, environments, and emergent composition. As researchers, we have worked to expand practical notions of language and literacies, which leads to practical implications for methodological and analytical work. This work has been motivated by the significance of what we have seen in practice and a need to communicate this significance to communities of educators and researchers. As a group of researchers and practitioners, we have felt that some of our core theoretical and methodological tools are no longer as useful as they once were, or that we are increasingly arguing for further expansion of concepts and more methodological complexity. Coming together, we have tried to find a term or concept that ran across this complexity in a useful way. Talking about magic is a means for us to focus on what we see as core within literacies research: the fantastic in the everyday; circumstances in which individuals feel that something has happened to them; the means through which we create shifts or changes; and the ways in which people use literacies to move through social life.

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As a group, we all work in the U.K., predominantly in the north of England. We explore projects working with children and adult participants. We come from a range of backgrounds—some of us hold positions within research institutions, some in other organisations, and we are at different stages in our careers. At times we talk in detail about our backgrounds and trajectories when discussing specific research projects. We recognise that to even be engaging professionally with theory and research, in a Western context, is a privileged position. We also recognise that much of our writing team are able to access forms of privilege relating to Whiteness, cultural capital, economic capital, and gender identity (to varying degrees). We believe it is important that we recognise the privileges that we have as researchers, and that research and theory are dependent on access to levels of prestige.

Schools and schooling seem to remain largely unchanged by the monumental events over the past five years. Literacy in formal schooling tends to exist as bounded in time, concerned with older print-based media, and centred on linguistically focused approaches to research and practice. There have clearly been turns that draw in postqualitative theories (Kuby, 2014 and process philosophy (Ehret, 2018), and we strive to contribute to these movements/turns with a turn to magic. We are also thinking very practically when thinking about magic. This might seem paradoxical, but our focus is on the magic that happens in everyday life, and we are invested in the practicalities and logistics involved in creating positive and progressive literacy environments. All five research vignettes in the following text carry similar properties of literacy as *magic*:

- Time as durational (Bergson, 1910) and laden with memories and associations
- Spaces as both physical and speculative/imaginative

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- Actions as moving across representational and nonrepresentational ways of knowing and being
- Bodies as thinking-sensing entities

Being in time and space; acting, knowing, and being; and having a body are all fundamental parts of human life, and in that respect are quite simple. We all have significant knowledge of these properties. As we move into academic research spaces, these properties cause problems for the rhetoric process of linear research narratives and build in complexity. Being caught up in the magic of experience differs significantly from the means through which we as researchers narrate these experiences. We use terms throughout the chapter linked with theory because they help us to tease out strands of magic as a framing device. *Durational time*, for instance, comes from Henri Bergson's (1910) notion that time can be on a sliding scale moving constantly and fluidly from past to present to future.

We also use the vignettes as a means of articulating qualities that we want to imbue into contexts or evoke through research. We offer this perspective as a way of attending to the complex human nature of literacies in everyday life, whilst also focussing on the familiar and relatable nature of many of the experiences that we use these perspectives to describe. If researchers wish to reimagine or reshape existing contexts and practices to address precarities, then they need to move into these imaginative bubbles to think otherwise, and be otherwise, whilst keeping an eye on practicalities. In an era characterised by an attention economy (Franck, 2019; United Nations Economist Network, 2023), we need to take what is compelling seriously and find ways to draw others into imaginative spaces that can move them toward positive social futures.

A Note on Theory and Concepts

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We consider a range of terms and concepts across this chapter that have their grounding in philosophical and research literature, or in our academic research:

- Creative imaginaries
- Narrative
- Temporality/duration
- Immanence
- Intersubjectivity
- "As if" spaces
- Resonance
- Ways of becoming
- Living literacies
- Neurodiverse literacies

We also use several terms that relate to magic, in the public imagination, to blend together or encircle numerous perspectives, concepts, or disciplinary approaches in ways that we feel are useful in considering language and literacy practices. We do this to say something about the complexity of communication, interaction, literacies, and life in the current era, whilst recognising the influential everyday power literacies and language have to move, change, or create:

- *Wizardry:* The art or practice involved in creating "magic"
- *Illusion:* The impressions of reality that construct our reality
- *Insight:* A glimpse or view into the nature of things

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- *Evocation:* The act or fact of creating possibilities and the entanglements from which they emerge
- *Spell-"ing":* The use or exercise of practices to engage with "magic"

In each case we position these magical terms as orientations to both theory and practice that provide ways of sticking with the magic of everyday literacies. All terms are contested, and *magic* is not immune to carrying inherent assumptions about power and capital. Reflecting on classical notions of magic, one might think of White, male wizards and warlocks with wide-brimmed canonical hats—a bit like Gandalf's hat in *Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1966). This is one version of magic, but it most certainly is not the only one. Magic runs through all cultures and communities, and it shapes and shifts based on practices, spirituality, values, beliefs, and so forth.

We also recognise that talking about magic and using magic as a term to engage with literacies and language in academic research spaces can feel whimsical. We are also not positioning our research perspectives within ontologies or epistemologies that are influenced by heritages of occultism. Equally, magic can be marginalising, particularly if magic is seen to go against religious beliefs. However, in the public consciousness there is significant capacity for talking about how experiences move us, how we get caught up in things, and the ways in which what we imagine impacts on who we are. Many of the literacies that we see in our research work can potentially be seen as quaint or unimportant in traditional mainstream framings of literacy. In this sense there is much currency to be gained from exploring the ways of considering the "magic" of what people get caught up in as a means through which to undertake literacies research. Whilst we may still be open to accusations of whimsy, we would argue that playfulness, fancy, humour, and novelty move people through their everyday lives, and thinking

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about magic allows us to take this capriciousness seriously. We note that humour and playfulness are burgeoning fields within literacy studies (Ehret et al., 2023; Low, 2024). Equally, our participants come from a range of backgrounds and exist in a sociopolitical context where mainstream literacies or schooling serve to erase their experiences, sense of identity, and literacies. We recognise that our conceptualisation of magic is grounded in a privileged Western position that we do not share with many of our participants. However, working with participants to explore the compelling, captivating, and transformative nature of their experiences can serve as a means of privileging and legitimating the literacies they value that may be devalued by dominant conceptualisations of literacy.

Example 1: Hugh and Gemma—Creative Writing and Wizardry

Feeling that Magic Has Transpired

Gemma is a creative learning manager with a background in teaching, acting, and research. Hugh is a literacies researcher in an English department. In our example, we want to start off by talking explicitly about magic, in the sense that magic can help create inviting and generative spaces. We want to think about magic being compelling because it involves negotiation, participation, feelings, and a recognition that "something" has happened. In discussing conjuring and stage magic, Goto-Jones (2016) states:

> So, magic is not an object, not a prop or a mechanism, not even, a technique or an accomplishment. At least, not *per se.* Magic flows from the hands of the magician only when an audience feels magic happening. It is an interpersonal and intersubjective phenomenon. And that, more than anything else, is the secret to magic: a magician is one who causes you to feel that magic has transpired, no matter what has transpired. (p. 1)

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Magic only happens when the audience can get something from what the magician is doing. Something is done, in a space, over time, that creates a feeling. *Enchantment* as a term goes much of the distance in articulating this phenomenon (Burnett & Merchant 2018). However, we are interested in exploring the conscious work of educators to create "enchanting" circumstances, and also the simple recognition that someone has made something transpire. In this case, wizardry describes the art or practice of creating magic—the work involved in "casting a spell" and creating enchanting or compelling spaces. We are interested in what comes from considering mainstream literacies as only able to "happen" when the emphasis is on the class feeling that something awesome, magic, entertaining is happening. And that them buying in to what they are being presented with is centred. What if, say, expanded noun phrases, or punctuation, or spelling were seen as things that were done in a space over time that create feelings, as opposed to things that are explained and acquired by children.

Literacies and Narratives of Magic

In literacies studies there has been a critique of the focus on the conscious design involved in literacy-related activity and a move to consider the embodied and relational nature of meaning-making (Leander & Boldt, 2013). This critique has been informed through thinking with multimodal, sociomaterial, and posthumanist perspectives (amongst many). In linguistic research there is a focus on the complex of practices, semiotic potential, and historically situated nature of written English (Lillis, 2013), and an engagement with the partial, emergent, performative nature of identity in context (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Creativity (as a human phenomenon) is seen as fundamental to interaction (Carter, 2016), and "being creative" (as a socially or culturally recognisable attribute or quality) is seen as something that is of significant value to both

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children's ability to navigate adult life and societal futures more generally (Durham Commission, 2019).

Whilst these expanded views of literacy and language exist, in England teachers and children are often having to navigate traditional framings of literacy as codified skills and language and not as something that is "done" (i.e., languaging). There is a particular focus in the English literacy curriculum and inspectorate on spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and on skills-based conceptualisations of literacy. In this context, a teacher's "worth" is often tied up with how well they can get children to achieve set learning objectives and to what extent they can manage behaviour. The focus on skills and assessments in literacy provision creates circumstances where teachers feel pressured to focus their English teaching on curriculum objectives such as expanded noun phrases or fronted adverbials. Having access to a theoretical framing of literacy that we consider to be more "progressive" is significantly different from creating circumstances in which expanded notions of literacies and language can be materialised and valued. Spoken and written English are often presented as immutable to children, and so can be ripe for playful revaluation (Escott, Christie, et al., 2020, Escott, Thornton, & Bullivant, forthcoming).

Grimm and Co. are a registered children's literacy charity located in Rotherham, U.K. They take a child-led, arts-based immersive approach to literacy that focuses on developing children's sociocultural literacies. Their core narrative as an organisation concerns magic. Magical beings are real. Graham and Grizelda Grimm sell products to the magical world. The thing that magical beings draw their energy from is stories. Therefore, children creating stories with Grimm & Co. is of utmost importance to magical beings. This central narrative was developed through consultation with children and serves as an invitation to play and to set Grimm & Co. spaces apart from the everyday. This magical narrative appeals to children and young people's sense of

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fun and possibilities and opens a space of exploration where writing for resilience and well-being is centred. Escapism and adventure often provide the means of motivating these explorations. Magic has a widespread position in the public consciousness of children (e.g. Harry Potter, Minecraft, and Dungeons and Dragons). Grimm's magical narrative is generative, but also something that they must evolve and develop in order to support the diverse communities of the region they work in. The work that this magical narrative facilitates is the creation of a creative imaginary through which children can be moved toward positions of confidence and self-worth. Within the in-school literacy project that we want to discuss (called 'Chapter and Verse'), Gemma and Hugh arrived at a school to investigate a fictional story coming into the real world. This was a mainstream primary school in a lower socioeconomic status area of Sheffield and involved a year 4 class (ages 8–9). The class of 24 was made up of an equal split of boys and girls, with a third of the class receiving Special Educational Needs and Disabilities support, and half the class qualifying for Pupil Premium support (a form of school funding that supports underprivelaged communities). This school is in a majority White area, and some students in the class were from minoritised or mixed ethnicity backgrounds.

Chapter and Verse

In the Chapter and Verse project, Grimm and Co. were focussed on encouraging teachers to embed child-led, arts-based immersive approaches into their literacy teaching by teaming them up with an artist. Gemma was focussed on integrating Grimm and Co.'s child-led, immersive, playful approach (their "signature pedagogy," see Bullivant, 2022) into existing schemes of literacy learning. The goal was to develop teachers' creative courage without adding additional pressure or stress. The focus here was very much on starting with something that children can get caught up in and using this momentum to develop their sociocultural literacies. Things like

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expanded noun phrases (e.g., *the scary monster rose* from the sea) can be woven into the fabric of this delivery so that materialising these outcomes becomes less the focus and more the cherry on the top. Often, we have seen children jump at the chance to explore, but also within this work we have seen significant trepidation from children when they are asked to get involved and play. Equally, we have met and worked with a number of teachers who have felt that the "magic" has gone out of their teaching or felt reinvigorated when seeing how their pupils respond to a shift in delivery. Starting with what cuts across and the impact of imaginaries and affiliations on the everyday lives of these children provides a way of shifting their encounters with literacy learning. It provides space for the generative, emergent, social, material, literacy, and language activity on which curriculum outcomes are predicated

The Iron Man was the set text on the curriculum for this class, so the framing for sessions was that the world of the Iron Man was bleeding over into the school. The children found a huge metal arm in a wooded space on school grounds. A self-contained theatre space called "The Bridge Between" was found in the hall. This space was described as a conduit between our world and the world of the Iron Man. The headteacher stopped by the class to inform them that there were no school dinners because the Iron Man had eaten the oven doors and all the cutlery. The children had to audit all the metal in the classroom after this and develop a menu that would appeal to the Iron Man so that he wouldn't destroy the school kitchen. The class teacher had a strange headset that Hogarth, the main character from the book, would ring her on. She would field questions from the children. The children considered what their own character would be (A woman made out of multiple wolves? A man made from rubbish or nature?), what their story would look like, and much more. Much of this work started with something that caught the

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children's interest, an invitation to shape shared class narratives, and control over their own individual stories.

In a session where we were using paints to create an image from the Iron Man story, one of our participants went "off task" and was caught up in the magic of composing a musical performance, which led to him involving a number of his peers in this activity. When we asked this participant what pseudonym we should use for him, he wrote "Posesor Donsaur," which we could translate to "Professor Dinosaur," but we think Posesor Donsaur will do just fine. Another participant you will meet is "Agent Chicken":

> Posesor Donsaur was lying on the floor with a sheet of paper tapping a plastic cup. He said he was composing music and he was writing on the paper with a form of notation. Posesor Donsaur was still drumming and more pupils started to get involved, bringing more cups and sticks. He carried on working on his notation. The group built up and Gemma joined them, asking Posesor Donsaur to perform what he had noted down. They discussed writing lyrics. There was some negotiations going on about who could be involved and who couldn't and constant tapping and drumming. Agent Chicken drummed the notation and Gemma asked him if he could still do it if his tongue wasn't to the left of his mouth as he had a concentration face. He tried but was less successful. Agent Chicken played some more and Posesor Donsaur decided to conduct with conductor gestures. The group worked on the lyrics and they had something in them about "all day and all night." We eventually started to clear up the paint stuff. After this there was a performance of the drumming "band" with a recognition that Posesor Donsaur was the band leader. (Hugh's field notes, 07/07/2022)

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The composition involved negotiation, participation, and recognition of Posesor Donsaur's role in making something magical happen, whether through initiating the drumming and tapping, or through his notations, or in coordinating it through the act of conducting the group. This musical composition was not the intended learning objective for this session. In a framing which centres students' participation, negotiation, and recognition, this activity can be seen as of significant value—to Posesor Donsaur, but also to his peers. Things were done with materials, notations, narratives, bodies, and interactions in a classroom space over the course of a session that created a sense that something significant had transpired for the children, Gemma, Hugh, and the teacher. Posesor Donsaur was recognised as the person who had a significant role in the magic of what had transpired. Here, then, thinking about magic involves considering the interpersonal, sociopolitical, and sociomaterial elements involved in literacies being seen to transpire. In this example, literacy objectives, class behaviour, teachers' professional identities, and contemporary "schooling" are all precariously balanced on something transpiring and being seen to have transpired. The challenge is that this orientation is toward a focus on narrow framings of what should and could transpire.

Example 2: Chris—Autistic Adults, Ruling Passions, and Illusion

Magic and Technic

An alternative conceptualisation of *magic* offers a useful way into thinking about the literacies explored during a project about autistic adults' experiences of what are often referred to as their *special interests*. Campagna (2018), coming from a philosophical background, contrasts two paradigms through which humans understand and engage with the world, naming these *technic* and *magic*. Existing at a metaphysical level, *technic* refers to a worldview rooted in systematic, rational, and primarily language-based approaches. This paradigm emphasises control,

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predictability, and the reduction of life to calculable and describable units. As such, the world is shaped by language and its capacity to precisely describe it; anything that cannot be accurately reduced to words is deemed not to exist, to not be *real*. Campagna suggests that this paradigm is dominant in contemporary Western society, where there is a focus on productivity and the generation of capital, and where technological solutions and bureaucratic procedures prevail.

In contrast, Campagna's magic paradigm represents an alternative way of perceiving and interacting with the world—one that moves beyond language in order to value mystery, imagination, feeling, and the transcendence of mundane realities. Here, *magic* acknowledges the existence of forces and experiences that cannot be fully articulated or controlled by rational thought. Magic embraces the creative, the spontaneous, and the spiritual dimensions of human existence. Campagna argues that the dominance of technic stifles the human spirit by imposing rigid structures and reducing the richness of life to mere functionality. He advocates for a resurgence of magic, suggesting that reconnecting with this paradigm can restore balance, enrich our experience, and cultivate a deeper, more holistic understanding of the world and our place within it. This shift would allow for a more vibrant, meaningful existence. Campagna's notion of magic continues our collective focus on spaces of possibility and starting with what people are caught up in, whilst also helping us to think about the work literacy researchers undertake to engage with the impressions of reality that construct our reality. This dichotomy is useful for these purposes, but in working with these two terms we do not wish to suggest that all human practices can be easily sorted into one category or another. Campagna provides an example of how theory is involved in renegotiating normative or dominant norms in practice, and the work involved in renegotiating an impression that we feel is illusory or unhelpful.

Special Interests

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The idea of life being "meaningful" and the concept of making meaning from the world via engagement with self-directed topics of interest was the key focus of the Ruling Passions project. Renaming autistic *special interests* as *ruling passions*, drawing on Barton and Hamilton's (1998) earlier work on everyday literacies, was a move that served two purposes. First, it helped make a connection between an aspect of autistic lived experience and a broad understanding of literacies, thereby bringing into being a field that I am calling *neurodivergent literacies*. By mobilising the understanding of literacies existing in the relationships between people, I am manifesting what I call a relational model of neurodiversity that emphasises the interdependence of all people. This model is something I am developing in my current work. Moving away from the neoliberal adoption of a neurotypical/neurodivergent binary, relational neurodiversity understands *neurotypicality* as a societal expectation rather than a realistic description of any single person. Being invested in power relations, it is the literacies that we value in society that do some of the upholding of the harmful neurotypical ideal that does not, in fact, benefit anyone other than those invested in keeping the world as it is and as it always has been.

Second, I chose to refer to *ruling passions* rather than *special interests* due to the medicalised origins of the latter term, which aligns the phrase with a historically situated deficit understanding of what it means to be autistic, in contrast with more recent socially and culturally sensitive understandings that have grown from work around neurodiversity. Knowledge of another paradigm is useful here—Walker's (2021) *neurodiversity paradigm* describes a way of understanding the world in contrast with the *pathology paradigm*, which positions difference in largely deficit terms. Campagna (2018) talks of the world being shaped by words, and when those words are of a medicalised origin then the possibilities for understanding and shaping those worlds are shaped in a particular way. Replacing a medicalised term with a term from a different

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domain changes the emphasis here—this is a phrase that has been used to talk about interests in the wider population without assuming deficit experiences or requiring essentialist understandings of difference. It allowed me to explore autistic people's interests, to show interest and explore their particular qualities, without instrumentalizing that difference. It also helped that I am, myself, autistic and am motivated by a wish to understand a common experience, rather than to add to scholarship that relies on the othering of its subjects.

Taking a *neurodiversity paradigm* (Walker, 2021) approach, coupled with an expansive New Literacy Studies perspective on literacy, I interviewed 13 autistic adults. Participants were between 18 and 66 years of age, and interviews were spoken or typed in order to meet the needs and preferences of participants. Four participants were women, five men, and four nonbinary. Participants self-described their race and/or ethnicity: nine White British, one White British/Scottish, one Brown African, one Irish/Indian, and one Brown African. Several participants were multiply neurodivergent, associating with terms such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and dyspraxia. We talked about their passions, the literacies they involved, and the purposes and positions they played in people's lives. To be *neurodivergent* is not synonymous with being *autistic*—autism is just one possible "way of being" (Deligny, 1975/2015) that comes under the neurodivergent umbrella. That includes, to mention a few labels, ADHD, dyslexia, epilepsy, dyspraxia, and so on. The term *neurodivergent* was coined by Assassasmasu (see Walker, 2021), who intended it to be an inclusive, socially shaped term, in contrast to the closely guarded and defined vocabulary that exists in the medical domain. In the realm of pathology, being autistic is to be aligned with a certain type of literacy. The main diagnostic manual, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth edition (DSM-5), refers to autism in relation to deficits in communication and limited

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understanding of the world. Other diagnostic materials, such as the widely used Autism Quotient (AQ) test (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001), drill down even further into literacies, suggesting that, unlike those it frames as "normal," autistic people often have little interest in reading fiction, are not good at understanding or visualising characters in books, and often find it challenging to create stories.

As such, the pathology paradigm makes allegiances with the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1989) to decide what people can and can't do, and who people can and cannot be—to use power to enforce existing hierarchies. Notably, the DSM-5 also makes it hard to be happy and autistic—autism is only diagnosed when it is having a significant detrimental impact on someone's life. Furthermore, what it refers to as "special interests" are deemed to be "repetitive and restrictive." Through my interviews, long-established cliches about autistic lived experience were unravelled.

Ruling Passions

Participants talked about an array of varied topics of interest that were related to literacies in a range of complex ways. Sometimes the literacies were "traditional" and therefore easily recognised as literacy. Examples here related frequently to reading, and several participants referred to themselves as "bookworms" and "voracious readers," from a very young age. Some participants read the same book several times; others moved on quickly from one text to another. There was a variety of experiences, including a split between those who preferred fiction, nonfiction, or a mix of both. At other times, the literacy involved was multimodal and broader in scope. One participant described his passion for narrative and story via the role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons, explaining "I enjoy the narrative, the telling the story both as a player

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and then also running games myself…I am regularly either thinking about a new character concept, thinking about where I want to take the campaign story…". Others described their strong connections with music, film, knitting, cycling, photography, video games, and the like—a varied, almost infinite list of activities that defied the label of "restrictive and repetitive."

It was clear from the accounts of all participants that their interests were tied up with their enjoyment of life, with their identities, with wellbeing, and with making social connections and networks with others. To attempt to reduce the quality of such experiences to words alone would be to submit to Campagna's technic paradigm. Similarly, to functionalise them and reduce them by categorising the "purpose" they played in people's lives would also sideline the *magic* inherent in the lived experiences. Bergson's (1903) concept of *durée* emphasises the continuous flow of time as experienced from within, highlighting the qualitative aspects of lived time rather than the quantitative, segmented time of clocks. He argues that this inner, subjective experience of time cannot be fully captured or represented by static, analytical means—it can only be inhabited "from within." As such, the "true" nature of reality, characterised by this dynamic and fluid temporal experience, eludes complete representation and understanding through conventional, objective methods.

Figure 1. Bergson's Concept of *Durée.* Copyright Chris Bailey.

Alt text: A comic image of a hand throwing a ball. The text "I shall no longer grasp the movement from without, remaining where I am, but from where it is" is displayed outside the hand at stages over time. The final part of the text, "from within, as it is in itself," is displayed within the hand.

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Not only is it impossible for an individual to fully convey the meaning or impact of their favourite pastime into precise language, it would be restrictive to suggest that any researcher could do the same—to "grasp the movement from without" (Bergson, 1903)—to give an overall impression of the value of these activities. This said, whilst it is not possible to articulate the nuance of experience, these experiences are inherently familiar and entirely knowable through their relatability. Frameworks such as the DSM-5 and terms such as *autistic*, *special interests*, and *neurotypical* shape how people understand themselves, are seen by others, and come to make sense of how they relate to the world around them. Considering literacies involves negotiating perceptions, framings, and ideologies related to reading and writing. It also involves looking at what people do in terms of practices. Here, then, thinking about magic involves an increased engagement with the things that people do as they exist within durational time and the ways in which these experiences are not just framed by literacy ideologies, but also by other socially significant paradigms. Passions, practices, and special interests all relate to what people do as they exist in durational time, and they all come with their attendant ideological perspectives, which in turn impact on how people make sense of themselves and their identity. In this example, focussing on interests in relation to literacies is useful because it helps highlight the impossibility of what Campagna (2018) calls "total language"—attempts to categorise, to define, to sort people and their experiences under precise descriptions or labels—for particular kinds of humans will always fail because life is more nuanced and alive. Autistic adults engaging with ruling passions involves them navigating the impressions of reality that construct their reality, with these navigations being part of the fabric of everyday life.

Example 3: Jennifer—Drawing and Insight

COVID Stories and Immanence

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In winter 2022, Steve Pool, Yun Sun, and I conducted a small research study in a special education school in a southwestern UK city. At the beginning of the research, we had hoped to move into the school for two to three months, two days a week to work with children and young people on COVID stories made up of anecdotes, memories, and reflections about their COVID experiences. We wanted to start with prompts—our own stories, anecdotes, and reflections; share images of key moments; and then ask children and young people across the primary and secondary schools to produce short films that depicted their COVID tale. The academy has a primary and secondary school, and they are two quite separate buildings with a 10-minute walk between them. There is a spectrum of learning needs and disabilities across students in the primary and secondary schools. For two good reasons, we abandoned our ambitious plans for individual or pair-produced short films and scaled back our research goals. The main reason for this decision was COVID and research disruptions due to spikes in cases and a shortage of teaching staff; the other reason was that our research plans were too ambitious.

In the primary school, we embarked on a film project that made a sensory journey across all of the classrooms in the schools. As a research team we witnessed an array of senses, from a child playing with the filigree on a green tinsel pom-pom to another child wrapping himself up in fuchsia gossamer fabric (Pool et al., 2023). There were many of these moments on display, and they were magical in the way they illustrated resonant sensations, ways of becoming, and pockets of joy. What moved to the foreground of the research was an increasing urge to slow down and watch life and everyday sentience unfold. That everyday being involves thinking about the magic of dwelling or being within time, bodies, spaces, and environments. We ended up calling this *literacies of immanence* (Pool et al., 2023). We drew on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) immanence to help us describe what we saw, experienced, felt:

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> Our deliberate use of the phrase literacies of immanence connects the research […] to Deleuze and Guattari's writings about immanence (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Deleuze defines immanence as a slowing down and sitting with entanglements. In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari recognise that there is always potential in assemblages where new and emergent becomings come into relation. What this means in practices, or least as we construe it for our research, is a love and being for what is. The children and young people we spent time with did not focus on knowledge but on an interest, even love for things, settings, ideas, and people. (Pool et al., 2023, p. 6)

What we witnessed during the primary school research was experiences, senses, and modes all at once. Throughout the research, we reflected on and discussed our decisions about what we noticed, attended to, and analysed and what represented data. Equally, the process of returning to these moments and sitting with them in relation to theory means that the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice involved in research work is itself constituted by literacies of immanence.

Collaging and Postdigitality

For this vignette, I discuss a collage. Over two days, we placed two large sheets of paper taped together on the art room floor. We asked students in years 9–11 to draw something that reminded them of their COVID days and ways. Classes funnelled into the art room over the two days, and around 30 14- to 16-year-olds filled the pages with drawings. One young man drew Ukrainian and Russian flags side by side, which felt tense and contentious in the winter of 2022. One young

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woman drew a flurry of tiny flowers and hearts. Steve drew goldfish. I drew an infinity symbol and a snail. There were creatures, sharks eating stick people, and lots of allusions to media, such as the symbol for the umbrella corporation from the Resident Evil video game series. To celebrate this feast for the eyes, Steve turned on his fibre optic-lit steel colander and added a strobe light and turned off the overhead lights. The collage materialises young people's imaginative whimsies; it cracks open spaces for the everyday, lived, and felt; it moves in and out of virtuality and physicality. In other words, to me, it illustrates many characteristics of the postdigital condition.

Postdigitality involves fluid, tacit movements across screens, paper, or other physical places with digital twins. Postdigital literacy is magical in the sense that it constitutes new discrete literacy skills or practices that are layered, participatory, and move across temporal contours. Also, and importantly, postdigitality implies plurality as discussed above—as complicating binaries and categories and instead existing across physical/digital spaces to communicate and make meaning. Think about a Google image from 5 or 10 years ago that appears before you as you sip your coffee looking at your phone. Though the featured collage is flat with simple drawings on it, it carries within it a portal to varied transmediated thoughts and texts and to wars and upheaval and to flights of the imagination. These are artefacts that involve craft and alchemy to cast their spell. What differentiates this research artefact from other artefacts is precisely its layered and dimensional qualities. Where Heath clearly anchored the much-cited literacy event within "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretative processes" (1983, p. 93), this collage and the textual practices it applies are distinct. Ehret, Hollett, and Jocius (2016) explore physical and virtual mobilities and an imperative for researchers to explore boundaries and exclusions with youth's meaning-making

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across community contexts. The use of literacy events has been contemporised in research to account for the multiple scales and dimensions of literacy events that cross physical places with digital places (see Stornaiuolo et al., 2017; Leander & Burriss, 2020). In brief, there is a wider context of communication now that moves far beyond the boundaries of a piece of writing. Within this collage, there are words,colours, symbols, flags, brushstrokes, swirls, symbols, and icons, , and importantly, a surfeit of affect and assemblages of modes that translate into a language all their own. Here, then, thinking about magic involves considering the immanence that is central to composition, as well as thinking about the multitude of modes, mediums, and environments that allow for this slowing down and sitting with entanglements, in order to consider the means through which this sitting allows individuals to materialise thoughts about the social, political, media, and cultural issues that matter to them. As young people are encouraged to think, know, and be magical, they are emboldened to compose counternarratives that display their concerns, passions, and agency.

What I notice about this postdigital condition as a researcher is that everything seems to happen at once in ways that I did not see or recognise in my early fieldwork. Fieldwork now is crowded and messy—digital/analog, technological/nontechnological, timeless/time-bound—mostly performative involving fluid movements across representational and nonrepresentational communications. As *literacy* researchers, our relationship with data has shifted toward the movements and dynamics of modes, affect, and performance. Literacy researchers need to be attuned to what else is possible to know, do, and become. Immanences helps us to think about how literacies are tied up with the ways in which we are being and living within the everyday, as well as the layered and participatory ways in which we do this—the magic of the present state. It also draws attention to the postdigital quality of the synchronicity of the material and immaterial

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in everyday life. Slowing things down and being within moments offers a glimpse at the wider context that moves far beyond the temporal boundaries of literacy events. This shift also invites different textures, experiences, and immanences to our encounters with research processes, methodologies, theories, data, and practice

Example 4: Samyia and Kate—Treescapes and Evocation

Voices of the Future

The Voices of the Future project was part of the UK Treescapes programme, which had the aim of focusing on all trees, including urban trees, hence the term *treescapes*. It was jointly funded across environmental science (Natural Environment Research Council, NERC), arts and humanities (Arts and Humanities Research Council, AHRC), and social science (Economic and Social Research Council, ESRC) It aimed to explore children's experiences of treescapes. By treescapes we mean any trees which are part of children's nearby or far away outdoor environments. These can be trees present on the streets, alongside the road, in homes, in the front or back gardens, in the school playground, and/or in local parks. Children's treescapes can involve trees from national and transnational contexts including trees in the homes of their extended families across the globe (Ambreen et al., forthcoming). We worked with 30 Year 3 schoolchildren (aged 7–8 years) in a semirural primary school in Bolton. The majority of the children attending the school define themselves as White. Nearly 20% of children attending the school define themselves as coming from Asian, Arab, and Eastern European backgrounds. Our research team included a group of interdisciplinary scholars across four different universities from the UK. This included two tree scientists, who engaged children in tree measuring activities. Our team also included two childhood studies academics and ethnographers, a geographer, a philosopher, and an artist. We were also joined by tree planting practitioners

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Manchester City of Trees, who planted approximately 900 trees with these children in the school playground. Our research engagement with Year 3 children in this school started in November 2023. We spent several days in the school between November 2023 and April 2024, documenting tree-related activities with children. These included thinking about trees, designing the new woodlands, re-imagining the future of trees, planting new trees, tree measuring, being with trees in the school forest, and caring for trees. We interviewed the forest school practitioner and spent time with children exploring their experience of the forest school. We aimed to do a collaborative ethnography, which meant that notebooks, iPads, and digital voice recorders were given to children to record their activities. We collected over 300 photographs and films by the children to listen/pay attention to the stories that the children documented about their experience of being engaged with trees as part of these research activities.

Here, we share stories of children's ways of engaging with trees and snippets of children being with trees in the forest school. We argue that this work created an emergent space for literacy and language practices to emerge as the children were in the woodland space, drawing on the idea of "living literacies" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020). We focused very much on children's relations with treescapes, and this led to moments of diversity within the literacy and language practices that the children produced in the woodlands. Learning about trees was done *with* trees, and this being and becoming in treescapes was not politically neutral. We had to undertake significant work to convince others, such as our tree scientists, that this was a legitimate way of knowing about trees, and that this relationality and meaning-making was valid. The children's engagement with treescapes created spaces of possibility and was done in recognition of the complex more-than-human entanglements involved in "being" in treescapes. We also discussed our positionalities as adult researchers, with one of us (Samyia) sharing linguistic/cultural identity

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with the children. We explored how being in the place with children and having knowledge of children's different language(s) led us (adult researchers) to explore children's multilingual identities whilst being with trees. The encounters with treescapes that the children were involved in are familiar and relatable to many of us. Yet in articulating their value or engaging with the magic of these encounters, considerable theoretical machinery has to be brought to bear to make these encounters appear "significant," whether this is making them appear significant to researchers in other fields (i.e., tree scientists) or within the academic literacies involved in academic writing.

The focus of our work was on the relationship between children and trees, but critical to this work was the idea of researching multilingually. In terms of our positionality, Kate has worked across languages in her project exploring artefacts of identity and narratives of migration (Pahl 2012) and has a focus on multilingualism as a mode of inquirySamyia's South Asian heritage and her knowledge of the Hindi language enabled both two girls of Indian heritage and the researcher (Samyia) to create a shared world as part of the research. Having a common language also facilitated fluidity in both the children's and the researcher's identities. For instance, as a researcher exploring children's engagement with trees, Samyia was perceived as someone who could understand the children's cultures both within and outside the school. The children discussed trees and how they engaged with them. They also used their home languages to generate stories about their dynamic linguistic and ethnic identities, as well as their migration histories. This knowledge of the children's experiences became evident while interacting with trees and learning about their natural environments.

Multiplicities and Multilingual Stories

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One afternoon on March 14, 2023, we were invited by the forest school practitioner (Richard) to visit children in the small woodland area in the school known as forest school. Samyia (Research Assistant), Kate (Principal Investigator), and Steve (artist) went there to see how children engage with trees as part of their outdoor learning. This example is about two girls, Pooja and Zita (pseudonyms), who have an Indian heritage, and a Welsh boy called Ben (pseudonym). Pooja was filming what other children of her class were doing in the school forest. Ben and Zita were removing bushes under a tree. Ben was trying to move a stone with a tree twig. After some struggles, he managed to move the stone a bit from its place.

Upon asking, the pair told Pooja and Samyia that they were both making a reading corner under a tree. During the conversation, both Zita and Pooja started speaking Hindi. Zita said in Hindi, "Kia ker rahy ho?" ("What are you doing?") Pooja did not understand and asked her to say this again and again. Pooja said to Zita, using English, "How are you?" She asked Zita to translate this into Hindi. Zita replied in Hindi, "Aap kaise ho?" Both girls asked Samyia if she could understand Hindi. Soon the conversation changed to exploring migration histories, when the girls asked Samyia and one another about where we all came from. Zita guessed that Samyia was from Sri Lanka, which she is not. Zita shared about herself being Welsh and Indian and how she learnt Hindi from her mum, who is from India. Pooja shared that she is from India, but she was born in Qatar and now lived in England with her parents. Both Pooja's parents are Indian, and she goes to India now and then. Zita shared that she has never been to India, but she knows Hindi, which is why she calls herself Hindi. When we all were having these conversations, we moved around trees, untying some knots from a rope. Ben was silent and did not say anything except that he is from Wales. He was trying to knot bushes near the tree roots with the rope, which Samyia passed on to him.

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We noticed how spending time with children in woodland and drawing on a multilingual perspective widened the scope of what we were able to understand and recognize. The treescape space differs from markedly monolingual spaces (such as physical classrooms) or other spaces in the UK where there is potential precarity attached to speaking in languages other than English. Researching multilingually (Badwan, 2021 opens up a space of practice to find out what children know, with the treescape space inviting multiplicities. The funds of knowledge that children have outside school need to relate to children's lives in educational settings. Rather than imposing ways of knowing on children about their environments, it is important to use modes of communication that attune to children; it is about listening and connecting their knowledge with their environments. These modes of communication need to be multilingual. Multiplicities in terminology that multilingual children bring to name trees and other elements of the natural environments need to be recognised. The emergent nature of treescape spaces was important in setting the groundwork for a diverse and complex set of relationships, languages, and literacies to emerge. Eliciting reciprocal and relational worlding(s) of human and more than human (Taylor et al., 2021) multilingual children's relational stories about/with trees appears magical in recognising the presence of certain forms of connections between humans and more-than-humans, which are still under-recognised in Western Euro-centric posthumanist ontologies of human and nature connections (Nxumalo & Peers, 2024).

Treescapes imbue children's actions with qualities that are always "too much" for language and literacy, whilst also bringing into being multiplicities and potentialities so that multilingual encounters can emerge. Whilst it is possible to recognise and relate to the evocative magic of these encounters, significant work is involved in both clearing the way for children's voices to

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come to the fore and constructing a theoretical scaffolding that allows these worldings to be legible within conversations about value and significance. These children are being in time (Bergson, 1910) and space. The treescape is both speculative and imaginative, their experiences of these spaces are laden with memories, they draw on different ways of knowing and being, and they inhabit these spaces through their bodies. Possibilities for multiplicity and multilingualism emerge from these properties of children's interaction with treescape spaces and are seen as central to these multiplicities in a research framing that focuses on children's meaning-making.

Example 5: Jessica—Journaling and Spell-"ing"

Participating in the Wizardry of Creative Journaling

At the start of 2022, as part of an arts-led project in the north of England, I began to research creative arts contexts as sites of possibility for communities in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. My research is always ethnographically oriented or involves an ethnographic approach. By necessity and by design, I carry out my research in smaller moments and snatches of time when I can be in workshops and spend time alongside creative practitioners in the diverse work that they do. I have written about this before (see Bradley, 2017, 2021; Bradley & Pöyhönen, 2024), and also reflected on the complexity of negotiating ethnographic research and the entanglements of people, activities, and spaces that this involves (e.g., Baynham, 2004; Heath, 1983). Of course, ethnographic research in literacies has a long tradition, accepted in part because, as an approach, it embraces the unpredictable and the everyday, albeit in small fragments or glimpses. The creative activities I was researching were diverse in scope and approach, led by artist-educators from across practices and including ceramics, printmaking,

photography, painting, and transdisciplinary arts in terms of creative journaling. I would attend as many sessions as I could, introducing myself to the participants and doing any necessary paperwork. I would also participate in the activities myself, generating a wide range of creative outputs of my own, aiming to experience something—a fragment, a glimpse—of what the participants in the creative programmes were experiencing.

My role within the project was one of privilege and one I did not take lightly—I was not responsible for the design or delivery of the workshops (the wizardry). Instead, my presence was invited and my ideas and insight were requested in the ongoing process of the programme being rolled out and afterwards as planning took place for future work. What this means is that, in doing this work, I—in the same way as many literacy researchers—was invited into people's everydayness. Moreover, I was invited to *participate* in this everydayness, and to contribute to exploration and to its sharing. I had to work out how I might engage with these different everydays, with this everydayness, in this invited and privileged space, doing whatever justice I could to these fragments and glimpses. At the same time, I had to recognise the need for the emergent space of immanence created through the creative activities to remain one which was private and safe for everyone participating. Because of this invitedness, and the necessity of conserving the privacy of private journal pages, the examples I share in this vignette come from my own journaling activity—from creative activities in which I engaged through participating in the workshops as a researcher. This demonstrates in itself the way in which the auto is always entangled within any ethnographic project, our navigations of the everyday, and how we learn through doing. We learn through the arts and practices that allow us to move, change, or create.

Each workshop centred on a creative prompt. The journaling followed a format which had been developed by a midwife, producer, and artist who set up what quickly became a "global

movement" to address some of the isolation and anxieties of early motherhood that she observed as a midwife working with new families (Godfrey-Isaacs, 2019). The founder of the journaling movement had, over the years, in connection and in collaboration with creative practitioners including poets, visual artists, and writers, created different materials which could be drawn on in workshops. These short prompts fuse artistic practice with mothering experience, and each one includes the name of the artist who created it, to acknowledge their work and ownership. The materials are presented online, in short and long guides, and in a published book (; Godfrey-Isaacs & MacGowan, 2021).

The Entanglements from Which Motherhood Emerges

The creative journaling aspect of the programme was focused on mothers and birthing parents. I will now use the word *mother* as a shorthand; however, it is important to state that the journaling movement is inclusive and open to anyone who might identify as a mother, though in the workshops I attended the participants were mainly women who had recently given birth or who had babies under the age of one. They tended to be on maternity leave, taking leave from work for a while, or had recently returned to their jobs.

Creative journaling in the particular context in which I was researching took the form of an 8- or 10-week programme with weekly communal journaling activities lasting just under two hours. The programmes were communicated widely to new mothers and birthing parents by a tangled web of human and textual sources, including midwives and community health practitioners, social media, communications from the arts organisation, and word of mouth. Groups tended to be made up of a maximum of eight participants (plus infants), and the sessions took place in the arts organisation building or in community locations across the city and wider region. The

sessions were designed to focus on the mother rather than the baby or child, in contrast to much provision for new parents, and included a creche facility led by childcare practitioners.

Motherhood as Both Imagined and Experienced

Journaling is an approach to engaging with everydayness which is, at its core, political. Mothers' groups, baby groups, playgroups, and breastfeeding circles, alongside all the multiple strands of baby-focused activities, laid out in a postdigital smorgasbord on hospital noticeboards, Facebook groups, and WhatsApp chat groups, are entanglements into which people are knotted once they become mothers and take on this named identity. They mark time and are the material and embodied reality of that which is both simultaneously *imagined*, in what mothers might have expected or anticipated prior to giving birth, and *experienced* in the day-to-day. Journaling also does this marking of time and engages with the simultaneity of the everyday and the imagined, indeed with *everyday imaginaries*:

> Journaling in pregnancy has particular poignancy as it relates to the inevitable marking of time, the nature of the experience as 'a journey' and the sense of being in a liminal space (a threshold between one state and another). It is also commonly a time of great imagination and vivid dreams—all good material for a journal. (Godfrey-Isaacs, 2019, p. 162).

And in this sense, the act of bringing mothers together to consider and engage creatively with their own feelings and their own experiences, in collision with their hopes, dreams, and fears, brings a communality and politicisation to this practice. This aligns with the historical context of women's writing, of memoir, and of the act of documenting the everyday, in ways which Sari Pöyhönen and I have explored using theoretical ideas around the *je transpersonnel*, or

transpersonal I, from the work of French writer Annie Ernaux. Ernaux's writing around collective memoir (e.g., *Les Années*, 2008) provides accounts of recent histories of France from a woman's perspective, using *on* (translated as *we*) to foreground the collectivity of experience. The je transpersonnel/transpersonal I attempts to bridge the individual and the collective, to account for the simultaneous embodiedness and sharedness of experience. The creative journaling programmes, therefore, aimed to provide mothers with a space to explore their experiences and their feelings—to explore individual everydayness in a collective space. And in turn, for a short period of time, these workshops became entangled in women's everydays—a marker of time, of day, of routine. As markers they entangle with other markers—the baby weigh-in, the health checkpoints, weaning, the longer periods of sleep.

Caught Up in Journaling

I now turn to focus on an example from my own journal, for which the prompt was "dandelions." This journal writing example acts as a form of what we have playfully termed *spell-"ing"*. Spelling in one sense refers to engaging with orthographic practices which are often seen as core literacy practices (*Oxford English Dictionary [OED]*, 2024a). It also has a number of older or rarer meanings that aptly draw together the various elements of the theory of magic that we set forth in this chapter. Spelling can refer to the "the use or exercise of spells or charms" (*OED*, 2023a), "to charm, fascinate, bewitch…to act as a spell upon" (*OED*, 2023b), and even "to take the place of (a person) at some work or labour" (*OED*, 2024b). In our theory of magic, we position *spell-"ing"* as a term that reflects the ways in which literacies can be institutionally situated or mundane (like orthography) but are always a means through which the power to move, change, or shift is evoked, and are always situated in the durational and immanent nature of everyday life. In order to illustrate this, I can look at a recognisable journaling literacy event

as a form of wizardry that engages with illusions relating to motherhood, acting to provide insightful glimpses into the entanglements and potentialities of motherhood through its ability to allow me to dwell within my body, the time, the space, and the practices that are all converging to draw me through the everyday.

It is March and we are a few weeks into a programme. It is Monday morning, just after 10 a.m. The table is laid out with mats (cut up from blankets from Ikea), small glass pots of water, paintbrushes, red rectangular watercolour paint pallets, pencils, pens, stickers, and then, as people arrive, added to the assemblage are water bottles and hot drinks, baby bottles, mobile phones, biscuits, and wrappers. Journals are open, with blank pages ready. As everyone settles into the room, having dropped off babies and young children in the creche, perhaps some go back and forth between rooms, and help themselves to a hot drink from the corner table. The session starts with some mindfulness exercises, a structure which has been brought into the programme early on by one of the midwives who informally oversees the programme, working closely with the project manager who is based in the arts organisation. The morning's activity is then introduced, researched in advance by whichever practitioner is leading the session and based loosely on a schedule which has been led by the lead midwife practitioner and to which the other members of the team also contribute. The prompt today is dandelions, and the task has been designed by the co-producer of the movement. It is framed as:

> Putting the day's complications down on paper and breaking them into smaller pieces can help things feel more achievable overall. (Godfrey-Isaacs & McGowan, 2021, p. 150)

The activity is categorised as drawing, painting, requiring pencils, paints, and pens. The creator tells a story of how she created the activity to respond to the feeling of being "pulled in all directions" (p. 151). There are two steps:

1. Try to focus on the little things getting in the way today and make a note of them.
2. Draw or paint a dandelion clock in your journal using any pens or materials that you like. You can make it super detailed or keep it simple. (Godfrey-Isaacs & McGowan, 2021, p. 151)

My journal page was the result of this. I have started with pencil, sketching out dandelion shapes onto the page, with clocks and flying seeds. For each of the seeds flying away from the clocks I have written words which represent the things I have to do, the things "getting in the way," and these words offer glimpses of my academic and family life entangling with the research. Looking back at this page as I write now, 11 months later, I notice that I have captured the ephemera of that moment—my eldest daughter had recently sprained her ankle—meanwhile so much of what I have noted would be what I would also note today if I were to do this exercise again. I can't remember the exact details of the paper, the funding, or the conference I mention, of which things I refer to. But of course other papers, other funding applications, and other conferences have filled the space. I have then painted washes of light blue watercolour over the background and added cloudy white, green, and yellow to the dandelion clocks. Within the workshop space, I notice how I soak in and draw on the methods and approaches of the participants, the motifs, and later in the workshop when we share what we have created, we note common themes of the day-to-day, articulating the mundanity and everyday practices which propel lives along. The things getting in the way are also the things that are the fabric of our everyday. But the act of drawing and painting somehow brings a cautious beauty to our individual and shared experiences,

bringing them into being, making them material, and I find in this workshop and in the others in which I participate a kind of joy in this collective sharing of everydayness.

Ernaux writes of this ephemera of the everyday and the temporality, the ways in which our words will, at some point, disappear:

> Everything will be erased in a second. The dictionary of words amassed between cradle and deathbed, eliminated. All there will be is silence and no words to say it. Nothing will come out of the open mouth, neither I nor me. Language will continue to put the world into words. ((Strayer 2020: 20)

It is in this act, this collective and creative reflection on the everyday that makes it material, that brings it into being, that the individual and collective collide. And what can be taken from this for literacy researchers is how we attend to things within the spaces to which we are privileged to be invited, in how we might treat the everydayness of the worlds in which we also play a part in creating.

Researching, and through this engaging with the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice, shares an affinity with how we understand *spell-"ing"*, in the sense that research involves participation in the academic literacies associated with research, but also provides us with a means through which the power to move, change, or shift is evoked. Often literacies research also involves contexts where the individual and collective collide. Spell-"ing" helps us recognise the magic involved in everyday literacies to bring about changes or shifts. It also provides a means of reflecting on how, as researchers, we use literacies to bring theory and practice together in ways that we hope will create changes, or, if we are being mercenary, will shift our professional progression for the better.

Summary

Throughout this chapter we have considered a number of ideas to explore how we feel thinking about magic can be applied as an orientation to literacies research. Literacies research is often tied up with progressive or hopeful visions of social futures. Magic involves thinking about influence: what influences people and what influences we can materialise. We have considered contexts in which people have been engrossed in creative play, special interests/ruling passions, collaging, filmmaking, treescapes, and journaling. In each of these cases we have seen how the magic of these literacy events and practices has served to move people and place them somewhere else. We have also considered how our engagement with theories operates in a similar manner to move us from one place to another, and to bring about shifts and changes. In a number of cases the joy, immanence, draw, and potential of these experiences have offered what Steadman-Jones poetically articulates as a "departure from the crushing familiarity of the ambient day" (Pahl, Steadman-Jones, & Vasudevan,, 2022, p. 48). We have worked with a diverse range of theoretical and methodological concepts in relation to these examples, drawing on our work across a range of literacies and language research contexts. In doing so we have worked to articulate ideas relating to a number of concepts regarding magic as being of use to literacies and language researchers: wizardry, illusion, insight, evocation, and spell-"ing".

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