

Entangled Ekphrastics: Proliferating Modes of (Post) Qualitative Inquiry Through Liminality and Research-Creation

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Abstract

In this article, we articulate a research-creation process called *entangled ekphrastics* as an emergent response to *-isms*: *racism*, *capitalism*, *colonialism*, *heteropatriarchalism*, *speciesism*, and *nationalism*. Our collective gathered virtually, engaged with artwork, and co-created (entangled) poems. This research-creation process generated profound appreciation for disrupting conventions of traditional qualitative inquiry, pushing the boundaries of *activism* and *artivism* in the present moment. We wonder about how responding to the present through *entangled*

ekphrastics moves us toward theoretical liminality, hospicing the crises of the present, and midwifing a future together.

Keywords: act/artivism, co-created poetry, posthumanism, past~present~future entanglements, mid-wifing the new

“Our words are not without meaning, they are an action, a resistance. Language is also a place of struggle.”

bell hooks, 1989, p. 16

Meeting In The Middle of the Middle of the Mess¹

This article emerges from the unexpected entanglements that come in the middle of the middle of the mess in being and becoming. We are living in the question (Tippett, 2016) of how to conduct research that acknowledges and engages with collapsing thresholds of planetary ecology and global civil society. How can we answer the calls in (post) qualitative² inquiry to enact a feeling~gathering~muddling~musing~thinking~wondering together,³ and to critique and create differently (Faulkner & Watson, 2025; Flint & Perry, 2025; Leavy, 2021; MacLure, 2013; Smithers, 2022; Wolgemuth et al., 2025)? In these messy, threatening, and unjust times of accelerating species extinction, ecosystem collapse, pollution, the COVID-19 pandemic, threats from peak oil and nuclear war, multiple military conflicts, dramatically sharp increases in fascism, Indigenous displacement and dispossession, the rapidly increasing refugee crisis, and the rise of homelessness, economic inequality, and mental health crises, how can we (us, as authors, and you, dear Reader) entangle with more-than-humans as a politicized practice of response-ability? These are not questions that we approached with any methodological rigidity. Rather, they emerged during an online Zoom meeting in February 2024. It was as if the universe conspired to pull the six of us together to experiment with research-creation (Manning, 2019). It was not our intention to conduct a research project, or write an article, but the beauty of becoming~with art, theory, poetry, and community brought us to the page. This article is an attempt to convey in written language what we have been up to, why it matters to us, and how movements and practices like this might matter to all of us as (post) qualitative researchers; always keeping in minds, hearts, and hands, how our work might launch your own politicized practice of response-

¹ Traces of and loops related to theory have been embedded throughout the article; foundational texts interwoven by each author. Additionally, we provide a reading list at the end of the article as further proliferations of theory that might invite the reader into theoretical liminality. This approach is informed by the writing/thinking of Katherine McKittrick (2021), who calls attention to “*how we know, and how we come to know, [rather] than in who we know*” (p. 23, emphasis in original).

² We write (post) qualitative as such in order to affirm the undercurrents and crosscurrents of multiple posts: post-qualitative, posthuman, and post-activist inquiry. We acknowledge the tensions that come along with naming practices and are of the shared mind that this work—using an entangled matrix of posts—opens space for living the questions of liminality, complexity, and unfinishedness. Further, our thinking seeks to unburden *unconventional* thinking from categorizations that we believe ultimately stymies speculation and innovation in relation to inquiry.

³ We use the tilde symbol (~) to depict categories of existence as enmeshed and always already coexistent (Stewart, 2015).

ability in relation to thinking differently about the surroundings holding more-than-human worlds together.

These times of the Anthropocene and the sixth mass extinction ask us to “be” different types of humans and researchers (Braidotti, 2022; Haraway, 2016). That is, of course, if we are to confront, disrupt, repair, and re-world wide-spread and escalating social and ecological crises, injustices, and threats in meaningful and ethical ways. We are an emergent collective of educators~researchers~becoming~poets from diverse localities, positionalities, and angles of arrival across the globe, with a common interest in problematizing (post) qualitative inquiry through entangling with others, grappling with theory, and creating with the human and more-than-human (posthuman) world. To “be” a different type of human is to muddle and (de~re)construct static, stable, rigid, and fixed identities pertaining to “be,” through modes, methods, and performances of political activism, or activism, that takes up the verb of *being* in the form and process of being-with: of being-with art, being-with poetry, being-with each other, and being-with the maelstrom of chaos and possibility in these socio-ecological worldings with which we are entangled (Cloud & Faulkner, 2019; Machado de Oliveira, 2021). In response to the hyper-separation spurred on by neoliberal dysphoria, or ways of being and becoming that are static, performative, and distinctly measurable, the task then, as it seems to us, is engaging in modes of meaning-making that are situated at the nexus of disruption and speculative fabulation (Butler, 2000/2024; Haraway, 2016). Thus, our article is a “be(com)ing/doing together” (Zapata et al., 2018, p. 479) with entangled poetry, in which we use our words as materials in the imagining and (re)imagining of our individual and (now) collective journeys in these troubled times (Ahmed, 2023; Haraway, 2016; Loveless, 2019; Machado de Oliveira, 2021). Coming to know ourselves with and through the situated, dynamic, and fluid material/discursive entanglements in worldmaking is a pursuit in, and for, social and ecological justice, and the fabric of our poems serve as “a killjoy rearrangement of the past bring[ing] us closer to the truth” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 141). The truth, for us, is that *being is becoming and becoming is always becoming-with~together*, including with the more-than-human, a process Deborah Bird Rose (2012) terms “embodied knots of multispecies time” (p. 136).

Our words are conjured through lively and vibrant affective responses to art that generate a material push/pull to action in a Spinozian sense to “affect and be affected.” Moreover, we attempt to distil thoughts, feelings, and sensuous encounters into a discursive string of phrases that resemble individual and independent poems; a form of *ekphrastics* that puts into practice a long-honored tradition of using poetry as the means of responding to art. While each member of our collective selected and curated an art piece for the collective to individually respond to, we follow our shared commitments to entanglement as scholars, with the world around us, and with the “trouble,” as Haraway (2016) intimated. Therefore, our practices of ekphrastics propelled the conditions of possibility for critical and creative openings for reconfigurations of us, as individuals, and for the discursive push/pull of language as positioned in hierarchical binary logics in Western thought landscapes (Barad, 2011; Taguchi, 2014). Such practices beget an ontological shift that positions the human in an iterative, ongoing, and dynamic relationship *with* broader ecologies of the world, not just as individuals *in* the world, and language as entangled in the interplay of

affective and embodied responses (Barad, 2007; Barad & Gandorfer, 2021; Mol, 1999). Ekphrastics, therefore, is not a definition or outcome; nor something that *is* through representational logics of methodological rigidity. Rather, through modes of responding to art through what we have named *entangled ekphrastics*, we engage a method of writing that enacts *doings of relationships* with each other, with art, and with political and ethical obligations to (re)storying the social and ecological damage arising from the effects of unfettered modernity (Machado de Oliveira, 2021). Mapping a multitude of paths between im~possibility in these messy, threatening, and unjust times, *entangled ekphrastics* gives oxygen to the many entryways of becoming undone and becoming otherwise (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013).

Through *entangled ekphrastics*, we see poetry as always existing in the space of liminal theorizing; as a form of research-creation because, by its very nature, each reader brings their own selves to the poems. By its very nature, poetry is living, breathing, and becoming—an affective openness to becoming~and being-with. Poetry is affective and effective for liminal theorizing precisely because poetry leaves us with an “unabsorbed remainder of meaning left over after the statement is said and done. This is meaning that has yet to come to determinate expression” (Massumi, et al., 2019, p. 114). Affective openness to becoming~and being-with has vast implications for (at)tending to relationalities, complexities, and uneven vulnerabilities inherent but often overlooked in coexistence, because it grounds care in relational accountability, response-ability and obligation through attachments within infrastructures of inequity (Liboiron, 2021; Ó Tuama, 2025). That is, affective openness moves care from a normative ethical orientation to an active mode of relating and existing set in practice (Daigle, 2023; de la Bellacasa, 2017), in which politicised accounts of democratic citizenship grounded in the rights of the oppressed shifts to a stance of complicity *and* response-ability from different politics of scales. As authors from White, middle-class backgrounds with degrees of privilege, we acknowledge our complicity in impoverished systems and call on our own response-abilities to stand-with and to be accountable when relations are not good (Liboiron, 2021; TallBear, 2014).

Specifically, the poems we present in this article were meant to honor our entangled relationality and the trouble that we all live with(in) as we attempt to navigate systems of *-isms* creatively, attending to their abolition with care, while midwifing the new (Machado de Oliveira, 2021). To this end, we are guided by Bayo Akómoláfé’s (2023) dictum that, “Every attempt to remove oneself from entanglement is an attempt to master the world. You remake colonialism in those moments” (4:45). We created a series of entangled poems that pull together and push apart converging and diverging political, sociocultural, ethical, spiritual, biological, personal, and material forces in our collective. We sought—and still seek—to unthink mastery and work the ruins of academic machinery that tells us always to *know the answer, claim the findings, determine the implications, and enact the policy* (la paperson, 2017; Singh, 2018). Through *entangled ekphrastics* as a decolonizing practice, as a cyborgian engagement with entangled ways of *unknowing*, we seek to fracture conventions of traditional approaches to academic writing and the questions with which we grapple; producing moments of rupture that generate hope and action, carried off together into “that space of refusal, where one can say no to the colonizer, no to the downpressor, is located in the margins. And one can only say no, speak to the voice of resistance,

because there exists a counter language” (hooks, 1989, pp. 35-36). Thus, we offer a collective and collaborative “breaking of a container, a narrative, a turning of phrases” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 18). This “break” is to generate ethical horizons of hope and action that attunes to the violences and injustices of the modern world, while imagining possibilities for a world-to-come, a world-to-build. Racism, capitalism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, nationalisms—these are the organizing *-isms* of our modern world (Machado de Oliveira, 2021, p. 91). We all recognize the harm but respond in various ways. Machado de Oliveira suggests modernity as an organizing force is dying, and that we might hospice this death with care, learning from the lessons it offers, all the while preparing ourselves for the birth of something new. We can do this by orienting ourselves to new cosmologies and ways of being. We must see ourselves as midwives. Machado de Oliveira’s (2021) call is reminiscent of many other theorists, social critics, and visionaries of our times. For instance, thinking with Machado de Oliveira reminds us of James Baldwin’s similar assertion about midwifing the future from the epilogue of his book *No Name in the Street*:

An old world is dying, and a new one, kicking in the belly of its mother, time, announces that it is ready to be born. This birth will not be easy...no matter, so long as we accept that our responsibility is to the newborn. (Baldwin, 1971/1998, p. 475)

Against this backdrop, thinking poetically, with a form of posthuman entangled poetry, emerged for us as a way of responding to the violences of the past and present by creating, imagining, enacting something different.

We invite you into this entanglement with alternative ways of knowing and being about questions, problems, and possibilities we did not really know we wanted to examine when we started out. The possibilities fell out of cyberspace and into our laps, so to speak. The universe brought these provocations to us; the universe assembled us in a space~time continuum for the very examinations we are undertaking in this article. Most of us did not know each other before this began, though we are now entangled in ways that send reverberations into the academic and spaces of worlding in unpredictable fashion. As such, this account of our journey is a cartography of moments shared, of written dialogue, bound together through the structures of hegemony and dreams of a less violent, more beautiful present and future.

Posthuman Poetic Practices and Potentialities

Considering the burgeoning nature of posthuman studies, it should come as no surprise that the tendrils of posthumanism have extended to realms of the poetic, situating poetry as an atypical location for experiencing and responding to the human and more-than-human worlds. Moving with the suggestion that posthuman poetry is capacious in altering the relational boundaries of human and more-than-human sensibilities, Jesper Olsson (2021) considers how the aesthetics of poetry “deflects anthro-pocentrism but can also be read as a step towards the expansion of the ethical and political imagination for the future” (p. 240). For as the posthuman poet perhaps nests and knots their thoughts across expressions that transcend human centered-contexts and relationships, the materialities used to compose poetic figurations hold significant weight. In this way, via Felix Guattari (2011), Olsson suggests that posthuman poetry surfaces “the evolution of a

late capitalist machine-centric universe in which subjects are replaced by subjectivities and complex assemblages” (p. 240). Concomitantly, as poetry ruptures standardized textual articulations (i.e., structured forms of writing), so do the machines that sustain our human relationships to the more-than-human world (and each other). In our case, this intellectual endeavor was very much a be(com)ing~doing together with machine; a fluctuating weaving of ourselves into the machinic assemblage populated by graphics, codes, messages, algorithms, sounds, colors, and time zones embedded within the architecture of Zoom’s software platform.

As a site of inquiry, poetry abounds with openings for analyzing relationships anew. Responding to the title of her own article, “So why poetry?,” Laurel Richardson (2018) offered that poetic lines of flight “will lead to intersecting discoveries and a clarity/certainty of voice that might inspire others to seek and hone theirs” (p. 661). In terms of posthuman poetic inquiry, Monica Prendergast (2020) leveraged Patti Lather’s (2016) article on (re)thinking ontology into a found poem to articulate the potential of posthuman poetic inquiry. Accordingly, Prendergast (2020) waxes,

In Deleuz[oGuattarian] (1987) terms

“a
molecular vision of the alternative
a plurality of fissions and margins
a system of deviances
(straining for communicability
while
protecting its
marginality)
registering in the local
enacting the future life
of difference
a way to dream
(and perhaps enact)
postqualitative work
The question is
how might we move from:
what needs to be opposed
to
what can be imagined
out of:
what is already happening
embedded in an immanence

of
doing
?"
(p. 23)

Through found poetry, Prendergast (2020) exemplifies a co-constitutive approach to meaning making, thus signifying theoretical (and poetic) simultaneity. From this axiom, entangled poetry synchronizes our own individual epistemes, while concurrently bracketing the undulations that make each author's perspective distinct. While the words of the found poem come *from* Lather, Prendergast's arrangement prompts readers to consider a (re)new(ed) discernment concerning "how might we move" *through* posthuman poetic inquiry. Similarly, entangled poetry is about entangling expression, which makes meaning-making and representation more than a singular way of knowing and becoming.

Living Entangled Ekphrastics

How we assembled is important. In February 2024, the Posthuman Nexus⁴ online community held their monthly online social. Kat (Author 1) had been asked to design an engagement activity for the online social, and produced the idea of writing an entangled poem to reflect on a piece of art. In the meeting, she presented the artwork and then asked each participant to quietly reflect and then write a poem or short response to the piece. Each participant typed our responses, and then Kat assembled the text, line-by-line, into an entangled poem. An entangled poem emerged from the thoughts, feelings, provocations, musings, questions, troubles, and embodied reactions of participants. By taking individual lines and combining them with others, a powerful and entangled reaction to a prompt—or in our case—a piece of art, emerged. Kat assembled the poem and then shared it with the group through the shared screen functionality of Zoom, reading the poem aloud. Words will not capture this initial experience for each of us: it was as if air had been suctioned from our spaces. Some of us had tears in our eyes. Our spirits felt troubled, but also full of possibilities. What had just happened? The experience was so powerful that we questioned: should we meet again? What would happen if we each selected an artwork that spoke to us about the questions of history, place, space, and the posthuman quandaries we found ourselves in?

What followed was a constellation of bi-weekly Zoom meetings in which one of us presented a selected art piece and facilitated the *entangled ekphrastics* process. During each meeting, one member of our collective selected an art piece to show the group. The artwork was shared, and each of us wrote our individual musings, responses, and thoughts on the piece which we then copied into the chat box. These lines were then stacked into an emergent entangled poem. The ordering of each line was entirely emergent—a happenstance arrangement as per whomever happened to copy their poetry in the Zoom "chatbox" first. Authors each selected a color to represent their individual thoughts~lines. Once assembled, we read the poem aloud. We sat with

⁴ For more information about the community and its shared commitments of proliferating complex/critical ways of being(com)ing~doing together, please visit www.posthumannexus.org or the Facebook group, Posthuman Nexus.

the emotive responses to this entangled poem, allowing their power to reverberate across time, geography, and technological space. We limited our meetings to 30 minutes, and reassembled two weeks later, until each member of the collective had shared a piece of art, leaving us with six entangled poems.

Through this process, a (re)new(ed) imagining of pluralities, fissures, margins, and thresholds continuously emerged. We started asking more questions about what we were doing. Was our pull to entangled poetry a form of activism? Was it a form of artivism? Was it more-than these individual concepts might capture? We talked about theory, art, activism, speculation, imagining the future, response-ability, remembering the past, all with such rapidity in our dialogues. We emoted. We wondered why what we were up to felt so moving, and why it might matter to us and other (post) qualitative researchers—envisioning what we might be up to as a form of research-creation (à la Erin Manning, 2016, 2019) that pushes the boundaries of *-isms* (e.g., activism, artivism) as we grapple with *-isms*.

In what follows, we share our *entangled ekphrastics*, and using QR codes, link to the artworks that inspired each piece. We hope the QR codes might offer readers of this article both a color version of the work as well as some necessary contextualization about each piece. As previously stated, in our original writing, each author's line was represented by color. Here, we have selected different fonts to represent our words: an important approach to delineate differences and distinctions in the co-shaping of worldings (Barad, 2007). These fonts are as follows: Kat (ubuntu), Gretchen (Montserrat), Bretton (Roboto), Celina (comic sans), Paul (Garamond), and Christie (Spectral).

The Scream

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Kat

I am a third-generation settler to Australia (from Welsh and Scottish descent) and a first-generation settler to Canada. I use the term settler care-fully to locate myself as a person with deep moral and ethical responsibilities to disrupt colonial logics and violent relationships that European colonizers continue to inflict on Indigenous peoples. It is in this spirit that I chose *The Scream* by Kent Monkman (2017), acting from my grounded, lived, embodied, and embedded (micro) politics of location to emphasize the importance of consciously and intentionally querying what these subjectivities might mean for my relationships to the peoples and Lands and that I call home (Wolfe, 2006). This is particularly relevant as a scholar~educator working in transdisciplinary ways across fields of physical education, place-based education, and climate change and environmental education, in which so much of my personal and professional practice is situated on, and with, Land and more-than-human worlds. I stand on the shoulders of giants who understand social and ecological justice as inextricably intertwined (Braidotti, 2019; Liboiron, 2021).



Entangled poem co-created on February 29, 2024

The sadness and despair of this image reaches into every fiber of my being.
 The birds shriek, echoing the grief of mothers, and I, watching from a distance, cannot stop the damage – this time.
 I want to speak to the trees or the grass.
Listening, witnessing, smelling, touching ghosts of the past.
 The land screams.
 It asks me to do better.
 But I learn, studying the tears of the children, how I must stop the injustices the next time.
 To ask them what they remember about the violence they witnessed.
They are still living today in many parts of the world.
 Sounds of violence and trauma echoed by humans and non-humans alike.
 It asks me to question everything about my worldview, where I have come from, and where I am going.
 Do they pass their knowledge down as they renew?
Will we be able to learn to avoid them in the future?
 I will do better. It starts with making room, making space. I don't have to take up so much space.

Fig. 1 Entangled poem #1

Mississippi Blues

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Gretchen

I approached this work from the perspective of a white, cisgender, female assistant professor of literacy education who is a transplant to the American South. While my roots are Midwestern, I have lived, learned, and worked in the South since I was 18. I moved to the Deep South three years ago when I accepted my current position, and I embrace learning about/from this area that I now call home. As a white Midwestern woman moving further south, I reach for art, stories, and music of those whose roots extend deep into the land. I seek to honor the complex entanglements of past/present/future of the area, which led me to share a work of Kafia Haile, a self-described writer, filmmaker, and artist from Georgia. *Mississippi Blues* captures some of the dynamic moments “through which life emerges, assembles itself, and endures” in this culture (Davies, 2021).



Entangled poem co-created on March 27, 2024

Maroonage: spaces of transformation, extrication, hope, resistance, abolition, and joy.
 Working together from the early morning to the end of the day.
 Under the same melodic and turbulent sky
 Musical rhythm that makes the journey enjoyable despite the work that must be
 carried out.
 Blood in the chords of your music at the front and centre of struggle and joy
 Recently, a country song I heard celebrated the age of cotton; I was disturbed.
 The blues of the sky sweep away the red of yesterday, leaving only the tints of
 pain in the dawn.
 Red the color of blood, my blood, your blood, our blood
 The ground seeps up the hurts, and the music remembers.
 Also reaches me
 I hear the Mississippi blues, Spirituals – sing pain, color, and hope
 In a natural landscape, no sounds are needed, just the music of our lives.
 Legacy: indelible traces (upon traces) that forever haunt the futurepresent.

Fig 2. Entangled poem #2

But This Ain't No Discotheque

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Bretton

I entered this shared space as a cis-hetero-white-man with roots in the San Francisco Bay area. I am a father, spouse, and friend who worked as a public school elementary and secondary teacher for 20 years before joining the higher education ranks 5 years ago. I first met Titus Kaphar at the beginning of my teaching career. At that time, his wife, Julianne Kaphar, taught several doors down from me and Titus was struggling to gain traction with her artwork. Being said, I was re-introduced to Titus' work in graduate school after he released his widely disseminated TED Talk titled, "Can Art Amend History?" (Kaphar, 2017). Crossing paths with his work came at a time when I was discovering Derrida's hauntology and beginning my attunement to the way that ghosts and hauntings can be generative and capacious in helping us make "sense of that which we cannot immediately touch yet nonetheless continues to touch us" (Varga & Helmsing, 2022, p. 1). I continue to remain struck by this painting and the ghosts of whiteness that articulate and contaminate the characters on the canvas. Here, I move with the thinking of Báýò

Akómoláfé (2023), who suggests “Whiteness is not white people. Whiteness is impervious to entanglement. Whiteness is the fascist refusal to participate in a world that is ongoing and flowing like water. Whiteness is settlement building saying, this is where we mark the ground. This is what identity looks like. This is what power looks like. That’s whiteness” (30:46)



Entangled poem co-created on April 3, 2024

Ghosts.
 You see these yellow and red lights in the back? Painted over by white.
 Threads of anti-Black violence woven into the pastpresent of American society
 Are they still real or are they too faded?
 Let them be free, let them speak, let them be themselves.
 I am becoming more human.
 They have been silenced and the color of their skin has been erased.
 Unstable futures built upon “law” and “order” and “justice for all”
 They are specters. Spirits and souls leaving us.
 Are they considered skeletons?
 Rise.
 Maybe physically – killed off. Maybe verbally – silenced. Maybe verbally – spirit dead.
 Are they considered ghosts? Are they considered people?
 But this ain't no discotheque.
 Were they always too faded?
 Muted.
 Yet again – maybe they are the voices rising into the ether and consciousness of our society’s dark history.
 HANDS UP!
 We make ghosts with their hands up.
 WHEN?
 Calling us to consciousness and remembrance.
 Curves of soft humans can’t withstand the harsh white lines of erasure.
 Surveillance.
 Don’t shoot? Those shots were taken before they were even fully formed.

Fig. 3. Entangled poem #3

Patera Painting

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Celina

I am a Spanish scholar whose great-grandfather had to emigrate from Spain to Mexico by boat in search of a better life for his family. Years later, my grandmother migrated herself and came back to Spain. I locate myself as a person who is concerned about the forces that drive people to emigrate and the dangers these journeys may entail. Bearing in mind these ideas, I chose Patera Painting by Natxo Valencia Egüés. With this, I act from my grounded, embodied, and embedded (micro) politics of location as a White middle class Spanish, linking the experiences of my family to those of thousands of African migrants who, during the last 20 years, have sailed to Spain from the African coast on unsafe rudimentary boats ("pateras" in Spanish) in order to enter European Union territory without the need of legal permission. Many of those migrants have reached European land becoming irregular migrants. However, thousands of them have drowned in the sea. With this painting, I wanted to emphasize the odysseys many people have undergone (if they were lucky to survive) to sail from their countries towards an unknown land pushed by unbearable social situations.



Entangled poem co-created on April 17, 2024**SALT**

Christina Sharpe reminds us that human death has altered the salt composition of the ocean

Their life vests and pateras provide no better structure than the land they leave or the desperate hope they seek.

Water is connective...

The eyes are so sad

Sad eyes, almost crying... What has been left behind? What is about to come?

HISTORY

Saidiya Hartman reminds us how histories, cultures, and bodies can be ripped and dislocated from space

It seems they don't know if a better life is possible.

Or so Bayo Akomolafe says.

Water-in their eyes, around their boat-doesn't sustain.

But imperialism reeks...

What must it feel like,

A trip has started, life or death, anyone knows the future.

FUTURE

Always-already unknown and out of joint.

As souls go under your shiny shoe

To have life preserved with such hopelessness?

Fig. 4. Entangled poem #4

Forbidden Fruit Picker

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Paul

I attended an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston in April 2024 entitled "Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage." I had previously encountered the work of Wangechi Mutu, a Kenyan-born sculptor and collage artist who challenges Western conceptualizations of the Black experience, particularly by harnessing mythology and folklore. Mutu is also concerned with questions of how capitalism, technology, and consumerism impact the human experience. I am a white cisgender queer man living in the United States, and though I have lived in many parts of the country, I recognize that my education and embodied experience in the world have provided me with only one set of perspectives. In my personal and professional life, I seek out affective perspectives that center and tell storied experiences and voices not always available to me because of my background - those that jar me out of my complacency and help me imagine different ways of being. This worldview seeking has led me most recently to Afrofuturist writing; to Buddhist philosophers; to mythologies, folklores, and queer retellings of our origins and futures (i.e., Marlon James' "Dark Star Trilogy").



Entangled poem co-created on May 1, 2024

What makes us cyborg now?

Children's bones, destruction, decay, death,

Crackle, hissss spit

7Ex7urED bEc0m1N9s

No distinctions, just everything entangled.

We ignore nature's roots and our children in our head-tilt toward a blood-spattered progress.

Though we become more mechanic, we are still drawn to myths and stories

and life, living together amidst the ruins.

Sizzle stripe poison I am holding on, holding on, fed on the blood of babes

M0RE-7h4N-HUM4N bLUrR1N92, p477eRN2, ssssssss0uND2, 4nd m47Er1aLs

Mind-boggling, thought provoking and inspiring... no words, just indescribable feelings.

Dualities: two-headed serpent and their tongues; part human and part machinery

Drawn to the fruit

Fed by interconnected breaths of more-than-human.

4 (r3)N3w(3D) wOrLD is Po5518b3

To share the fruit or to fight for it, that is the question.

As she reaches toward the tree's fruit, I wonder if the knowledge will be our redemption or our next downfall.

Simultaneously reaching for life,

And being struck by life.

Hybrid beings in this together but not the same.

Fig. 5. Entangled poem #5

Oceans From Here—Honey and Prue

Angle of Arrival~Departure: Christie

I arrived late to this entangled poetry party - glitching, (neuro)divergently witching my way in through a small crack generously held open by Kat. After perusing the first four artworks and resulting poetry and feeling the powerful critical+creative movement directly when participating in the production of the fifth, my own choice of artwork to include felt obvious. Australian artists

Honey Long and Prue Stent provocatively depict elemental bodies bodying with the natural world, a project resonant with the calls of many scholars and activists concerned with how modernity entrains bodies through “the education of embodied intuition” (Berlant, 2011, p. 52) that they are separate from one another and the rest of the natural world (Machado de Oliveira, 2021), a process Manning (2023) calls “the genocide of relation” (p. 15). But in the production of subjectivity, “bodying is always a being of relation...always more-than [human], always in movement, a motor or conduit of a worlding” (p. 31). In orienting toward connecting with a wider metabolism of which we are a part and working against modernity’s colonization of our unconscious, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira (2021) suggests “reactivating your vital compass: reactivating the body as a knowing entity that receives and experiences the world as continuous with itself in its living condition and that is affected by the forces of the world in mediated and unmediated ways” (p. 256). For me, an older, white, former elementary and middle school science teacher turned feminist ecophilosophical scholar based in the Mid-Atlantic U.S., the project of reconnecting our creaturely selves with the rest of the natural world, learning from one another and joining forces guided by an ethics of affirmation and joy (Braidotti, 2022), is a critical aspect of working for change in these troubled times.



Entangled poem co-created on May 8, 2024

whiteness always-already saturating all more-than-human elements
 The quagmire, the cleansing
 Witchy, ghostly, formations.
 Mud and scraggle and water: signs of life.
 Trying to find something or trying to find herself?
 Feel you me salt saliva sweat sap tears
 Out from the depths
 Attempting complete contamination through hegemonic ethics of
 control.....hierarchy...dominion
 The ground, the plants and the water are all part of the same,
 everything is entangled.
 Fresh algae sac
 Seaweed slap
 Haunting for all-time.
 Filters of sand, of reefs, of amniotic waters
 She as a strange, mythical creature
 Awash sea and salt, rising out of Neptune's Necklace
 Is that life enveloping us or hiding us—or both?
 Clear and calm water, but no reflection of her face and feelings
 Fluid becomings with your (n/r)ipples pink
 New think
 Birthed anew
 Unfurling. Levitating. Goddess power.
 Birthed from the water, we return to its transparency for bare sustenance.
 Reflecting me
 Reflecting you
 But she is still naked. Vulnerable. Underneath
 It reflects our nature, our womanhood, our softness, our shrouds.
 Between the flow, interstitial glow
 something(s) new emerging.

Fig. 6. Entangled poem #6

-Visms Poetically Hospicing -isms: Preparing for the New

Art has the power to move and open new horizons (Torrent, 2024). Our *entangled ekphrastics* emerged as a serendipitous encounter in which we did not only meet in ordinary Zoom calls, but we, as individuals across varying geopolitical landscapes, were modified; becoming-with each other, each other's ideas, the pieces of art that we curated, the entangled poems we created, and the ongoing reflections on how art and theory open us to attend to the liminal (Pépin, 2023). This work has let us be moved, (re)understand ourselves, (re)imagine ourselves in different locations, decenter the way we see the world, break with the canon, breach the frontier that defines normality, and leave ourselves to come back to the same place differently (Planella, 2017). Poetry as an agent of intensity and feeling produced innumerable shimmers, radiances, and particularities which we deeply treasure as part of our research process; a profound honoring of our reactions to

the images and the poems we co-created.

(Post) qualitative researchers have long been interested in using methodological approaches to open and expand awareness of how various forms of social, ecological, and other oppressions impact experiences of the world. Many qualitative research traditions have an intentional focus on opening space for examining the lived experience (e.g., narrative research, oral histories, case studies, archival document analysis, CPAR, and critical case study). As researchers have proliferated methodological approaches to studying, documenting, and examining how *-isms* impact the world, new questions have emerged for (post) qualitative researchers about our ethical responsibilities and practical response-abilities in terms of representation, voice, social positioning, community and participant involvement, and self-reflexivity~researcher positionality. Every painting that was selected during our process of *entangled ekphrastics* contained one of these *-isms*: *racism*, *capitalism*, *colonialism*, *heteropatriarchalism*, *speciesism*, and *nationalism*. In this way, our work was responding to Machado de Oliveira's (2021) call to attune ethically to the hospicing of these *-isms* while midwifing us towards the new.

As we talked about how expansive (post) qualitative methodologies respond to *-isms*, we also discussed how (post) qualitative research has thought about *-isms*. For instance, how is research a form of activism? Should research be considered a form of activism? Or how has *-ism* shifted as new modes of working with data appear? For instance, an oft-used term in (post) qualitative and art-based inquiry, *artivism*, that unlike purely critical and political forms of art that reflect on social issues, directly engages with and confronts specific social problems by giving a platform for individuals and communities to share their stories and perspectives (Aladro-Vico et al. 2018). Blurring the boundaries between aesthetics and politics to promote the aestheticization of politics and politicization of aesthetics (Mandolini, 2023), *artivism* is a fusion of political activism and artistic expression aimed at transcending traditional educational boundaries to effect social change (Alimen et al., 2023; Bräuchler, 2022; Bronfman, 2021). It is in this spirit that our engagement with *entangled ekphrastics* seeks to offer novel contributions to (post) qualitative inquiry through a fusion of affective intensities, emotional responses~insights, and sympathetic intra~interconnections with art to channel purposeful, creative expressions that disrupt societal norms and advance transformative change (Edgar & Morrison, 2021). Through transdisciplinary enactments of (post) qualitative methodologies and arts-based inquiry, our practicing *entangled ekphrastics* was an affected~affecting process that shifted our research into something that was its own *art-event-becoming* (Manning, 2016, 2019).

To this end, what we describe in this article is unlike the traditional qualitative research processes taught to us in graduate school and unlike the traditional knowledges we have encountered in qualitative research: we did not set our research purpose and questions before we started; we did not design a methodology to investigate the purpose and questions; and we did not write an article with the expected research sections. Moreover, we are not interested in linear, conclusive, or static definitions representing knowledge as fixed and stable because we are not looking for definitive solutions to problems. Rather than projecting a tidy set of conclusions, a predictable solution to problems of modernity, we leverage our bodies, our locations, our histories, our modes

of being and becoming, to live in the space of liminal theorizing and a place of not knowing, and to become comfortable with questions that have no teleological answer(s). We begin in the middle of the middle of the mess, in which there is no central point of reference to what language/semiotics means, but through dynamic, complicated, layered, chaotic, and unorthodox process of *entangled ekphrastics*, subjects (us as humans) and objects (art and poetry) come into being because of, and through, entangled~differentiated relationships *with* each other. As worldmaking is co-constitutively composed, what emerged was an artistic disruption of traditional research, an unplanned experiment with entangled poetry as a research process, an “alternative way of being moved by and moving through” the research world together (Manning, 2016, p. 25).

As a communal disruption of traditional research, our practicing *entangled ekphrastics* together served as a minor gesture that “open[s] the way for an experiential variation” on the pieces of art we each chose, and also on the ways of doing research together (Manning, 2016, p. 81). That is, entangled poetry as a mode and method of knowing and becoming~community is a conduit for collective expression, an “artful” practice of research that is just about creating...creating...creating... (Manning, 2019). Our *entangled ekphrastics* enacts a form of research-creation as a mode of being-with research, aligning with Manning’s (2019) vision of “research-creation...as the potential destabiliser” (p. 120) in disrupting the tendency in the academy and academic research to find an answer. As Machado de Oliveira (2021) reminds us, we cannot discard or eradicate the old stories or these ways of being produce(d), but we can attend to their dissolution and abolition thoughtfully, with care. Thus, the act of research-creation allows us to rethink the boundaries of these stories by taking up new and different imaginings in social, ecological ethics, and justice work. These ideas are relevant for (post) qualitative researchers and/or educators concerned with activism, artivism, and social and ecological justice. Through research-creation, we can participate willingly in bringing to the fore hidden narratives, experiences, and events that tend to remain on the sidelines. Hospicing the old stories while creating entangled becomings of something more is how we push qualitative research into new and different tomorrows.

Co-sharing a multiplicity of (micro)political locations, the six of us (authors) query what possibilities might exist for *entangled ekphrastics* as one way to speculate and activate what could come after entanglement in (post) qualitative inquiry (Giraud, 2019). We see this movement as a gesture toward midwifing the new (Machado de Oliveira, 2021). Through *entangled ekphrastics*, we (at)tend to the birthing of a new, dynamic, (in)form(ing) of collaboration and revision entanglement as ripe for the process of research-creation. We are not claiming that if you do this process, you will arrive at the same outcomes. Afterall, our intention through this work is not to reify universalizing (colonial) modes and methods of practice that claims to be congruent with every context. While the marks on these pages come to their end, it is our hope that the poems we have presented in this article provide a launching pad for others to engage and entangle with through their own differences, as well as our commonalities and shared characteristics (Liboiron, 2021). Keeping the story alive in finding new and different stories in, and for, these messy, threatening, and unjust times is crucial for more relational and sustainable futurities. We are inviting you into the process, to encounter these art pieces (or others), to do this work (or adapt

it), to do this study (or your own approach to this study). We do not know what will happen if you do this, and we do not have to. Each event, after all, takes on a life of its own.

“Was that life? Well then, once more!” -Nietzsche

Reading List

In this article, we discuss how our reflecting and dialoguing about the process of *entangled ekphrastics* also opened space to think about theoretical liminality. Our Zoom meetings were often filled with “This makes me think of [insert theorist/book/article/person/thinker/philosopher/...]. In breaking with convention, we offer here also a short reading list - co-curated - to support (y)our own thinking with these pieces of art and poetry in your own process of research-creation.

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