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Teaching in higher education: organic methodologies

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we use process philosophy to address the increased feeling of alienation and resignation among students and teachers in Norwegian academia. By trusting the generative forces of childhood, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, we explore changemaking potentialities in what we label 'organic methodologies' in higher education. Our question is as follows: *What educational potentialities might evolve if we educationalised 'Babette's Feast' as a collective explorative act of feminist resistance in the academic system?* As a starting point, we briefly present the short story *Babette's Feast*, written by the Danish author Karen Blixen. We experimentally educationalise the imaginary of Babette's feast and transform it into a contemporary *feminist feast*, facilitated through our master's program Toddler Science (0–3 years). After a brief presentation of some elements in the *feminist feast*, we point to processual tendencies within the feast, using Manning's logics of major/minor gestures and Massumi's concept of the trans-individual.


KEYWORDS

Toddlers' life orientations; process philosophy; trans-individual collectivity; minor/major gestures; Manning; Massumi

Prologue

*In Norway there is a Fjord—
a long narrow arm of the sea between tall mountains—
named Berlevaag Fjord.
At the foot of the mountains, the small town of Berlevaag
looks like a child's toy-town
of little wooden pieces
painted grey, yellow, pink and many other colours.*

The above lines from Danish author Karen Blixen's short story *Babette's Feast* (1965) serve as the starting point for this article. In the middle of the small community of Berlevaag, a French refugee and former gourmet chef named Babette works as a maid in one of the yellow houses owned by the sisters Martine and Philippa. Their deceased father was a recognised parish priest in Berlevaag, and the sisters, as well as the whole community, profess a strictly pietistic version of Christianity. Unexpectedly, Babette wins 10,000 francs in a French lottery, and she asks the two sisters for a favour: to let her cook a celebration dinner to remember the parish priest's one-hundredth birthday. Babette wants to share her talents and experience with her new circle of acquaintances and cook a real

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French dinner with an abundance of exclusive dishes that are previously unthinkable, untouched and untasted by the Berlevaagian congregation. However, to Martine and Philippa, this idea seems too extravagant and appears as a threat to the Bible's strict order of the pietistic moderation that has slowly and silently shaped the community over the generations – the mind-sets, the atmosphere and the relationships – in a cold and seasonally dark landscape.

Searching for connectedness and hope in higher education

Without claiming that the spirit of Berlevaag in the eighteenth century completely corresponds with what we experience as pietistic/dogmatic tendencies in contemporary higher education, we argue that the two do indeed have similarities when it comes to behavioural and ideological restrictions. While Babette's environment, among other things, is constrained by the religious morals of moderation, teachers and students in contemporary Norwegian academic settings seem to be trapped in increasingly stricter regimes of control, proclaiming a strong belief in separation, individualisation, linearity, goal-orientation, pre-definitions and cognition as key approaches. Such orientations toward what is seen to make a difference is what Manning (2016) would call 'major gestures'. Later on, we return to the concepts of major and minor gestures, and the major's immediate tendency to capture the minor.

These problematic features of Norwegian contemporary academia are implicitly promoted through a certain kind of abstract formalism, as Løvlie (2015) discusses. Such abstract formalism, Løvlie argues, 'canonises skills and their measurement in closed schemes that, for all practical purposes, tend to sap experiences of their vital energy' for at least two reasons. First, because it is 'less based on the authority of the teacher, and more on impersonal rules and steering mechanisms', and second, he underlines, 'it is abstract in the literal sense of a thinking that has severed its precious links to the lived world of teachers and students' (p. 2, author's emphasis). The problem, then, does not only affect the students. A complex educational machinery is trapped in this abstract and forceful constraint, threatening to transform the students' and teachers' deep commitment to toddler pedagogy into one of increased frustration, alienation, and resignation.

To counteract such problems, we explore alternative educational methodologies, responding to calls from Larsen (2017), Olsson, Dahlberg, and Theorell (2016), Sandvik, Larsen, Johannesen, and Ulla (2019), Taylor and Bailey (2019), Thomas and Reinertsen (2019) and Ulla, Sandvik, Larsen, Nyhus, and Johannesen (2019). In so doing, we accept Olsson's (2012) call for 'more elastic theories that align themselves with and are close to children's learning processes' (p. 105). Because Olsson (2013) is engaged in giving 'the child a somewhat "better" position within the educational context as well as in society' (p. 232), we cautiously draw the parallel and explore educational methodologies that might give students and teachers a somewhat better position within academia in order for both to be less subjected to the previously mentioned frustration, alienation and resignation. The phrase 'educational methodology' underlines our counteracting explorations in the sense that the philosophical approaches and the educational efforts are closely connected.

In our efforts to move forward in this somewhat depressing landscape, we find inspiration in our own previous experiences and research among toddlers (Johannesen, 2002, 2013, 2016; Larsen, 2016; Nyhus & Sandvik, Forthcoming; Sandvik, 2016, 2020; Ulla, 2016,

2017). Additionally, we also lean on research emphasising infants' and toddlers' life orientations (Manning, 2009; Olsson, 2012, 2013; Olsson et al., 2016; Rossholt, 2018). When exploring alternative educational methodologies in higher education, without essentialising such orientations, features of what we regard as toddlers' life orientations pervade this paper as they do in our work at Østfold University College. Our argument for doing so is two-fold. First, Hickey-Moody (2013) refers to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of a child as a Spinozist. Hickey-Moody (2013, p. 273) labels this as a vector of affect, an activator of change and points at toddlers' generative potential. Second, the affective contagiousness of childhood is a condition that everybody, regardless of age, might embody (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p. 283). Thus, childish contagiousness might be regarded as an affective capacity that anybody, teachers and students in higher education included, can activate at any time in life. Herein lies what we deem to be the main potential in our exploration of such change-making capacities as vital forces within our explorations of alternative educational methodologies.

Toddlers' life orientations: organic ways of being of the world

In our search for more organic educational methodologies that align themselves with and are closer to toddlers' life orientations, we are deeply in debt to all the toddlers we have met during our former positions as kindergarten teachers. On a daily basis, they have time and time again demonstrated orientations in life that could be described as *immanent*, *collective*, *rhizomatic*, *processual*, and *affective*. In our logics, together, these features demonstrate an organic being of the world. Although these features are intertwined and inseparable, we separate them in the following paragraphs in order to comment on them slightly more in depth.

Speaking of *immanence*, leaning on Deleuze (2001) we try to go beyond bifurcations, such as mind and body or living and learning. In Deleuzian logics, there are no fixed or stable separations between the elements of the world – rather, the different elements pass through each other (Massumi, 2002b). Accordingly, the immanent feature of the childish fulcrum becomes visible through the toddler's seemingly total ignorance of different separations constructed by society, for example, the body/mind bias or even the split between our lives inside vs outside institutions (Manning, 2009). Toddlers seem to ignore the different codes of behaviour inside/outside an institutional space. For instance, they might loudly comment on a stranger's appearance or interrupt a theatrical performance without being encouraged to do so by the artists (Nyhus & Sandvik, in process). The *collective* element is to be found in the toddlers' social orientations, even when falling asleep and waking up (Ulla, 2017). Furthermore, toddlers seem to love imitating each other as part of their urge to communicate and create a togetherness (Johannesen, 2002). Joyous and eager voices bear witness to a mutual experienced meaningfulness in gathering and swarming as they turn the hallway into a construction area or when they discover an insect on the floor (Johannesen, 2013). As such collectivity does not diminish the various personal elements previously forefronted in toddler research, we think of such practices as *trans-individual*, in line with Massumi (2015). To further strengthen the term, we add 'collectivity' to it to become *trans-individual collectivity* (p. 206). The *rhizomatic* feature might be recognised in the way toddlers seem to open themselves to anything in the environment regardless of its size or significance to the

pedagogical fulcrums. As we shortly return to, a rhizomatic approach does not imply a lack of concentration or superficiality. The fourth feature, the *processual* elements, seems to be interlaced with the rhizomatic ones and come to the fore when toddlers demonstrate a preference for processes at the cost of results, questions rather than answers and effects rather than finding causes (Olsson, 2012, 2013; Olsson et al., 2016; Sandvik, 2020). Among other things, this points to Olsson's conclusion: 'We might sense that children actually display a veritable taste for creative thought, and what they really do is to go on a hunt for that which glimmers' (Olsson, 2013, p. 231). However, such rhizomatic and processual orientations do not prevent the childish *affective* capacity – a capacity to affect and be affected, as we mentioned earlier. We argue that pedagogical research has tended to exaggerate young children's capacity to be affected and underestimate their capacity to affect (Nyhus & Sandvik, in process). When they silently scrutinise an unfamiliar face for a long time and in depth, they demonstrate their capacity to affect the one being observed.

To summarise, we see the immanent, collective, rhizomatic, processual and affective elements within toddlers' life orientations as *organic ways of being of the world*.

Educationalising Babette's Feast

As we now shift focus to our work as teachers in the master's program Toddler Science (0–3 Years) at Østfold University College in Norway, we concentrate on one of our many explorations of a more organic approach within academia: the *feminist feast*. Initially, we underline that our educational endeavours are not totally experimental, as we also work in more traditional ways. However, this particular sequence shows our efforts to transform the classroom in order to bring the professional issues and the theoretical approaches vital in this course, named 'Body, Gender and Materiality', to life.

The idea of arranging a *feminist feast* evolved from a myriad of different sources. In line with our aim to evolve organic approaches, the feast activated itself in rhizomatic ways and presented a temporal and spatial mixture of long-lived fascinations for Karen Blixen's texts, above all the text *Babette's Feast*, as well as memories of meals in kindergarten, with friends and family, on the radio and on television programs, in dreams and in imaginative literature. In addition, as we return to, various aspects of feminist ideas have worked as resistant elements in our struggles to counteract the problematic and ongoing erosion of academia. A thorough separation of each element seemed impossible and also irrelevant, as the whole imaginary worked as a hotchpotch of intensities.

The discrepancy between the overwhelming abundance of *Babette's Feast* and the pietistic zeitgeist of Berlevaag presented itself as a tempting trigger point. In turn, this led to the following question: *What educational potentialities might evolve if we educationalised Babette's Feast as a collective explorative act of feminist resistance in the academic system?* Before responding to this question, we present the facilitations and carrying-out of the *feminist feast* to give the reader a picture of what happened.

Welcome to the feminist feast

Thorough preparations were required to create forceful educational resonance of *Babette's Feast* in a university classroom, as 'It takes a lot of preparatory work to get a few

minutes of inspiration' (Deleuze, 1995, p. 139). Fortunately, the preparations seemed to be pregnant with fictional energies from the story in *Berleevaag*, which in turn intensified the preparatory energies. Once such energies actualised themselves, they transformed our actions from structural planning to more open orientations toward tendencies that were already in germ within the processes. A sudden impulse, a strange association, a touch of memory, a smell of childhood, a colour of enjoyment led us astray as we carried antique candelabras, urns, bags of fruit, glasses and tablecloths into the classroom (Figure 1).

With a certain playfulness, we tried to incorporate the atmosphere from *Babbette's Feast* into the Spartan university building. One thing led to the other, and a certain kind of openness oriented us toward whatever might become interesting as we worked to investigate the dawning potentialities. Retrospectively, we argue that our contemporary practice thereby linked itself to the features of toddlers' life orientations we mentioned earlier.

In the classroom, daylight was pouring through the windows, whispering of a summer to come, as the chairs and tables were placed in a horseshoe formation (Figure 2).

Even though the budget at the university college fell far short of allowing a replica of *Babbette's Feast*, her menu and accessories inspired a provision of fruits and flowers in addition to personal belongings like valuable glassware, cutlery and plates in order to design a setting evoking an extraordinary event. While the extravagance in *Berleevaag* manifested in an overwhelming menu, the academic response was an abundance of possible speculations, inspirations and idea-sharing in the modest luxury of the environmental arrangements. Instead of being offered foreign and tasty food, the guests were invited into a teaching sequence that went beyond their former experiences. The event's yet-unknown and tempting potentialities linked themselves to *Babbette's* guests when they entered the dining room:

As *Babbette's* red-haired familiar
opened the door to the dining room



Figure 1. Feminist Feast.



Figure 2. Feminist feast.

and the guest slowly crossed the threshold,
they let go one another's hands and became silent.
But the silence was sweet, for in spirit they
still held hands and were still singing. (Blixen, 1965, p. 54)

The somewhat hesitant tempo – holding and letting go of hands, the silence – in some sense brought forebodings of something secretive and collective, a personal anticipation. In *Berlevaag*, the feast overture led to a spiritual holding of hands and singing, whereas the academic setting offered a ceremonial handshake by a teacher–hostess accompanied by a YouTube clip with Blixen quotations mixed with music. In both contexts, a certain atmosphere of excitement and curiosity arose, as if the unknown, the more than: germs that were not-yet-actualised.

When the table was covered and all were seated, a prepared homage to Karen Blixen's life and her works filled the room. Sounds, pictures, tones and tempi filtered into unspoken associations, memories and imaginaries that were highly possible to sense as anticipatory energies, yet impossible to verbalise or verify. Attendees' eyes were drawn to the end of the table, where two external guests of honour were sitting. They had been asked to bring two virtual guests each, someone who had influenced the actual guests' professional work and life. After being introduced, the guests of honour presented their

two virtual guests, who turned out to be four internationally renowned researchers. One of them entered the room on Skype, her vivid voice and face lent gentle yet powerful temperature to the atmosphere. Another actualised herself via an email written to the master milieu. The last two were made virtually alive through memories of previous encounters and references to their influential works. All six were invited into a discussion on former and contemporary toddler educational research, educational politics and philosophical approaches. As the six of them conversed, the other participants listened carefully for a couple of hours until the sequence ended.

Processual tendencies already in germ

In the forthcoming discussion, we lean on Manning's (2014) process philosophical approach by memorising Manning's reminder of what could be called the 'humanist trap' – privileging human beings. The force, she says, 'of process philosophy lies in its ability to create a field for experience that does not begin and end with the human subject' (p. 164). This implies that all elements of the *feminist feast*, the human and the more-than-human, are aspects and parts of collective processual shifts in tones and differences in quality (Manning, 2013).

As the *feminist feast* proceedings ensued, the earlier-mentioned devitalising features of academia gradually seemed to fade, replaced by an evolving ritual that shifted the field of experience (Manning, 2016). Like a quivering tone, a certain change in processual quality actualised itself through an audible breath here, wide open eyes there and one guest's utterance of experienced belonging: 'At last, I feel I have come home'.

The multifaceted expectation within the teacher collective connected to what Manning (2016) calls 'event-based hospitality' (p. 196) – a generosity for what the feast might bring. In some sense, the earlier rhizomatic 'lanterna' orientation was vividly working to open any minor germ that activated. Time and place seemed to lose their categorical relevance, and the borders of personal and professional lives faded. In turn, a strong feeling of belonging within a historical/contemporary and personal collective field of toddler science arose. The sense of being part of something larger and believably much more important than each individual connected to one feature of the previously outlined toddlers' life orientations: trans-individual collectivity. As such, the classroom turned into a collective, adventurous a-territorial and a-historical landscape overflowing any academic idea of education as separative, individual, goal-oriented and pre-defined, expressed in abstract formalism (Løvlie, 2015). We suggest that such organic experiences of being part of a trans-individual, body/mind-based (as body and mind are seen as inseparable aspects), uncontrollable and 'inefficient' collectivity might be memorable and forceful than verbalised explanations carried out as lectures or group discussions.

Flickering expressions: where world and body/mind co-compose

In the following, we focus on tears as a minute example of the former outlined sense of trans-individual collectivity beyond each individual at the *feminist feast*.

When listening to our guests' stories of struggles concerning methodological choices, efforts in holding onto hope concerning early childhood education and care in addition to

survivalism in academic hierarchies, my eyes got wet. I battled with holding back. I am not supposed to lose control over the body, or by all means, expose myself as sensitive. As the *feminist feast* went on, I suddenly felt another connection: These are not ‘my own tears’. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of relation so much bigger than me, so much more complex. (Notes written in retrospect by one of the guests)

The guest tried to remain composed, but the struggle to remain impenetrable dissolved as the focus shifted into the merging processual relations that were occurring. Manning’s (2013) question related to the skin – ‘What if it didn’t all begin and end with containment?’ – serves as a powerful reminder here. The tears became a ‘bodylisation’ and an ‘affectualisation’ in the *feminist feast*. Maybe the tears brought forebodings of that which glimmers (Olsson, 2013, p. 231). If so, the tears represented neither a physical sense, a psychological statement nor a leakage from the interior of a psychological subject limited to one actual person as a concealed corpus. This destabilises habitual essential separations of categories – ‘the crier’, ‘the tear’, and ‘the feast’ – and in so doing, it connects to toddlers’ organic life orientations.

More specifically, the tears created passages into the immanent, trans-individual, processual and affective creations that were in the making in the midst of the *feminist feast*, wherein humans and the more-than-human pass through each other and co-compose, even expressing themselves trans-bodying, always across itself within the life-living: ‘thinking of life as more-than human’ (Manning, 2019, p. 3). Thus, life-living might be regarded as relational and processual creations within the *feminist feast* that calls mobility into being ‘across individuals, across species and scales, tending always towards flickering’ (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 30).

Hence, the tears may be recognised as processual trans-individual passages (Massumi, 2015, p. 206): ‘It is not *in* the body or *in* the mind, but *across* the bodying where world and body co-compose in a welling ecology’ (Manning, 2016, p. 116). Put differently, the tears may travel in and affect more complex relational fields, offering an intensity in a mode of environmental awareness (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 10). Obviously, we cannot know to what degree the tears’ passages travelled into the previously outlined trans-individual collective life-living of the *feminist feast*. However, our point here is merely the potentialities within the tears as a carrier of such sensible intensities.

The previously mentioned temporal and spatial extensions activated within the event seemed to produce the flow of salty liquid and carry the weight of history as well as the hopes for the future to come in an immanent and affective manner. Our foci of co-compositions are of body/mind, trans-individual collectivity and cognition/feelings folded into our feminist struggle; trying to dismantle the privileged position of the habitual separation of personal and professional life; and reducing the separation of living and learning as we collectively expand our alertness to all life forces within and outside the university. We argue that such alertness might broaden the educational field, as it reminds us that organic life orientations might intensify the forces in trans-individual collectivities, where humans and the more-than-human all contribute in various modes of life-living.

Minor gestures within the arrangement of a major gesture

Despite our efforts toward more organic approaches to education, which in turn also implies a certain kind of life-living approach, the planning of the *feminist feast* demanded

what Manning (2016) would call a major gesture: an orientation toward what habitually counts as a site that makes a difference. The difference here would be some undefined ideas of learning benefits relevant to toddler research, childhood, feminism, educational politics and the like. This might be seen as a structural tendency that ‘organizes itself according to predetermined definitions of value’ (p. 1). Without such major gestures, despite their humble appearance in our planning, the *feminist feast* would not have been facilitated in the first place, because viewed from within a logic of the major, such a feast would seem irrelevant and meaningless.

Following up on this logic, we argue that even though we in some sense trusted in the major in our preparations, the minor was activating around us all the time, working as the activator, the carrier, ‘the agencement that draws the event into itself’ (Manning, 2016, p. 7). Minor gestures, then, may be the orientations within the making that activated across the individual, for example, the sense of being part of something larger than each individual.

The point is that such senses are activated from within the major – tendencies already in germ that alter what that tendency can do (Manning, 2016). In other words, ‘The minor and the major are not opposed. They are variabilities in differential co-composition’ (p. 66). As pointed out in our outline of the feast, within the structural planning and staging, orientations toward the minor activated without being able to identify each tiny germ of potentiality that coursed through the *feminist feast*.

While in the classroom, the minor seemed to lie dozing throughout the visiting researchers’ arguments in the conversation. As words were spoken and concepts discussed, occasionally, slightly rosy cheeks, sparkling or tear-stained eyes and trembling voices carried signs of being affected by something, someone, somehow. Simultaneously, the rosy cheeks, sparkling or tearful eyes and the trembling voices also might affect someone, something, somehow. Possibly, they all hinted at a sensed yet unconscious collective devotion to the field of toddler pedagogy. However, following Manning’s (2016) logic, the fullness of the feeling seemed not yet actualised, and at the same time, it might serve as a conduit for new occasions of experience.

All this being said, the pedagogical point, when searching for increased manoeuvrability within the pietistic field of higher education, is not about how to ‘make’ a minor gesture or how to resist a grand gesture, but it is about how to develop approaches that resist the major’s immediate tendency to capture the minor (Manning, 2016). Consequently, arranging a feminist feast does not solve the problem – rather, it is an invitation to orient even more insistently toward what might happen in the midst of what happens.

***Bewitched, bothered and bewildered*¹**

In our explorations of the *feminist feast*, our teacher collective has been bewitched, bothered and bewildered more than once. We have been bewitched by how the minor always seems to actualise itself, and thus how new processes have been brought to life in a continuous stream, both inside and outside the classroom. Often, orienting toward the minor – trusting and exploring any rhizomatic impulse throughout a teaching session – results in the following outburst, from one of us: ‘Funny how things seem to fold neatly into place, one element on top of the other’, as if each element were the successor of the previous in a meant-to-be fashion. In peculiar and unintended ways, they connect, they echo, they

twist, they disturb and they affirm one another, always activating engagement – be it an offering of sweet surprises or laborious frustrations.

Memorising toddlers' preferences for process at the cost of result, we find ourselves stumbling upon glittering aspects when working in a processual way instead of rushing toward any predefined goal. This implies working from within, letting the process take its time, opening up to energies within each sequence and allowing them to determine the tempo and pace. Consequently, we need *more* time, *more* dwelling, *more* pauses and even *more* affective investigations in order to encourage experimental creation of thought instead of any predefined learning outcome, as such thought creation is a time-consuming activity (Berg & Seeber, 2013). However, such a methodology is not an easy, instrumental or technical way to perform education – rather, it requires a willingness to take risks, to make mistakes and even to live with not being sure which way to go (Massumi, 2002a). Still, we see it as an ethical methodology that manoeuvres toward new modes of knowledge and experience in higher education (Manning, 2016).

The bothersome part of our counter-activity occurs as the intensified hunger for separative logics, individualisation, goal-orientation, predictability and privileging cognition in higher education steal our concentration, focus and time. At the end of the day, the appetite of the previously mentioned pietistic tendencies in academia, expressed as abstract formalism (Løvlie, 2015), seems to have no limits, no point at which it is fulfilled or satisfied. As the system does not seem to understand a language that embraces an immanent, collective, processual, rhizomatic and/or affective approach, we are doomed to document our efficiency exclusively related to these variables as the system.

Finally, some bewildering aspects emerge in our work. The *feminist feast* left us questioning, 'What happened just now?' and 'How could this happen?' Without being able to answer such questions of uncertainty, they have intermittently provided unexpected positions for discoveries or investigative explorations. Other times, the confusion seemed overwhelming, draining our energies to the extent that we left the bewildering forces alone as crumbled leftovers (Ulla et al., 2019). Experiencing our bewilderedness as either vitalising or tiring, we admit that both imply possibilities for teaching and learning, as they are parts of our attempts to open education toward the minor, in line with toddlers' rhizomatic 'lanterna attention', where no guarantees for pleasure and comfort are given. Here, we underline that our aim is not to 'make' a minor, but it is to prevent the major from immediately capturing the minor. Hence, the suggested organic approach might work from inside the major, departing from the major's structural integrity and problematising its predetermined normative standards (Manning, 2016, p. 1).

Summing up: 'Je répondrai'

As we move toward the end of the paper, our initial question – What educational potentialities might evolve if we educationalised Babette's Feast as a collective explorative act of feminist resistance in the academic system? – needs a response. Evolving organic approaches is our main response to the question, without claiming that it presents trouble-free pathways to guaranteed success within educational practices. We do not promote simple methods or manuals, nor do we suggest that all teaching methodologies must be made into grand feasts or extraordinary creative sessions. Rather, every

educational situation or organisation must invent its own methodology, orienting toward the minor and the germs of potentialities that activate around us in a-personal and trans-individual collective manners. It must be noted that creating pedagogical adventurousness by going rhizomatically with a trans-individual collective flow to see what happens does not imply pedagogical abdication (Sandvik, 2020) – rather, it calls for a willingness to respond ethically, as nobody can know beforehand what such flows might do. In addition, it is necessary to evade eventual destructive tendencies, as the minor is not inherently positive or good (Manning, 2016, p. 6).

For us, Karen Blixen's favourite saying, 'Je répondrai' ('I will answer'), works as a forceful imperative. We answer by trusting in immanent, trans-individual collective and affective processes, cultivating a fascination for surprises and effects in a timeless, ongoing, slow search for that which glimmers. In turn, maybe our feminist and toddler-based 'je répondrai' might vitalise academia.

In addition, inviting academic colleagues to share experiences, explore possible pathways to educational methodologies that carry the richness of processual, collective, surprise-friendly and affective approaches, also seems like a tempting option. The mere asking about the conditions for valuing the emergence of other forms of experience may turn out to be a different kind of togetherness (Manning, 2013).

Here, another of Blixen's sayings, 'Pourquoi pas?' ('Why not?'), may have an energising effect. As she outlines the difference between the word 'why' and the phrase 'why not', it becomes clear that the first word (why), when standing alone, presents itself as –

... a jammer or a complaint, a cry from the heart; it seems to sound in the desert and in itself to be negative, the voice of a lost cause ... Adding the negative *pas*, ... the pathetic question is transformed into an answer, a directive, a call of wild hope. (Blixen, 1978, p. 277)

So why go through all the hassle of changing a classroom by adding tablecloths and flowers and of inviting guests, not to mention experiencing the tiresome struggle of counteracting academic power-producing machinery if there is no guarantee that anybody will learn anything at all? Following Blixen's call for a wild hope – and answer the 'Pourquoi pas?' – why not trust in the generative potential of childhood, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) argued, and look for what might turn out to be full of glimmering surprises? Why not trust in more organic methodologies, despite their wobbly uncertainty, in order to explore their daredevil potentialities? As Rossholt (2018) underlines, 'Life as lived in the kindergarten as well as life in general is full of contradictions and ambivalences where diverse interests flow in erratic ways' (p. 29). So why not strive for atmospheres with capacities to make the blood course faster through the veins of a trans-personal co-composing collectivity? Why not trust toddlers' organic life orientations from within the world? Why not? Maybe the academic world will never look the same again.

Martine and Philippa stood for a long time on the stone steps
outside the house. They did not feel the cold.

'The stars have come nearer', said Philippa.

'They will come every night', said Martine quietly.

'Quite possibly it will never snow again.'

In this, however, she was mistaken.

An hour later it again began to snow,
and such a heavy snowfall

has never been known in Berlevaag. (Blixen, 1965, p. 70)

Ethics

All participants provided informed consent prior to taking part in the study.

Note

1. The formulation 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered' refers to the song 'Bewitched' by composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Lorenz Hart (1940).

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