Opening and enfolding as the prismed a/r/tographer:

Towards a strategic ethics for researching and facilitating elder care

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## Abstract

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This study seeks to generate meaningful data on the delivery of arts-led interventions as a form of non/formal learning in an elder care setting.

Employing a/r/tography as a methodological impulse, and research methods that meet the ontological and epistemic frames of attendees to the field, I research my a/r/tographic self as the phenomena.

The research text asks what impact the fluidity and porosity of a/r/tographic identities (artist/researcher/teacher) has on the self, and how this can be referenced to inform non/formal learning in wider social care and community-led settings.

Through undertaking this living inquiry, I present ethical strategies of opening and enfolding through a/r/tographic diffraction, offering alternative iterations of caregiving, education, the arts, and health and wellbeing studies.

**Roots**

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*Introduction*

This study explores how the fluidity research identities that include 'research', 'artist', and 'educator' can be managed and supported, in order that research on the topic of elder care can be a meaningful, responsive, and ultimately ethical project of work. Elder care has been systemically devalued according to feminist Marxist Silvia Federici, who calls for collective interventions in order to tackle the crisis of what she terms as "reproductive labour" (2014). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of elder care was made visible by the neglect and suffering disproportionately experienced within social care settings in the UK. In relation to the current landscape of elder care, which Federici determines is in crisis, this study employs a/r/tography as a methodological tool for exploring the possibility of arts-led interventions within elder care settings. This project contributes to an understanding of the underexplored potentials of a/r/tographic iterations in education, the arts, care, and health and wellbeing studies, towards forming an ethical and responsive practice that seeks to supplement medical proceduralism in caregiving.

A/r/tography is a practice-based methodology for qualitative research. It emerged from autoethnographic traditions that sought to illuminate the researching self as a voice within research, drawing on approaches to art making, arts facilitation, and art therapy. Emerging as a speculative feminist and new materialist response, a/r/tography has been developed over the last twenty years predominantly by Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay, both professors of education and the arts (2005; 2017; 2021). Recent

a/r/tographic projects include WalkingLab, a project studying critical walking methodologies through interdisciplinary arts practice and public walking events (2021).

In this post-structural and educational study, a/r/tography has been employed to make visible the simultaneous roles of artist/researcher/educator. Attending to this in a meaningful way requires consideration of how to present the presence and continual re-emergence of these simultaneous identities, not just in content but in the presentation of that content.

As such, this research text begins in separate registers in an effort to capture and represent the multiplicity inherent within a/r/tographic encounter.

*Instructions for reading*

This research text will begin in two distinct but connected voices. The research text has been instigated in this way to situate my simultaneous a/r/tographic selves before leading to a theoretical and contextual score, further responses to the field, a research design, a research findings and interpretations rhizome, an open conclusion, and a post-script.

In the first section, there are two columns of text. The left-hand, italicised column reflects the autoethnographic narrative developed through my entanglement with the field; the right-hand, non-italicised column represents the context of the field. The two columns can be read separately and linearly, one after the other; or they can be read horizontally. As the author, I would encourage a combination of both reading styles, as this action seeks to convey the continuous entangling of the methological impulses of a/r/tography; an experimental act that counters more formal ways of academic reading. I entered the field with these distinct yet connected stories, realising that the research I wanted to create would be permeated by the multiple ways of being that I undertake in my life. To try and fit these neatly together in a linear reading would be unethical in regards to my wellbeing as a researcher reflecting on the field with which I have entered and intervened to create and process this study.

Further into the research text, the stories converge physically on the page becoming closer to a single narrative. This convergence seeks to reposition myself-as-a/r/tographer as a container and a catalyst for these roles, asking that I acknowledge the threads that

have brought me to the moment of exploration. However, the narrative splits open again when the reader is taken to a separate textual and graphic space to experience the research findings created and reflected on from this a/r/tographic encounter. The composition of this separate yet tethered space reflects the meaning of a/r/tography, in that art (images) and graphy (writing) comingle on the page, vibrating together to resonate with my experience of and in the field. Again, a horizontal reading is invoked here, as the page is mostly navigated by scrolling sideways. Upon reaching the end of this scroll, the reader is to re-turn (Barad, 2014) to the document that contains the research text.

The final section of the research text is an anti-conclusion in that I leave an opening and offering for both the reader and myself-as-a/r/tographer. This non-ending became essential upon reflecting on the findings, followings, and feelings that have culminated throughout the experience of discerning this study. A future installation in the St. Andrews building in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow has been planned as a celebratory moment for this study and a marker from which this research can grow from/with.

## Where I'm coming from

*I have been a freelance artist facilitator for several years, working for a wide range of arts organisation in the UK. The catalyst for most of this facilitation practice has been drawing, which I would describe as a mode of creative expression that I use to process and translate the world around me. My drawing practice makes up one aspect of the creative research and facilitation practice that I now undertake on a professional level. Other modalities of critical and creative expression co-create this practice. I often find it hard to split these practices into separate elements, because they have continually overlapped and coalesced during the period beyond attending art schools. This experience is contradictory to much of the teaching I received whilst being an art student, which tried to separate artistic modes of being into discrete entities, methods, and mediums. I felt confused by this segregation, feeling as though the act was a violence towards the flow of creativity I felt and experienced as a respond to being in and of the world.*

*When I began to pursue facilitation and teaching positions in the arts, I was often met with an institutionalised need to segregate artistic forms. My struggle to make transparent how multiplicity characterises my lived reality, rather than a burden to be neatly categorised, was particularly noticeable during a stint working for a London-based art school as an alumni tutor. In Glasgow, which is where I currently live and work, my desire experiment with*

## Points of convergence: a contextual and theoretical score

Before I unravel and enfold the methodological stances with which I have undertaken this study, I would like to plot out multiple theoretical and contextual points that have converged to co-create a score. Speaking to the field of education in emergence with health and wellbeing studies, this score is means to keep account of all that has impacted this study. The score is a flowing framework that speaks to a/r/tography's acknowledgement of loss, shift, and rupture during the process of undertaking research. The score affirms the porous nature of responding a/r/tographically; it also offers a thread to hold onto whilst practicing in the (en)fold between/across traditional qualitative research, health and wellbeing studies, education, and the arts.

### Creative ageing in dementia care
*Health and wellbeing in the UK dementia community; artists in care homes*

According to the charity Dementia UK, dementia is an umbrella term for a range of progressive conditions that affect the brain ("What is Dementia?", 2021). Emotional connections can be difficult for dementia persons, as the ability to recognise others through memory can be fragmented or lost. Fragmentation can also occur in a dementia person's understanding of their residence within a care home setting.

*a/r/tography began to emerge. After studying on the now non-existent research in creative practices Masters at the Glasgow School of Art, (and still reeling with frustration at a funding cut from the aforementioned London art-school's Glasgow-based project that I had worked on for three years), I began to experiment with how a creative research practice could function as a tool for personal healing and collective wellbeing. This experimentation shaped what would be a successful application to an Arts in Care program, hosted by the creative ageing charity Luminate Scotland in 2019. This professional development program took me on a deep journey through my creative research practice in relation to the creative ageing experience of elders. Then, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic took hold of the world.*

*Mutual aid was galvanised across societal fault lines, in transgressive and radical forms that brought unions of solidarity and hope in all its mutations, such as the UK-based Adopt-a-Grandparent program, and locally to me, Glasgow Mutual Aid. Seeing these proliferations of empathy take root and seed across the globe was remarkable. I noticed the emergent and strategic forging, and acknowledging, of interconnectedness across localised wellbeing groups and networks of care, practising in solidarity beyond societal and geographical borders.*
*It is in my recognition and admiration of this care-ful(l) emergence, along with a personal healing process I have undertaken since being hospitalised due to anxiety in 2021, that I became aware of my intent to emerge as an a/r/tographer in order to contribute to the fields of social studies, health and*

Within the context of social care specifically catered to residents diagnosed with dementia, a slippage can occur between the reality of the situation of being in care, and their past as an individual that was part of a community and a wider society. This slippage creates ruptures in the feedback loops that pattern context and identity in subjective experience. Sequential events that take place within the care home setting can be experienced as disturbances, or at worst, violence. The neurological make-up of the brain is affected: meaning can become unfixed and uncertain, leading to a multitude of emotional and embodied responses, varying from hostility to warmth.

In their occupational approach to dementia care and wellbeing, Hazel May and Tessa Perrin discuss key aspects of the ways that different types of care influence wellbeing in social care settings. May and Perrin underpin their approach by acknowledging the importance of person-centered care, providing a conceptualisation of how subjective experience can be stabilised and destabilised by misinformed approaches. They write: "[…] personhood, that is a person's subjective experience of having a sense of being, agency and unity as a unique human being, persist even when abilities such as memory, knowledge, and language are lost…we are more than memory" (May and Perrin, 1999). The self, repositioned as a series of expressions, rather than a static entity reveals much about how older generations have been viewed in contemporary

*wellbeing, and creative ageing in educational research.*

*As a charity committed to 'creative ageing', with a special focus on the dementia community, Luminate Scotland provided a virtual care network in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. 'Creative ageing' is aptly described by looking to Luminate's urgent and attentive outreach to the elder community, facilitated in multiple forms including choir singing and LGBT+ socials, facilitated by artists with professional practices and a dedication to providing supportive environments and activities for isolating individuals. In 2021, I made the decision to apply for the Artist-in-residence program, hosted by Luminate in partnership with Erskine, a Scottish charity dedicated to caring for people with dementia who have served in the armed forces. The framework for the residency was based on a previous residency undertaken by two artists at the Erskine home in Glasgow before the pandemic. The project unfolded from the decision to erect an artist studio in the gardens, built with a view to house both the artists and residents who were in participation. The studio is still in existence, and with Luminate's encouragement, my proposal for the residency was based on engagements with the artist studio as a catalyst space for creative and meaningful encounters. My proposal was rooted in finding and following emerging convergences between residents' experiences, using natural objects as resources to spark conversation, and to underpin drawing as a mode to scribe-with imagination. In the latter weeks of the residency,*

Eurowestern (Truman, 2021) society, and how elder care may be devalued if a person is only characterised by age.

Instead, care can be discerned as a process of engagement rather than a fixed point in the dichotomy of life/death. A process-led approach transforms static registers of the operational aspects of implementing care giving, offering alternative modes for elder care, such as creative ageing. As a practice, creative ageing responds to the whole of the care experience by entangling the subjects involved via creative acts. The elements of creative ageing are grounded in the need for a modality beyond the formalities of pharmaceutical directives. This is not to say that these directives are valueless. They are of course integral to caregiving; however, it is through undertaking of this study that I have witnessed a multiplicity of processes that intra-act to co-constitute the experience of living in care.

In relation, CEO of Scottish Care Dr Donald McCaskill responds to the overlaps he has witnessed between creativity and care. He writes: "Social care is often narrowed down to a functionalist, time, and task approach but of course anyone involved in the sector knows that to be wholly untrue. The best social care isn't about maintaining an individual in safety and health alone, in the way they are, but rather it is about providing the structures and supports to allow that person to grow, to be independent, to flourish and to achieve their dreams…" (2022). This chimes with the methodological impulse of this study to ethically strategise the setting of

*I realised that by engaging in a shift between a/r/tographic roles, I was able to practice openness in the moments when my proposal started to slip away from the reality of what was happening, and what I needed to pay attention to.*

*Where I'm going*

*When I entered the Erskine home on the first day of my residency, I had all of this in my mind, with a determination not to let any expectations creep in. What I had learnt in the training that Luminate had provided was that expectations can and should be emergent and fluid, and by giving the artist-in-residence this permission, encounters with residents can be flexible and proactive to their needs. In such emergent modes of inquiry openness can be rooted in (at least) two points: as a method of contingency and a seeding of the opportunity for abundant and generative engagements between myself as a/r/tographer and staff, residents, and families, and the care home setting in general.*

*The Erskine home is specific in that it houses residents who have been in the armed forces, with accommodation catered to supporting and caring for residents living with various stages of dementia. This setting as a whole is co-created by shifting parts: identity and physiology, mind and body, past-present-futures, state legislature and the wider grand narrative of British citizenship. Temporally established and spatially constructed, these modes of being became the axis points by which this field of research emerges from.*

social care, via the "structures and supports" of creative interruptions and arts-led interventions to cultivate self-expression, wellbeing, and meaning.

Recognising older people as valuable in regard to their positionality in society is made fraught by representations of elder life in social care settings as determined by medical proceduralism. Although people with dementia may become more dependent on caregiving, loss of capabilities relating to memory and cognition do not automatically mean that a person's sense of self has been lost too. Subjective experience is perceived alternatively, however this experience can be ignored or diminished by frameworks of elder care that do not consider how elders can be devalued in economic terms, and/or by static categories of physiological wellness. To reveal the value in caregiving, modes of care that encourage presence beyond proceduralism, or as an emergent property of it, can and should be acknowledged.

### Non/formal interventions

*Arts-led interventions; ethical creative experiments; embodied outreach practices*

This section acknowledges how arts-led interventions within non/formal educational settings can catalyse meaning across multiple sociocultural identities and lived positionalities. My working definition of arts-led intervention is a semi-structured exercise and/or activity that engages imagination in relation to the setting and the community formally or informally visiting

*Reflecting on the artist residency has afforded me a period of ethical recognition of the a/r/tographic concept in reference to my lived experience. The analysis of this research hopes to make visible different realities held in-tact within the a/r/tographic encounter, illuminating the blurred parameters of creative identity that can be invisible(ised) and disregarded by traditional methodologies that seek to hypothesise results based on predetermined analysis. It also seeks to identify how modes of care and caring are registered and performed differently during the a/r/tographic encounter, in reflection of my residency in the home, and in relation to cultivating wellbeing in this setting.*

*Whilst this research project didn't involve the residents as research participants, it nonetheless has the potential for significant impact for this community, in relation to generating wellbeing through alternative modes of caregiving, and how this can be sustained coactively within the community, rather than through privatised and top-down residential care programs.*

*The decision to research myself-as-a/r/tographer comes in response to my reflection of openness in convergence with prescriptive ideas I previously had about what an artist's role could be within elder care. My understanding of care in reference to care homes was rudimentary, until the whirlwind of headlines regarding the death toll in care homes across the UK during spikes of infection during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

or inhabiting this setting. Interventions can take place in numerous settings. In this context, the intervention occurs as an informal exercise/set of practices within the non/formal setting of the care home. Although the care home is not a formal educational setting, there are attributes that are akin to the procedural requirements of this type of setting. Whilst carrying out this study, I was responsive to the intersections of formal, non/formal and informal education – it is in these intersections where learning can occur that was unexpected. I have highlighted the split between non and formal with a forward slash, indicating that the term non/formal signifies a setting where learning can occur out-with a context of proceduralism that is not based in learning, for example medical proceduralism.

The positionality of the learner, community member, workshop attendee, student, and/or resident (this list is non-exhaustive) in a non/formal context encompasses social and self-identity, referencing a person's subjective orientation in relation to themselves, their community, and the wider societal framework within which the intervention occurs. In my experience as an artist facilitator and creative researcher, the artist can catalyse the educational experience within the nonformal setting to create meaning, and situate knowledge, beyond the parameters of formal educational curricula. The strategic impulse of the creative intervention is to activate presence and purpose through arts-led practices. Experimental in regard to outreach, the

*A cascade of improper application of delivery of PPE equipment to homes, coupled with patients being re/submitted to homes with the virus and DNR orders placed on residents without their, or their loved ones, consent, resulted in an outpouring of horror and solidarity from the public with social care staff, with residents, and their families and loved ones.*

*With bleaker reports of death figures in homes rising exponentially and unprecedentedly by the day, concern among mutual aid organisations grew, leading to investigations into whether the UK's care homes would collapse under this immense, and some (myself included) would say negligence enacted on the part Johnson's Conservative government. News coverage and reporting during this period provide a grim view into the past-present-future, effects of neoliberal intentions over the most basic premises of care, in relation to the care sector and the National Health Service.*

*Throughout my time in-residence at Erskine, I have felt a new urgency in my creative research and facilitation practice that wishes to respond to the suffering experienced during the pandemic, turning towards concepts of interconnectedness, mutual aid, reciprocity, as modalities for care and wellbeing. In 2022, I began to practice somatic healing and exercises for regulating my nervous system to heal residual traumas. I don't think I would have undertaken this if it weren't for the pandemic – and perhaps I would not have applied to become an artist-in-residence in a care home either.*

arts-led intervention within the nonformal educational setting requires the artist to identify the ethical implications and risks that may occur during this process, realising that the intervention may lead to an embodied and emotional response that cannot be presupposed. This uncertainty has previously led myself-as-artist to a position of strategic openness, whereby I make porous both my positionality as artist facilitator, and the plan that I am using to lead the intervention. This porosity is not to indicate that anything goes within the intervention – in fact, it is a mode of being that actively responds to frictions

**Towards an ethical and responsive strategy**
*Reproductive labour and creative ageing; wellbeing and meaning making*

Entering the field equipped with arts-led interventions led me to cultivate a strategic acknowledgement of how artists-as-catalysts can foster an attitude of openness with regards to intention, which in turn activates an affective rendering of care. Activations that occur within the care home setting can instigate imaginative relations between the resident and their spatiotemporal context, developing a contextual presence between residents and the artist-as-catalyst. This way of thinking and doing reflects a contemporary concept for caregiving in the UK termed person-centered care ("Person centered care – NES", 2021). In relation to the context of dementia and dementia communities residing within care homes, person-centered care can

*Finding interconnectedness between generations is something I have longed for throughout my life. I grew up with one grandparent who estranged themselves from my immediate family when I was very young. Without this generational intersection in my identity, I have felt a loss and lack of connection to the elder community. This speaks to a wider disconnect between generations that this study hopes to heal.*

*My lived experience as an artist-as-catalyst in relation to undertaking a Master's in Education for Sustainable Futures has transfigured my role into the multiple and overlapping roles of artist, researcher, and educator in the context of a/r/tography, reflecting my recognition of the artist-as-catalyst as holding in-tact simultaneous states in order to be responsive and reflexive. It is as the a/r/tographer that I root this research, following the stems of lived experience towards the fertile blooms of how my experience will seed strategies for future engagements.*

be difficult to cultivate as the residents need round the clock assistance encompassing personal and emotional care. A strategy to prize open the potential non-personal aspects of dementia care, towards an affective and open coactive arrangement, is through arts-led interventions led by artists-as-catalyst situated in the care home setting for extended periods, for example on a residency or placement. The intentions of the artist-as-catalyst, which I have gathered from my own experience in the field, can be figured as a mode of intra-generational meaning making and wellbeing cultivation.

To develop a strategy of ethics for this research, I follow Karen Barad's engagement of the "inseparability of ethics, ontology and epistemology" (Geerts, 2016), which they term ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007). Barad positions the researching subject as always-already enmeshed within the research(ed); by employing this as a methodological strategy for this study, I can operate through the simultaneous roles of a/r/tography to fulfil the Baradian notion that "one cannot but ethically engage with the world" (2016). Referring to this inseparability, this study positions me – the researching-I – as the phenomena to be studied, employing autoethnographic methods such as dream journalling and voice note recordings to reveal the subjective realm of qualitative research. I wish to develop strategies of ethics that encompass ethico-onto-epistemology in regard to the research journey and the field of health and wellbeing studies that this project intersects.

Two clear paths have been charted. However, this research further entangles across multiple temporal and spatial contexts that cannot be contained within a document, for example through emotional responses. Making these entanglements visible and felt within the research text has sometimes been frustrating, as the confines of the linear document can be difficult to elasticise. Feminist theorist Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action" (2007; 2014) offers recognition of my struggle to separate elements of this study into neat sections.

Intra-action names the enfolding/entangling process that happens between subjects and objects in the process of encounter. This term describes ontology, the being of the self, as not an inherent and neat attribute, but instead a classification given to certain agents within an overarching system via colonial ideologies. Barad understands agency as not just belonging to the human individual, instead nodding to the wider constellation of being that commingles as existence (ibid).

The research text operates to illuminate on how intra-acting elements co-constitute the overall study. Feeling these frustrations, a format was sought that unsettles any perceived linearity on behalf of the reader and gesturing towards the multiplicity experienced by practicing research through the lenses of a/r/tography. Throughout the next sections, my autoethnographic narrative instigates a reminder that the researching-I is, and should, be affected by their research.

# Opening to living inquiry

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*I am the phenomena: artist/researcher/educator*

***After being evacuated from the new university building after a false alarm, I found my-self walking up the road to the library, a towering 11 or 12 floor building: its once architectural charm fading under the lights, that glowing aura emanating from the newer, slicker learning hub. I fumbled for my student card and made my way to the lift, wondering why I hadn't visited for so long.***

The event described to the left took place at the beginning of the research encounter and in hindsight was a nod to the shape of how my/self-as-researcher would need to take in order to recognise and re-cognise the stakes of self-research. Harnessing the experimental capacity of this research is a move to forge an openness to happenstance, fostering a position of curiosity to the field.

To employ a speculative feminist (Truman, 2018) lens in social studies research is to position the self and the other beyond that dualism, based how this approach attends to curiosity as an integral aspect of research making. Approaching a reflexive understanding of my experience in the care home setting requires me to acknowledge how speculative feminist practice can create thresholds for openness where there are often closures. I relate this notion to the philosophical collaboration between Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their co-authored book entitled A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1988). Following the empiricist, (the theory that all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses), and vitalist, (the theory that the origin and phenomena of life on a force distinct from purely chemical or physical forces), traditions, Deleuze and Guattari register the immanent passage of human thought as a line of flight (1988); their illuminations on the qualities of emergence have influenced this study and how it has operated. In the act of collapsing habitual thought, a rhizomic understanding of

research asks the researcher to be welcome, or porous, to unexpected occurrences. Attaching Deleuze and Guattari's thinking to speculative feminism requires me to register the origins of the praxis, which are found in the work of Professor Donna J. Haraway, in particular her efforts to illuminate and narrate the entangled entities of science and feminism via strings of speculative fiction and fabulation (2016). Haraway engages storytelling as a mode of representation, threading care and kinship into the interstices of these crossovers to offer methodologies for staying with the trouble(s) (Haraway, 2016) of tension and friction in the undertaking of social studies research.

Deleuze and Guattari speak of thought that has the capacity to transcend itself, to go beyond the sedimentation of prior thoughts to find a perpetual act of inscribing and reinscribing, constituting and reconstituting, that in the context of this study resembles the shifting modalities of the a/r/tographer. These shifts were made responsive to the Baradian concept of ethico-onto-epistemology (2007), in that their recognition of intersubjectivity is versed by representing subjects as phenomena; labelling subjects in this way speaks to the living aspect of research-making. Subjects are revealed as porous within ethico-onto-epistemological renderings. I found this porosity within my simultaneous roles as artist, researcher, and educator, because there is a softness to the contours that make up these positionalities, forming a presence-with-in. By recognising me, the researching-I, as the Other in undertaking this study, I was better equipped to meet the research half way. My researching-I interrupted (Barad, 2007) the artist and educator parts of my-self, requiring me to acknowledge and instigate openness towards the question of how ontology and epistemology flow through one another continuously. To allow, acknowledge, and articulate this flow, I refer to Deleuze and Guattari's writing on immanence (1988).

Immanence in Deleuze and Guattari's reading can be found as a condition of openness that emerges with acts of re-constitution: as I, the researching-I, assemble and re-assemble myself across the multiplicity of the research encounter, so too does the field within which I have chosen to situate myself. In relation to the field as the care home setting, immanence is a condition I have found to be in critical resonance with the emergent positionality that is instigated by creative ageing, specifically arts-led interventions. Practicing-with immanence can hold in-tact the multiple references of elder care, wellbeing, imagination, presence, and joy. This practice is cultivated in the

speculative feminist and new materialist methodological impulses that have arisen after Deleuze and Guattari.

If I am investigating my-self through the lens of speculative feminism, in relation to the positionalities of artist/researcher/educator, where do I begin? Looking to my chosen data gathering practices, I am keen to attend to the friction of searching and re-searching as an emergent and immanent act. By being simultaneously eager and apprehensive about accumulating my enfolded research experience within the flat plane research text, I hope to make visible the emotional aspects of undertaking this study. It is within this accumulation that I write from: not from a clearly defined beginning or starting point. I recognise the expanding nodal format of the rhizome/root system as a score – a mark used for keeping an account of where this study moves into and through, and how theoretical and contextual convergences leave

*Cramped, my-self and two others made our way in the small metal box through the gut of the building. I left at a random floor and edged my way along tall, packed bookshelves. Dumping my stuff, I decided to look around. I didn't realise that I was in the Philosophy section, and I just so happened to be standing underneath* **1000 Plateaus** *by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Feeling awash with synchronicity, (as I had come specifically to read the opening chapter, Rhizome, in PDF format, on my laptop), I shift the hefty book into my hands, feeling the very real weight of what I was about to consume.*

impressions on/in the research(ing-I).  Attempting to create a porous frame for thinking-in-movement is especially difficult within the linear Word document. I have had to flatten certain aspects in order that an academic audience can experience this study's event of enfolding. However, keeping a/the score allows me and the reader to witness my partial identities move in and out of being-with the field, and the affect/s that this has on the data captured and analysed.

Deleuze and Guattari's depiction of the rhizome assists me with this moving-thinking, as the generative root/score shifts and folds according to where/what/who is being attended to. The rhizome, according to Deleuze and Guattari, takes its form from a root and shoot system in ecology, whereby a plant or vegetation grows under, along, and above the ground surface. In their philosophical conception, the rhizome becomes a diagrammatic realisation of their ideation of the plane of immanence, where thoughts are created, and lines of flight, where these thoughts are actualized. The rhizome encompasses all

potentials in the act/ualisation of thought, describing a "process of existence and growth that does not come from a single central point of origin" (Mambrol, 2017). In relation, a/r/tography performs this resistance to singularity by invoking simultaneousness and multiplicity across, between, and within research, facilitation, and arts-led engagements.

> "[…] we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive…attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988)

In the above passage, concepts of uncertainty and contingency arise out of the writers' construction, or de-construction, of the substance of thought. They attend to the notion of knowledge-making as a process of substantiation, which figures learning as a process of collecting and categorising via language and semiotics. Embracing knowledge-making as rhizomic offers us alternative modes of learning; modes that can emerge with the unknown in order to attend to outliers. Employing this concept, the rhizome informs this study by giving me the metaphysical tools to find an ethical position for myself-as-researcher and myself-as-phenomena within the research text. I, the researcher and researched, shift through the research encounter as a rhizomic body tethered to a score. In this action, the score-as-theoretical-contextual-framework is kept as an account of where this research touches and how, reckoning with the intra-acting (Barad, 2007) nature of a/r/tography. I know that this movement is not linear, because I can feel the multiple in my body when I shift through a/r/tographic roles. This emergent positionality simultaneously enfolds and eases open of the possibilities of experiment and intervention without hypothesis.

When encountered in/as the tangle of the rhizome, I, the researching-I, become porous to the contingent aspects of the context of the field. The not-knowing of how research may unfold, and the uncertainty of how the researching-I may acknowledge, account, and analyse events, become conditions of the rhizomic multiple. To allow for immanence, a strategy of openness towards the impressions left by every part of the research encounter on every other part of the research, including the researching-I, are to be taken as a hypothesis-in-reverse. These impressions relate to the "traces of intensity" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) left residually in the body of the researcher. Acknowledging these traces, I

must cultivate a strategy of openness towards how I access and traverse the field as the research phenomena.

*Emerging; enfolding: further research lenses*

**My body slides across the nylon bus seat, unsecure and adrift if not for the thinnish sheet of metal, glass, and plastic acting as a wall between me, the edge of the bridge, and the river. The Erskine bridge, known to me previously as a series of spikes poking the sky above hills either side, now rushing past me, a connective tissue between my current self and the self who will learn how to care.**

Engaging with this project with curiosity and openness requires me to acknowledge and articulate the emergent properties of the field (the plane of immanence) and how this intersects with this study and myself-as-researcher (both enfold as the rhizome).

Writer, activist and facilitator adrienne maree brown's (2017) conceptualisation of emergent strategy further broadens the concept of immanence beyond Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) underpinning. brown writes:

> "Emergence emphasises critical connections over critical mass, building authentic relationships, listening with all the senses of the body…our future may depend on learning to listen, (to) listen without assumptions of defenses" (2017).

The act of listening that brown refers to can be acknowledged as a form of care. brown's emergent strategy resonates with and beyond Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) plane of immanence: the strategy speaks to how, in the enfolding contexts of research, knowledge-making, and learning, emergence critically connects selves/bodies across multiplicity. Emergent strategies are responsive and connected to the current, whilst being tethered to the past and simultaneously revealing a glimpse into the future. Speaking to this, brown (2017) writes, "In the framework of emergence, the whole is a mirror of the parts. Existence is fractal – the health of the cell is the health of the species and the planet". Fractal existence is mirrored in the constellate (dis)organisation of the rhizome. As a research lens, emergent strategies allow the a/r/tographer to follow traces, losses, ruptures, and shifts.

To seed emergence into my living inquiry, I have entangled methodologies. Reflecting and refracting create the a/r/tographer's positionality, this entangled score of contextual and theoretical points of convergence speak to further lenes within speculative feminist and new materialist (un)doings and (in)tensions (Springgay and Truman, 2017) of research: the concept of research-creation (2021) as defined and employed by Sarah E. Truman. Truman (2021) maps the transdisciplinary approach through a series of processes and propositions, speaking to how art, theory, and research emerges to activate thought and actualise a research process. It is in this emergent and strategic activation that I have found the spirit of my research. Emerging-with the research as the phenomena itself has forced me to acknowledge the process of enfolding, and how research-creation can foster this.

Truman's perception of research-creation is fertile tool for complicating notions of bodies and value in relation to the project of humanism and the Eurowestern sociopolitical system/s of neoliberal capitalism within which this study was undertaken. Truman responds to the parameters of bodily affect in the context of institutional legibility, whereby hegemonic knowledge economies are (re)produced through systemic oppressions through the devaluation of bodies that are no longer deemed productive under classifications of ableism. Research-creation as a methodological concept and impulse refutes traditional

*Caring tingles: it is the ground underneath me, the situation I'm in. The bus goes fast over the bridge, hitting forty miles an hour, soon fifty. I am on my way to a training session held at the flagship care home, set deep into a green and tree speckled valley. The scenery urgently through the bus window: a living tableau.*

formulas of traditional research paradigms by embracing noticing and witnessing as the emergent properties of perception within a research encounter and/or event. Instead of cozying to predictability in research analysis, research-creation demonstrates knowledge-making as a strange and frictional process that, in order to recognise the ethical stakes interred during any research event, requires the researching-I to perform a welcome to the unknown. Truman writes "A researcher's positionality and intentionality have material effects on what the research-creation might produce […] researchers themselves are also in process" (2017).

In-process, immanent, and emergent.

To be a researching-I in process requires intentions that are porous to the speculative emergence of the research event. Curiosity informs this openness, and reflexivity to slippage between the simultaneous roles of artist / researcher / facilitator in the a/r/tographic research encounter reflects the ethical commitment to become affected (Truman, 2021), which is a tenet of research-creation. brown (2017) signifies this commitment by writing "We must notice what it takes to respond well. How it feels to be in a body, in a whole – separate, aligned, cohesive. Critically connected."

Seeding this commitment was an apt way to negotiate the care home setting as an a/r/tographer, as receptivity to being affected by all aspects of the research encounter responds to, and emerges with, thresholds of relationality in reference to care and wellbeing in the non/formal context of the care home setting.

In an embrace with uncertainty, and with a commitment to become affected, the a/r/tographer performs in anticipation of slippages, finding the capacity to hold situated and relational elements together. The research being undertaken is felt in the a/r/tographer's body. brown (2017) responds: "[…] feeling matters…feeling is an important and legitimate part of knowing". I have felt the contextual, practical, and theoretical aspects of the research event enfolding as emotions. How does an a/r/tographer hold themselves in-tact? Approaching this, I find that research-creation becomes an anti-methodology: it requires the a/r/tographer to notice and respond to outliers, by acting simultaneously as an instigator, a curator, and a witness of the research event, rather than a master of it. Truman tethers Haraway's (1988) concept of "situated knowledge", whereby situatedness is conceptualised as the actual and physical location of the self; processes of self-identification; externally/systemically enforced identities and positionalities; as well as theoretical positionality, for example the canon, with Barad's (2014) concept of "non-local relationality", which describes the complex matrix of relations that co-create ontological experiences of being in and of the world. The co-emergence of these processes through the anti-methodology of research-creation, in conversation with Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and brown (2017), further encourages myself-as-researcher to be present-to the multiplicity of positionalities I shift and slip through, attending to feelings rather than dismissing them.

## Opening to the field

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*Urgent andragogy: new improvisations for elder care*

**I had been thinking about affirmation and affirming chance encounters. On my first day, I stopped off at the supermarket to pick up some lunch. I got caught in the gaze of the flowers section, drifting towards humming blooms. I picked up a bunch of bright orange tulips. They nodded at me as I lay them gently in the basket. During the day I gave them to people, introducing myself and jotting down names.**

Emerging from the score outlined previously, in this section I plot out connections between literature on elder care and my experience in the field. In this study, the research field is the Erskine care home based in Glasgow, UK. Erskine is a charity that has been operating since 1916, delivering residential support for people who have a dementia diagnosis and who have worked for, and served in, the UK's armed forces. The sociopolitical and clinical intersections that co-create this context serve as fertile grounds for an a/r/tographic study exploring arts-led interventions in care home settings.

Approaching relevant literature about elder care, I posed two questions: why is this research drawn to the care home as a non/formal setting for learning through arts-led interventions; and how does the a/r/tographer intersect and (re)produce care within this setting? The two texts reviewed in the next section have been done so to tease out elements that seek to configure these explorations, however the questions cannot be simply answered. The process of reviewing literature on elder care leads to further interrogations about how this specific form of care is valued in contemporary capitalist society, culture, and politics, and why there is an impetus to illuminate on the issues facing older generations across the Eurowest.

In her essay "On Elder-Care", teacher and activist from the radical autonomist feminist Marxist tradition Silvia Federici (2014)  outlines the crisis that underpins care for older people in Western countries ruled by neoliberal capitalist systems, such as the USA and UK. In this text, Federici, who has long unravelled the crucial role of what she terms as reproductive labour (2014), and how the aforementioned system/s operate care, speaks to how elder care has not been politicised in its current form, therefore hardly ever finding a place within contemporary social justice movements and socialist discourse. In response to this lack, Federici writes:

"Elder care in capitalist society has always been in a state of crisis, both because of the devaluation of reproductive work in capitalism and because the elderly, far from being treasured, as they were in many pre-capitalist societies as depositories of the collective memory and experience, are seen as no longer productive." (Federici, 2014)

If reproductive labour is figured in the context of social relations, sufficient care for elders becomes a necessary collective task that can be activated through cooperative reproductive labours, ,much like the mutual aid that was galvanised during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. However, in order for a collective and coactive care to be attended to, Federici calls for a cultural revolution (2014) to reconceptualise the concept of old age in contemporary sociocultural and socio-political narratives. Federici reckons with rhetoric that designates the degradation of people-as-workers through age and illness as a fiscal burden on the state, which is also highlighted within the Baradian (2007) ethos of representation beyond economic value within ethico-onto-epistemological registers. In simpler terms, when a person is no longer able to contribute to the capitalist system through waged labour, they are devalued because they are not viewed as productive against measures of economic productivity conditioned by the Eurowest. This projected uselessness is a barrier to the older community, and all types of social care, including state and community-led social care, as modes of reproductive labour are devalued. Care work, Federici (2014) writes, "like all reproductive work…is not recognised as work, but unlike the representation of labour-power, whose product has some recognised value, it is deemed to absorb value, not produce it." In other words, care and social work do not produce exponential profit; these practices create a deficit in workers when care-work is deemed obsolete by an overarching socio-political system. Care staff are made

subordinate through low wages and precarious working conditions, particularly during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic (Gardner, 2020).

When relating Federici's conceptualisation and critique of how elder care has been subordinated, and how the welfare state has been dismantled due to the "neoliberal insistence that reproduction is the worker's personal responsibility" (2014), considering myself as the phenomena of this study through the lenses of a/r/tography has given me a contextual experience of a care home setting that supports members of the dementia community. My experience in the field intersects with Federici's concept of reproductive labour, along with artistic and emotional labour, which intersect in and within themselves. In these interstices, the role of the a/r/tographer responds to an urgent need for imaginative and expanded perspectives on how care can operate. In this study, care as a means to manifest wellbeing was propagated and propagated by myself-

*I brought a bunch of flowers with me every time I went, collecting the petals from the previous bunch without knowing why. Collecting, gathering, witnessing, archiving. The petals were a way for me to trace my previous steps and remember; the petals gave me affirmation.*

as-artist-in-residence, the activity staff, and Luminate), relating to Federici's call for "collective forms of reproduction enabling older people to be provided for when no longer self-sufficient" (2014). Federici's acknowledgement that the elder community must be enabled through the reproductive activity of caring, via communal forms, is made resolute when she writes, "the elderly, far from being treasured, as they were in many pre-capitalist societies as depositories of the collective memory and experience, are seen as no longer productive" (2014). Recognising how contemporary societies devalue their older generations speaks to the basis of my original enquiry into arts-based learning with dementia, asking how the a/r/tographer can respond to this devaluation by creatively intervening in a clinical context.

Federici's notion of collective memory and experience resonates with the a/r/tographic and research-creation impulse to catalyse the field as relational, acting as a witness to the affective perspectives fed back from those who are sharing the research encounter. In the context of my experience with the dementia community, collective memory was brought to the surface through arts-led interventions, whereby attention was given to moments of emergence within the creative act rather than concentrating solely on output. I was able to

lean on the roles that constitute the a/r/tographer to explore the ways in which the care home setting becomes a non/formal learning setting through initiating arts-led interventions. The staff in this setting enabled this exploration further by providing invaluable advice regarding residents' lived experience and personalities, continuing this support during my time there. This is itself a form of care giving. These intersections of reproductive labour co-produce ethical attunements-as-acts of care, affording new stakes for lifelong learning, creative ageing, and elder care beyond the remits of exponential profit margins.

In his essay "Preliminary Notes After Care Homes", Tom Allen (2020) critically responds to a period spent working in a UK-based care home. Allen cites that "[…] care work is a rare instance in the Global North because it remains an occupation where the effect of neglecting one's work is made obviously manifest in the body of another human being". Contending that elder care can be multifaceted and fertile, rather than a vehicle to deal with people at the end of the lives, Allen speaks to impressions left in the body of the cared for via the act of care, or neglect thereof, problematising systems of care that produce violence towards the cared for by not providing stable working conditions for those who are performing the care work. Care in capitalism thus becomes a means to an end, losing any promise of presence with the embodied and emotional factors involved in dementia or any illness effecting older people. Person-centered care becomes near impossible within social care settings that are informed by how much money can be made from residents and their families, who often must sacrifice property in order to be able to afford residential care. The fact that there is little community-led mutual aid for elders in the UK provides a grim outlook for the future of elder care – I think about what elder care might look like when I may need it, and I worry about how systems of capital will continue to degrade the necessary importance and implementation of reproductive labours to provide care across generations.

In Federici's essay, she concludes that coactive and communal care can aim to "socialise the experience of illness, pain, grieving and the care work involved, in this process reclaiming and redefining what it means to be ill, to age, to die" (2014). In my study, the ethical implications involved in a/r/tographic inquiry converge with Federici's call to socialise elder care, creating a space for dialogue around care and wellbeing in relation to non/formal learning via arts-led interventions. As the researching-I, I can acknowledge what I witnessed in reference to Federici's critical outlook on the crisis of elder care and all

reproductive labour. From the perspective on myself-as-facilitator, I see the urgency of coactive and collective forms of care in the dementia community, in relation to the wider social care framework in the UK.

In turning to these texts, I rethink the two questions: why this research is drawn to the care home as a non/formal setting for learning through arts-led interventions; and how does the a/r/tographer intersect and (re)produce care within this setting? These wonderings speak to an emerging discourse reflexive of how artists can catalyse cultural narratives on lifelong learning, dementia wellbeing, palliative care, and creative ageing, through interactions and interventions within care home settings. With regards to my experience in the field, my feedback and findings are made resolute by a common theme: the potential for an urgent, careful andragogy as a modality that informs, and is informed by, arts-led interventions taking place *as* a form of care giving. In reference to practices of mitigation to the crises as described by Federici, and Allen's pathologising of the care home setting, researcher Shari Sabeti refers to creative ageing as a means towards self-expression for elder care narratives. During a three-year ethnographic study, Sabeti (2014) observed a group of older people attending a creative writing workshop at a museum in the UK (2014). As a process of value-making, Sabeti observes that the workshops allowed attendees to "[…] move away from an individual sense of self" towards "a dwelling in the present […] which contributed to their senses of wellbeing and 'youth'" (2014). Sabeti's finding resonates with Allen's conjecture that social care settings position individuals as an object to maintained, rather than a subject, a self, with a desire for wellbeing as much as the next person. Deliberating on the wage relation between care staff and those who are cared for refigures caregiving into a fiscal exchange, made increasingly precarious by the direct devaluation of social care through governmental funding cuts and policies that employ neoliberal tactics that narrate the care of older generations as a burden.

Sabeti's study refers to the educational aspects of creative ageing within non/formal settings, such as the museum, as increasing confidence via the inextricable links between creativity and caregiving, chiming with McCaskill's identification of the same crossovers. She writes, "[…] while the ageing self is often evoked as one that it is retrospective, creativity is associated with the prospective" (2014). Sabeti's observations mark a shift in sociocultural narratives surrounding older people, sparking the fuse of Federici's claim

that care must be instigated coactively in recognition of how crucial reproductive labour, such as caregiving, is for human *being*.

This is not to say that attending to the self within elder care is problematic; rather, Sabeti enfolds self-expression and social experience towards illuminating on how interconnectivity can be instigated through the intervention of creative ageing as a mode of caregiving. Strategising creative ageing as an ethics in and of itself, Sabeti (2014) contends that "[…] creativity (or improvisation) must be seen as a constitutive element of 'social life', rather than being about an individual's agency over 'society'. It is a relational process dependent on entanglement and 'mutually responsive' entities". This statement of intent is radically anti-capitalist and chimes with Federici's salves for the crisis of elder care. The concepts of mutually responsive creative ageing enfold with attributes from this study's ethico-onto-epistemological impulse to invoke how entanglements are "relations of obligation" (Barad, 2010) in the researching and facilitation of elder care, initiated in this study through the porous lenses of a/r/tography.

**Opening to chance encounters**

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*Research design*

The design of this study was seeded before entering the field. I knew that the study would need an interdisciplinary approach with regards to methods to reflect the shifting lenses employed in an a/r/tographic endeavour. Springgay, Irwin and Kind (2005) describes modes of a/t/tography as ruptures in the typical methodological process. These ruptures attend to moments of emergence and loss, whereby traditional qualitative methods such as observation and interviews would force connections between separate and distinct entities within the field. To allow for methods to embody modalities of rupture, the methods used to carry out my initial design had to be porous enough to allow outliers and happenstances to surface and resurface.

The creation of this study has been spawned from reading a chorus of texts, alongside listening to podcasts, audiobooks, talks, chats; and watching videos of writers speak about their work in interviews and discussions. To draw out the shape of this research whilst undertaking experimental roles in the field has been complex, requiring attentivity to my boundaries as the researching-I, continually asking me to navigate simultaneous positions in reference to theoretical underpinnings. The rigid format of the Microsoft Word document feels confining to my recognition of the spiralling and tangly nature of this research, and as the author of the research text I have begun to imagine the words and references emerging in chorus: I envisage a web, woven like a root system underneath fertile soil. In this spirit, below is an unfurling of theoretical guides and groundings, threaded with the focal points that have begun to unfold withing the research encounter and boundaries as the researching-I. The rigid format of the document has felt

confining to my recognition of the spiralling and tangly nature of this research. I imagine everything emerging in chorus: a web, woven like a root system underneath fertile soil. In this spirit, below is an unfurling of theorical guides and groundings, threaded with the focal points that have begun to unfold withing the research encounter and subsequent data collection.

University Scholar and Professor of Art Education and Curriculum Studies, Rita L. Irwin, describes a/r/tography as:

> "[…] often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher." (2005)

The methods I employed in this study were designed to shift between the process of emergence, whereby an openness to the possibility produced or contained within uncertainty is cultivated, and contingent factors are positioned as approaches rather than attributes to invoke a strategy of openness. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, the research methods used position this research as strategic, in that the data produced folds into analysis to perform an active response. The active response is interdisciplinary and trans-mediative, meaning that different media entangle to constitute the strategic impulse of the study. Transmediation discerns an epistemological response tethered to multiplicity by offering numerous overlapping points of information that flow through and beyond each other.
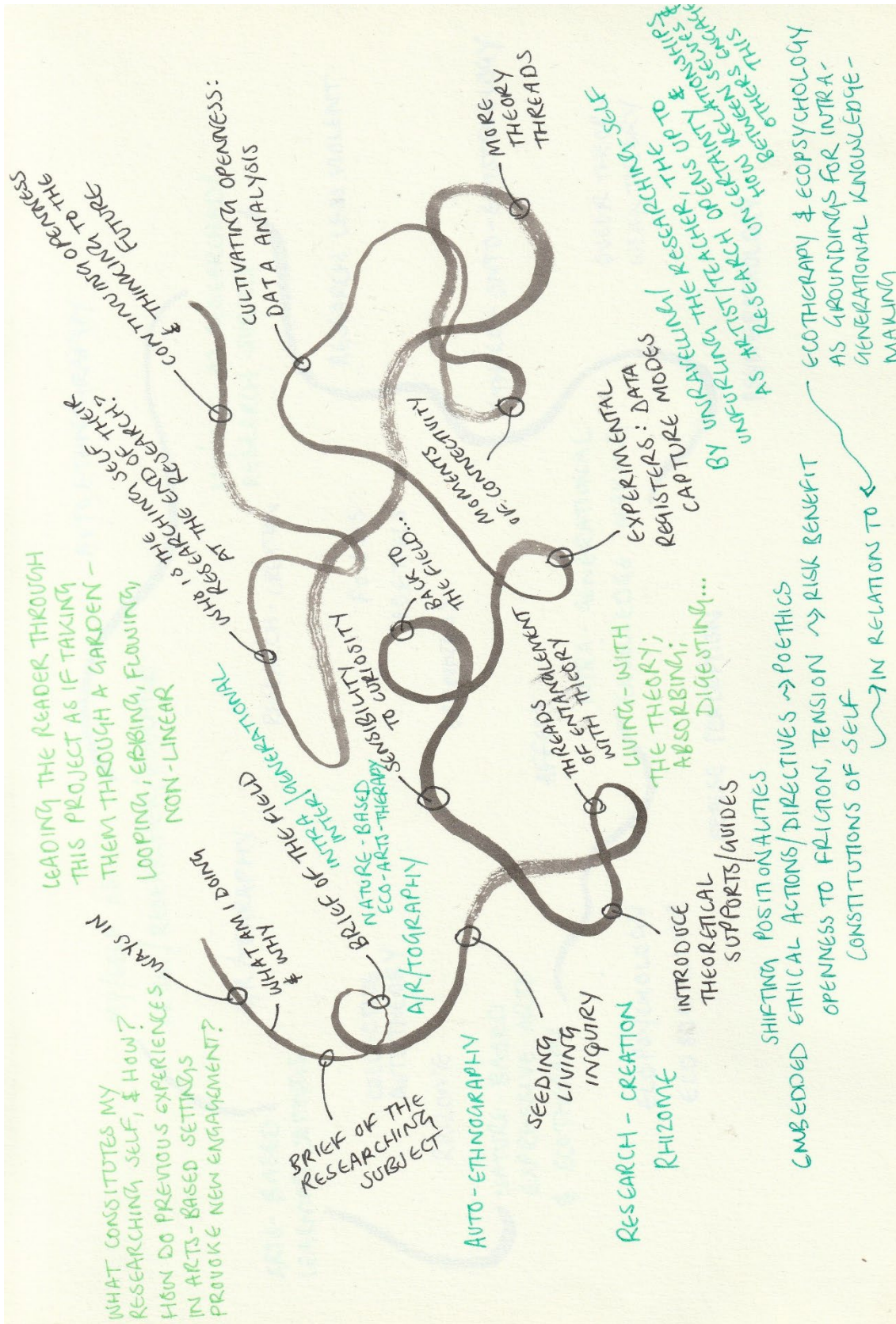
*Figure 1 A/r/tography in-motion – photograph of enfolding illustrated plan for writing this research text.*

*The embodied beyond: research findings rhizome*

*I arrange the petals onto paper, curating only their distance from the edge of the page. Over the space of a week, the petals leave an impression on the paper. A shadow is created from sunlight bleaching the remaining surface. What is left is a marker for the oscillating contours of passing time.*

The findings for this study inhabit a space beyond this research text. The act of moving beyond offers a shift in representation, attending to the enfolded nature of a/r/tographic inquiry. I feel this movement respond to the concept of myself-as-phenomena – I have given permission to my data capture methods to sprawl and entangle through the page – becoming vibrant and necessary, reflecting the theoretical and contextual score that underpins this document.

To view my research findings and analysis, please click on the QR code to be taken to a webpage in your browser. Alternatively, you can scan the code to view the page on your smartphone.

Presenting the findings as a rhizome allows space for speculation. Employing multiple registers is intentional, gesturing the reader to lean into where they feel drawn to. I have treated my analysis of the data in the same way, responding to what has been captured through attending to how this data makes me feel now, in the process of writing. The analysis becomes an act of feeling, rather than strictly doing, following any responses that oscillate through my body as a method of analysing the impact that this study has had. In this way, I go beyond the status of phenomena, and become a field of research myself.

This act of becoming reflects a commitment to become affected, following Truman's mode of research-creation and brown's emergent strategy. Kaleidoscopic, this reflection instigates the production of a new symbolism for the a/r/tographic self, referred to earlier in this research text. The a/r/tographer takes the symbolic form of a prism in order to reveal the felt aspect of art-making, research, and facilitation. The prismed a/r/tographer allows light to pass through, illuminating new paths of exploration, at the same time reflecting upon the field of discovery, or the plane of immanence. This moment of

projection and reflection creates a third mode: refraction. The a/r/tographer's refraction is her anti-methodology: she moves across parameters in order to find losses and ruptures, those thresholds of experiment that foster situated and divergent knowledge.

*Exploring the data*

Thank you for returning to the research text. It has been difficult for me to return, as I find the sprawling rhizome of the research findings webpage to be much more akin to the a/r/tographic process and my lived experience of creating this study.
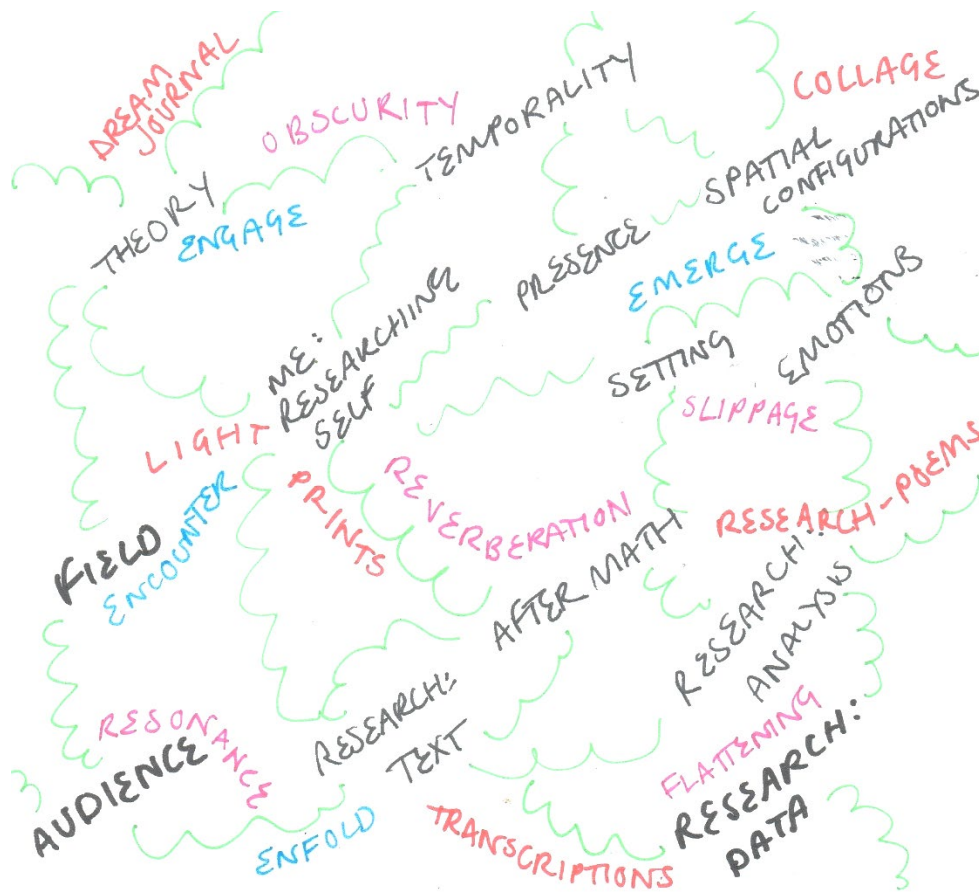


*Figure 2 research design reverberations.*

In this section I explore the data captured whilst undertaking this study. Above is a diagram to illustrate how the research design proliferates across the ethico-onto-epistemological realms of the researching-I whilst undertaking a/r/tographic research. This illustration was created as a response to flattening the findings of this study into a linear research text document, anticipating the ethical implications of this flattening and how this effects this representation a/effects the researching I. This looping, folding, tangling diagram feels a more apt tool to re-present my experience in the field.

*Seeking*

## Collage

In their essay on a/r/tography, Springgay et al (2005) offer the word "contiguity" to describe how the arts-led qualitative methodology resists neat definitions in analysis. As a method, collage reflects this resistance through operating-with contiguity: forms emerge as peripheries in/on the collaged page. Images vibrate in relation, stimulated by the edge of each other, enfolding to form a new and unknown mediation of experience. Springgay et al (2005) write:

> "[…] the use of the term text/ual makes present the implications of "texts" beyond, outside, unknown, and tangential to the visual and the written. Thus, a/r/tography includes an understanding of intersubjectivity."

The act of collaging speaks to the intersubjective folds witnessed in the a/r/tographic process – these folds intra-act in the two-dimensional realm of the page. However, collages are not flat – they implicate the many layers of meaning that constitute the text/ual. The act of collaging is representational of how this study has formed layers of meaning to create a strategic web. The act of collaging, of cutting out images and textures to reposition and affix them in new and unknown compositions is reflective of the act of a/r/tography and how a/r/tographic resonances occur through the purposeful commingling of mediums and mediations.

Images of plants and flowers were employed in the field as a component of arts-led interventions carried out with residents from the care home. This imagery had a symbolic importance as it carried residents to places in their mind and drew out narratives of landscape and place. Resonating with residents through the symbolic and referential

nature of images became an important element of my endeavour to cultivate forms of wellbeing that emerge alongside procedural caregiving in elder care settings.

**Voice Note Transcriptions**

Recording my voice in the aftermath of residency visits was a means to capture the emotional and embodied aspects of this study and my lived experience in the field. Documenting and analysing voice create additional layers of data that speak to how the researching-I comes to embody their research through felt connections occurring in the body.

In my findings, I present a transcript of three voice note recordings, and do not share the original recordings as part of the data analysis. The reasons behind this respond to the flattening required to present this study within the fields of health and wellbeing studies, which position data analysis as digestible and detachable from the whole of the research, and from the self of the researcher, in order for said data to be augmented into quantifiable units. Responsive to this flattening, the transcripts became narrative supports to the research undertaken. They act as a qualitive compost for new findings to emerge, specifically research-poems that were activated by my emotional responses to the method of recording, listening to, and transcribing voice notes.

Transcribing allows me to return and re-turn to my artist facilitator self, the self who operated in the field, re-living the experience through listening to these recorded echoes. My past self speaks to my present self: my voice reverberates through time and space to provoke a deep self-listening. Recall through the medium of echo, resonance and reverberation are attributes of the a/r/tographic impulse, as Springgay et al (2005) describe:

> "Reverberations […] excite possible slippages of meaning, where the act of returning is not mirrored but a performance where each reverberation resists and pushes forward towards new understandings. In a similar manner, reverberations are individual and shared. Privately and socially constructed, reverberations activate openings to let others' work and words resonate throughout in a tangled co-laboring."

Designing the study to include voice notes transcriptions as a method of data capture was done so to provoke the activation of openings, becoming a portal into the emotional side

of the labour of undertaking this study. The entangled acts of speaking, recording, listening, transcribing, flattening, and reading again follow the methodological impulse of a/r/tography to trace resonances through a strategic emergence-with the research undertaken. The enfolding occurring in reverberations through these data sets gives a sense of the many selves involved in producing them. Following reverberations *as* a method of data analysis references the commitment to become affected, as described by Truman in relation to research-creation (2021), because this commitment will produce new meanings regarding how the self is affected by undertaking research.

**Dream Journal entries**

Scans of a dream journal kept whilst attending the residency were collated in response to the voice note transcriptions, threading the before and after my experience of the field to form a mesh of embodied data capture. Keeping a dream journal allowed me to connect with any subconscious inquiry activated by this study. In paying attention to the waking moments of my a/r/tographic endeavour, this form of data capture responded to Springgay et al's (2005) rendering of living inquiry. They write:

> "[…] living inquiry is an embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual *understandings and experiences* rather than mere visual and textual *representations*. One cannot separate, through abstract means, visual and textual interpretations of lived experiences." (Emphasis authors' own)

The lived quality of the dream journal scans positions this study as contingent, activated by encounters with the field, rather than through presuppositions of how this experience will produce data. Capturing the ephemeral traces of dreams acknowledges how this research has been constituted by multiple convergences.

*Tracing*

**Light Prints**

A happy accident, the light prints were created by leaving objects such as glass beads and dried flowers on top of sheets of sugar paper placed near windows. The effect of sunlight on the sugar paper leaves a trace of the object in the original colour of the paper, whilst the remaining paper grows lighter the longer it is left. Originally, I had enjoyed

placing the objects on the paper as a practice of three-dimensional collaging, and I employed this as a reflective practice to be undertaken whilst alone either during time spent in the field, or during time spent in my artist studio.

As a method of data capture, the light prints reconfigured the analysis of my findings, supporting emergent strategy as a point in the theoretical and contextual score underpinning this inquiry. As data, they refer to the intra-acting and affective qualities of the research question, responding to how intervention can create new meaning and acknowledge alternatives for how care is constructed within an elder care setting.

**Research-poems**

The process of writing into captured data to make research-poems obscures traditional methods of data analysis. This obscuring repositions research as a living, porous, fluid act, reflecting on how the research phenomena is too obscured by a/r/tography. Intentionally, the research-poems are presented as findings and analysis, a doubling that opens the data to new reverberations and resonances beyond, yet tethered, to the initial research question. Employing poetry as a mode of analysis deepens the enfolding process of this study, revealing ambiguities and provoking responses to how a strategy of ethics can be cultivated in response to the field.

The research-poems act relationally and occur as touchstones for the future of the research undertaken. Exploring my findings through the lens of poetry requires me to attend to the ethical aspects of transmediation. Asking questions through poetic translations figures an approach to ethics that responds to what is already there whilst simultaneously forging new meaning/s. There is a structural equivalency between the findings presented through data capture via the research methods undertaken, pointing to how the research-poems can oscillate between findings and modes of analysis. This leads me to consider the concept of poethics as modality from which further a/r/tographic endeavours may proliferate. Merging poetry with ethics provides a conscious and attentive slippage between and through the modes, operating with a locus of "non-intention" (Andrews, 2017), to allow for meaning to be made from relational ethical affects.

In "Presenting and Representing Others: Towards an Ethics of Engagement", authors Lucy Pickering and Helen Kara (2017) refer to research-poetics as method for "real rather than literal truth seeking/presenting", an emergent process that is responsive to taking into

account ethical imperatives when representing others in research. In relation to representing myself as the researching-I, poetry transpired as a means to capture the essence (Pickering and Kara, 2017) of the experience of undertaking a/r/tographic research in the field, whilst simultaneously creating a reference point, a touch stone, to be re-turned (Barad, 2007) to during analysis and subsequent explorations. In her essay "How to Write as Felt: Touching Transmaterialities and More-Than-Human Intimacies" (2018), Springgay employs speculative feminist and new materialist standpoints to encounter writing as a practice that can hold together the multiple whilst revealing distinctions in-between. Springgay follows routes in and out of intimacy-with the more-than-human to practice writing as felt, performing the making of a text as an act of inscription that can provoke intra-active readings. Whilst I view each piece of data that was captured as an inscription, the research-poems felt particularly responsive to the desire of the research(ing-I) to strategise an ethical attunement to the field of elder care.

Pickering and Kara (2017) describe research poetics as taking, "the form of poetry written for the purposes of representation", emerging to "engage on affective as well as cognitive levels". In this sense, what allows research poetics to truly affect the researching self, is a porous encounter with their ontological and epistemological becomings in the field, and in doing so offering up space within the field of health and wellbeing studies for an equivalent experience: engaging with theory - with embodiment - with each Other. Like research poetics, *poethics* considers the ethical arrangement of ontological and epistemological becoming as inherent within the self and subjective "I". Arranging poethics as a tenet to a/r/tography further by strategizing its/their/my ethics with *openness*, cultivating space for the new and numinous in experimental knowledge making. With openness, ethical relationality within autoethnographic processes can engage multiplicities rather than refute them to gain power or control within the relation. As a radically entangled mode, poethics is instrumental in ethico-onto-epistemology; a term whose hyphenation reveals the pace of attention necessary to affectively navigate the intersections it holds together.

# Opening, enfolding

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Open, enfolding. I am aware that flattening everything into a neat conclusion would be an act of violence against the vibrant, ruptured, enfolded study that has emerged over a period of five months. To be ethical and responsive, the components of the reason for exploring the thresholds of a/r/tography and experimental fieldwork and how these intersections shift through each other can be explored. By converging multiple theoretical and contextual underpinnings in relation to the field, this study seeks to emerge-with the interstices between education, the arts, caregiving, in relation to health and wellbeing.

## *The prismed a/r/tographer*

A/r/tography is better defined as an impulse, rather than a methodology. In the experimental aspects of a/r/tography, I find the roots for a strategic ethics of openness. Intended to disrupt traditional modes of scholarship and knowledge production[1], a/r/tography is situated by Springgay et al as an arts-based form of research that is enacted through living inquiry[1]. A speculative feminist interrogation that moves beyond autoethnography, whereby the researcher collects and analyses narrative data in relation to their researching-I and the researched-other, a/r/tography moves towards an open and contingent entanglement between the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher. Illuminating how the body slips between these roles requires this study to identify the affective impressions left in the body of the a/r/tographer who undertakes research whilst being present to these shifts. By implementing creative practice as a research tool, a/r/tography positions art as a method of production and representation that can activate new critical discourse/s. A/r/tography orients the self to ask how this slippage renders this self in relation to the research field, data, analysis, and text.

"Loss, shift, and rupture are foundational concepts or metonyms for a/r/tography. They create openings, they displace meaning, and they allow for slippages. Loss, shift and rupture create presence through absence, they become tactile, felt, seen." (2005).

A/r/tographic openings, as described by Springgay et al, resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of immanence, lines of flight, and the rhizome, as these structures cultivate a critical witnessing of the unknowable and uncertain in an effort to recognise the multitude of possibilities inherent in any embodied thought process. Resisting oppositions, experimental activations of difference allow the a/r/tographer to strategise openness as a modality for creative becoming-with attendees to the field. In a/r/tographic renderings, the parameters of research-making are given foundational concepts, such as the loss, shift, and rupture mentioned; these conceptual seeds are planted as an embrace of how fluidity across difference can inform strategies for/of ethics by recognising how strict closures between sociocultural positionalities refuse the multiplicity of difference inherent in any encounter. Being hospitable to frictional encounters between thought, meaning, and knowledge in all aspects of the research encounter requires the researching-I to open to contingent factors. This openness responds to the interdisciplinary nature of a/r/tography, witnessed by Springgay et al (2005) "not as a patchwork of different disciplines and methodologies, but as "a loss, a shift, or a rupture where in absence, new courses of action unfold" – this rendering furthers responds to the loss felt in the experience of dementia, reconfiguring this loss as a space of immanence to allow, reveal, and provoke speculation and curiosity in elder care research and facilitation.

In the process of creating this study, employing the term *facilitator*, rather than teacher, has allowed me to respond retroactively to the roles I have had the experience of undertaking in my previous deliveries of arts-led learning. Within the field, which in the context of this research is the care home setting of Erskine, the term *facilitator* is useful when attempting to describe a perceived neutrality that my role responded to. This neutrality stemmed from observations of my presence in this setting, whereby the fact that I was not an Erskine employee, and therefore did not wear the uniform, meant that I existed within my own signification: I was perceived as a neutral outsider. Although I was tethered to Luminate and employed on behalf of the charity, I felt an essence of neutrality with regards to the positionality of my identity within the care home setting. I was first and foremost an artist, however the facilitation that I undertook produced an entanglement

across positionalities that intersected the role of the artist with the roles of caregiver and friend, creating a dynamic resonance between my-self, the residents, staff, families, the spatial and temporal context of the care home, and the creative output made-with the residents. After an extended period, this perceived neutral position emerged as evermore situated between the context of the care home setting and my artist studio. These two distinct contexts overlapped, reflecting the enmeshed roles of myself-as-a/r/tographer, becoming more about openness than neutrality, towards a speculative neutrality that can strategically enfold-with the active complexion of creativity in social care.

My desires as an a/r/tographer intersected the spatial and temporal context of the care home, along with the dementia community, and the procedures undertaken by staff. Holding these desires, for example activities I had loosely planned in advance, and the intersections of the field, together with my presence, induced in my reflection the shape of a prism – this shape has now become symbolic to me of the a/r/tographer's positionality, in reference to how the a/r/tographer is identified by other attendees to the field; and the meaning made from a/r/tographic presence by and with those who share the field. The symbol of the prism allows me to negotiate the complex shift and slippage between roles as an a/r/tographer; how these roles are navigated and orientated to; how those who share the field encounter/engagement/respond to the a/r/tographer, and the impact of the a/r/tographer's presence in the field; and the output of creative practice made visible and tactile by these intersections. The prism also allows me-as-researcher to identify loss as an anti-method that becomes fruitful through the navigation of the a/r/tographer as both a projector and a reflector. In reference to the cognitive loss felt experienced by people with dementia, the prismatic a/r/tographer holds space for interruption with activated intent.

I would like to add another rendering to Springgay et al's (2005) list: enfolding. This seventh a/r/tographic rendering represents the temporal and spatial qualities of enacting shifting and porous roles in a care setting, regardless of any formal procedures and prescriptions. Enfolding responds to loss, shift and rupture, and it also responds to the continuous movement between inner and outer, embodiment and environment. Further responding to the strategic doubling of the fold as a speculative and new materialist praxis, St. Pierre et al (2016) write: "In a fold, the outside is never fully absorbed, it is both at once exterior and interior. There is always a play of opposition and tension in the operation of the fold."

The e/affect of enfolding on the roles of artist-researcher-facilitator is a loosening from certainty and away from presupposed ideas of progressive output in terms of closed and finished contributions by care home residents and I, responding to Springgay et al's invitation to attend to "the creation of discursive events that are both sites to problematize research and a means to work with different publics around the knowledge flowing through the research event" (2018). What the entangling diagrams in the previous section do is allow me to convey an intentional openness to what is going to happen next. Here, the ebb and flow between modes of enfolding and modes of opening are strategies for ethical attunement to ethico-onto-epistemological becomings.

Reflecting and refracting, the impulses of a/r/tography have allowed me to respond to my experience in the field through performing an affective, living inquiry that is committed to forging new and urgent responses. I open, I enfold.

*A commitment to become affected*

There are two narratives in this research text. One explores literature and material relevant to the field of health and wellbeing; the other seeks to pay close attention to these materials and how they affect the researching-I. Separating these narratives has felt unethical at times because this bifurcation is forceful. However, the act of splitting the narratives, when registered through the lenses of a/r/tographic exploration, is experimental. As brown initiates, strategising the emergent properties of experiment is where and how power is taken back and given to the unknown.

In this study, elder care is responded to through a period of instigating arts-led interventions with a dementia community in a care home setting, engaging the porous, prismed positionality of the a/r/tographer to question how care can manifest as wellbeing when approached with strategic openness. This strategic openness is rooted in experiencing the research field as a rhizome in and of itself, refracted by the prism of the a/r/tographer in response to the felt experience of facilitating arts-led interventions over a 9-week period.

Employing the Baradian notion of ethico-onto-epistemology (2007) to conjure experimental connectivity in the sprawl of entanglements that co-create contexts of existence, I refer to Springgay suggestion of an involution of intimacy *as* ethics ("005). Intimacy is positioned as a practice that activates responsive ethics when involution is designated as a means to be intimate, to touch, to enfold. Drawing from this, I have found that manifestations of care within my field of research are redundant without a further catalysation that makes apparent how a/r/tography can manifest care differently. To establish an ethical positionality that challenges being and acting responsively to my research field and subsequent findings, and in intimate relation with Springgay et al's (2005) findings, I infer the notion of diffraction as an ethical modality, relational to the inquiry of the a/r/tographer and strategic with regards to emergence, immanence, and openness.

In my research text and findings, I interpret, through the researching-I, that the a/r/tographer becomes a prismed force within the field of study; an intra-acting subject in-practice, much like Mol's (2002) iteration of ontology, simultaneously projecting and reflecting in order to catalyse. In analysis of my lived experience as an a/r/tographer in the field as the living phenomena of this research, arts-led interventions are distinguished as the medium of catalysation towards experimentation. Before undertaking this study, I would refer to refraction as describing the moment of emergence between a/r/tographer, attendees to the a/r/tographic impulse, and the setting within which the a/r/tographic intervening takes place. Yet, refraction does not imply that anything changes in the intervention – the a/r/tographic impulse is witnessed and experienced, and perhaps some traces are left from the encounter, however attendees to the setting of the intervention, and the setting itself, remain static and closed by classifications of caregiving, learning, wellbeing, meaning, that have strict parameters. Diffraction, on the other hand, intra-acts with bodies and surroundings to find openings; diffraction infers the commitment to become affected, as implored by Truman (2022). Barad (2014) presents diffraction as an approach that can move beyond reflexivity and representation in regards to research towards newly materialising compositions between the researcher and researched. Barad employs the term, deriving from classical optics, to infer the "iterative (re)configuring patterns of differentiating-entangling" (2014) that co-constitute ethico-onto-epistemologies. Figuring diffraction as a fluid, flowing, porous dynamism, Barad writes "Diffraction is not a singular event that happens in space and time […] Each moment is an infinite multiplicity" (2014). By registering diffraction as a theoretical and practical

apparatus for knowledge-making in research-creation, closed boundaries between subject and object positions are blurred, following an enfolding, porous, in-practice strategy as its ethical imperative. Grounding diffraction here as a praxis makes visible and felt the enfolding process that a/r/tographic research forges, speaking to the potential impact of this blurring of the sectors that this researching-I has pivoted (in)between. Diffractive praxis responds to multiplicity by troubling entrenched positionalities; rather than relying on autopoetic systems of dominance, diffraction re-presents the sympoiesis inherent within, instigating the continual process of enfolding and opening to involve the commitment to become affected within research-making. In the context of the field of the care home, how meaning is made within a non/formal learning settings is opened to the potentials of practicing diffraction towards caregiving; in the non/formal setting, manifestations of meaning and wellbeing are diffracted elements of experimenting with a strategic ethics of openness towards such practice.

Diffraction opens closures; openness diffracts closures.

Rather than resolutely concluding this study, I wish to position this last section as an opening towards further enfolding, representing how I feel in the aftermath of addressing myself as the phenomena. The prismed a/r/tographer diffracts through a sustained process of enfolding and opening, to spawn new imaginaries (Springgay, 2018). In the context of my field of research, diffraction occurs to make felt the sympoietic potentials of caregiving towards manifesting alternative realisations and responses that bring new value to reproductive labour. Engaging diffraction in this way, I emerge as a prismed a/r/tographer.

# Post-script

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*In the final weeks of writing this text, I was given the news that the Erskine home in Glasgow, where I undertook the residency that would eventually become the field for this study, would be permanently closed at the end of 2022. This news was devastating, due to multiple reasons. Perhaps these reasons feed into why I have created and undertaken this study. As I write I feel the loss that this closure will cause. The thought of all those who will be impacted reverberates in my chest, making my heart simultaneously sink and beat faster. The timing of this news coinciding with the hand-in of this research text reminds me of the intra-acting components of life: ebbs and flows shift us continuously.*

*The fact of the home's permanent closure is stark evidence of Federici's recognition that reproductive labour, in particular elder care, is in crisis. This crisis was brought to the fore during Covid-19 lockdowns, however the aftermath has yet to fully surface. I think about Allen's (2020) acknowledgement that in social care, neglect is felt within the body of the neglected – Allen pathologises neglect to highlight the impact of wage-based care giving on ideologies of care, solidarity, and community. Pathologising asks us to re-think practices of care to recognise the reparative strategies needed to instigate provisions that are tethered to the body multiple: to ontology as a practice rather than a static rendering of what and how being in existence as a human can be. We must be imaginative if we are to keep practising. We must strategise openness and operate diffractively if we are to change the rigid parameters of procedural caregiving, to move-with crisis to collective moments of witnessing how neglect lives in the body.*

*I have laid bare the findings of my living inquiry to platform the possibilities of arts-led interventions towards wellbeing and meaning making for elder care in the dementia community. To strategises an ethics of openness as a response to my findings, I must acknowledge that it cannot be a/r/tographers alone who do this work. Enfolds between*

*practices, positionalities, and skill sets can be sought to find and follow new modalities for care, involving caregiving methods that are diffractive – tethered yet emergent – to make clear these necessities in lieu of life's contingencies.*
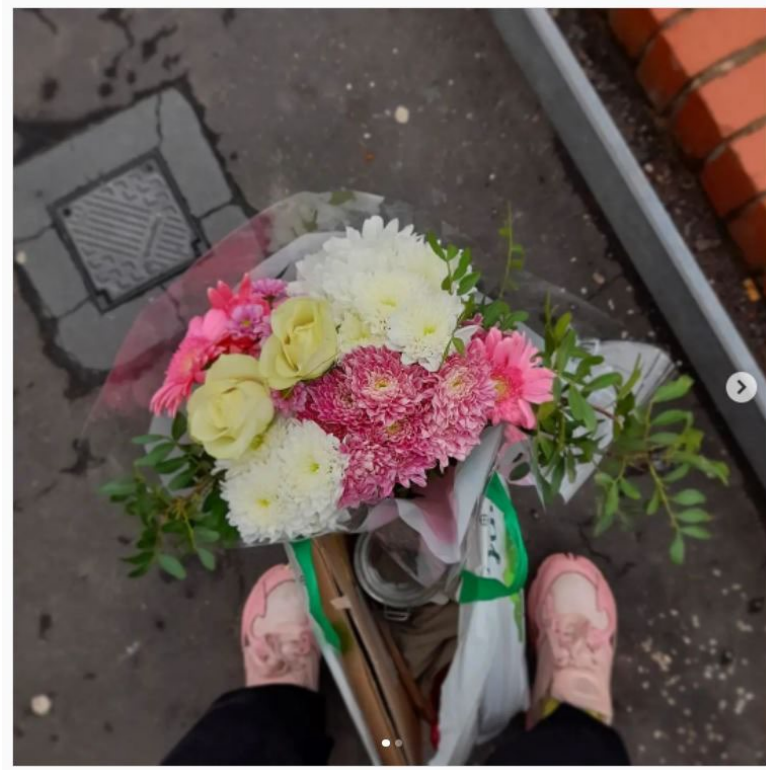


*Figure 3 a bunch of flowers given to me by Erskine staff on the last day of the residency.*

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# IMAGE LIST

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