

ther reinforces the masculinisation of gamer identity.

The fourth chapter delves deeper into the fact that female gamers are already core. Cote's interviewees describe what pleasure they find in gaming and how they manage to embody a gamer identity through adopting proactive identity fluidity. Chapter five shifts the focus to the strategies female gamers employ to choose content and manage their encounters with the community. While the strategies for selecting what to play, including genre conventions or social network recommendations, are neither revolutionary nor surprising, strategies for coping with online harassment include rather drastic and exhausting mechanisms, such as camouflaging their gender or even avoiding online gaming and focusing solely on single-player games.

In 2014, two years after Cote conducted her initial interviews, a movement that would later be called #GamerGate emerged. A female game developer was accused of exchanging sexual favours with a game journalist for a positive review of her game (the claims were later disproven). Because of this incident, Cote reached out to her interviewees once again and managed to conduct follow-up interviews with 11 of them in 2017. Chapter six, aptly named 'In the aftermath', reveals that events like GamerGate are not particularly significant for women, who dismiss it as just another instance of the sexism they already face. Despite this, Cote remains hopeful, as she sums up in the conclusion alongside suggestions of how to address the problems introduced in previous chapters.

*Gaming Sexism* is a brilliant book. Cote shows deep expertise in the topic and writes with a certain lightness, which makes the book accessible to both lay and scholarly audiences. I assume that this is the reason why the methodology chapter is placed in the appendix. Although this is understandable, placing it at the beginning might have given readers a clearer overview of its

limitations, such as the interviewees' characteristics (e.g. the fact that most of them were US residents). The clarity of this otherwise exceptional book would have been even greater. That said, *Gaming Sexism* has rightfully earned its place on the bookshelves of not only media studies and games studies students and scholars but also sociologists specialising in gender studies and media consumption – and, of course, gamers as well.

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**Louisa Allen: *Breathing Life into Sexuality Education***

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Switzerland AG, 197 pp.

Discussions about the form and objectives of formal sexuality education have become increasingly important in recent years in both academia and public policy arena. Louisa Allen, a professor at the University of Auckland, has consistently been a prominent voice in this discourse, presenting her perspectives from a feminist vantage point. Her work focuses particularly on the disembodied nature of sexuality education, illuminating discourse that prescribes certain (heterosexual) futures while it neglects students as sexual subjects in the present. In her latest monograph, titled *Breathing Life into Sexuality Education*, she extends her critique through the lens of new materialism. This approach represents a unique departure from the poststructuralist perspective that dominates feminist scholarship on sexuality education, and it has the potential to foster new ideas for a rethinking of this curriculum subject. Unfortunately, this potential has only been partially fulfilled.

The aim of the book is to breathe life into sexuality education. The metaphor of breath and all the book's philosophical endeavours are inspired by the work of educational theorist and practitioner Sharon Todd. Todd critiques the stifling effects of contemporary education's focus on efficiency and measurable outcomes and proposes a shift towards a more sensuous and embodied education. Todd builds her argument on the ideas of continental ethicists, in particular Levinas, who challenge the traditional view of morality as a set of predetermined values, a position based on the recognition that what is considered conventionally moral may, in fact, lead to unethical results. For continental ethicists, the ethical (moral) arises in interpersonal encounters and in our engagement with the world, which goes beyond mere cognition. The main point for both Todd and Allen is that education should not be concerned with imparting values and knowledge that prepare students for a predefined future, but should be reconceived as a site of ethical practice, in which the focus is shifted from students' imagined futures to their embodied present. Such an approach departs from the Western rational approach, as it doesn't prescribe the identities, values, and 'types of sexual subjects students should become' (p. 84). The educational event becomes *uncertain*, opening up spaces for students' subjective becoming, and, as such, it has, unlike current pedagogical practices, real transformative potential.

These ideas should resonate with scholars of education, and Allen articulates a compelling argument for the reimagination of sexuality education along the lines of Todd's thinking. Drawing on the insights of feminist scholarship and her own research, Allen identifies the stifling effects of sexuality education in its focus on imparting factual knowledge (about STIs, unplanned pregnancies, contraception, healthy sexual behaviour) and its framing of sexuality as

a risky, reproductive, and predominantly heterosexual matter that should concern students in their predetermined futures, not in their present life. With the metaphor of breath, she then embarks on a philosophical exploration of Todd's work with the aim of expanding sexuality education's epistemological and ontological borders. Individual chapters stem from Todd's various conceptual frameworks for education (e.g. education as a sensuous, embodied, material, uncertain, ethical, or aesthetic practice) and attempt to elaborate these concepts by integrating perspectives from feminist new materialism, geography, social anthropology, and sound studies.

Allen contends that these thinkers and theories may seem disciplinarily and theoretically disparate, but that they share a common emphasis on the sensuous/embodied, and 'can be characterised loosely as falling within the field of sensory studies' (p. 10). Subsequent chapters explore each of these theories in more detail, arguing for a reimagining of sexuality education as a 'sensuous event' and as a 'site of ethical practice', and proposing a rearrangement of conventional educational settings 'via aesthetic practices, which invite students' creativity and encourage an opening up to materiality and uncertainty' (p. 25). Rather than developing an argument, however, the chapters often skim the surface of complex theories without the author providing her own synthesis and discussion. This is likely due to the author's choice to follow their formal similarities (attention to the sensuous and the embodied), rather than addressing their deeper connections in an interdisciplinary ontological turn. A well-established approach in the social sciences (in social anthropology since at least the 1990s), the ontological turn entails understanding agency as something that emerges from material and embodied encounters, departing from the conventional notion of agency as given or essential. Had the author chosen to centre her discussion

not on Todd but on the ontological turn and to engage in an interdisciplinary debate, the book might have avoided a convoluted structure, repeated conclusions, and occasionally simplistic arguments.

Scholars in the field of sensory studies, for instance, are well-acquainted with the work of Tim Ingold, whom the author addresses individually. Theoretical concepts such as 'dwelling with', 'embodied knowledge', or 'embeddedness in the world', discussed in different parts of the book, have long been employed to challenge the rationalising and individualising view of agency. Continental ethics and phenomenology are among the philosophical ideas informing both Todd and the broader ontological turn in the social sciences, but in the book they are discussed separately. The author seems to be building thick walls between thinkers according to their disciplinary or philosophical affiliations, only to break those walls down in different chapters by emphasising the thinkers' shared focus on the sensory and the material. For example, in the first chapter, the author chooses to incorporate the new materialism of Karan Barad and Jane Bennett into the amalgamation of different scholars, arguing that although it 'may feel anomalous from the work of the scholars above, as it offers a theoretical rather than disciplinary approach' (p. 11), their inclusion is justified, because, like Todd, they pay attention to the materiality of things and their intra-action. Perhaps if the author had moved beyond the formal aspects of Todd's concepts to reveal and provide a synthesis of their underlying foundations, the book could have engaged in a deeper discussion.

Instead, the book tends to stay on the surface, occasionally resulting in the author's misguided or uninspiring reflections on these theories within the field of sexuality education. For instance, in chapter three, titled 'Attention and Openness', the author aims to address the question of how to respond to cultural and religious differ-

ence in sexuality education. She draws on Todd's thinking about the reconfiguration of teacher-student roles and the importance of openness to the Other, illustrated by Ingold's metaphor of walking. After explaining Todd's and Ingold's theories, however, the author uses them not to provide an answer to the original question – how to account for cultural diversity in sexuality education – but to illustrate her biases and the limitations of her research position in her participatory observation of a sexuality education class. Allen details how she identified 'difference' in a student of a different ethnicity and how her predefined categories reduced this research participant to a mere set of characteristics, a generalised Other. The implication is that as researchers we should do what Todd calls for in educational practice, which is to displace our selves, be open to, and not categorise others. This conclusion sounds somewhat trivial in the context of ethnographic research and its foundational principles taught in undergraduate social anthropology courses. The more intriguing question of how to apply Todd's and Ingold's philosophical considerations in sexuality education is not answered. Allen's theorising here entails a more significant paradox though. While the chapter begins with a critique of sexuality education policies that place the burden of addressing cultural difference solely on teachers (requiring them to possess the knowledge and skills to deal with students' different ethnicities and cultures and to undergo training), the author seems to fall into the same trap – teachers around the globe surely have their ideas and moral convictions about sexuality, but here the author asks them to displace their selves, without offering much insight into the ways this can be achieved other than by being a well-read feminist scholar.

Similar confusion arises in Chapter 5, which aims to develop Steph Ceraso's multimodal listening pedagogy from a new

materialist perspective and consider sound as an agential intra-active materiality. The chapter sets out to explain the materiality of sound with a number of academic citations, leaving the reader wondering whether a detailed introduction to new materialism and sound studies is needed to demonstrate the idea that sound vibrates and can therefore be seen and felt. Nevertheless, the point is eventually made that sound has a material agency, and that it is not a separate entity that is merely *heard*; rather, it is *felt*, and through embodied affect, it *does* something to our intra-actively shaped subjectivities. To illustrate sound's agency, the author points out how shopping mall music increases customers' enjoyment of shopping, making them linger longer. How this example illustrates the embodied nature of sound beyond the mere 'hearing' of it (however subconsciously or unconsciously), remains unclear. In another section, the author finds the agential power of sound to be demonstrated by the ringing of a school bell, prompting everyone in the classroom to get up and deem the lesson over. Yet it seems that in this case, meaning doesn't necessarily derive from an embodied, intra-actively shaped affect – the focus the author seeks to emphasise based on new materialist theories. Instead, the meaning here appears to arise from culturally shared textual interpretations of sound, a perspective the author had previously argued for moving beyond. Yet, these considerations lead Luisa Allen to a new materialist conclusion, that we should unlearn traditional ways of listening and bring our perceptions of the body into the research situation. Moreover, she argues that embodied details are usually omitted in data analysis. This claim seems misguided in the field of social anthropology and the social sciences, where the influence of the researcher's embeddedness and embodiedness on the research situation and data production have been the subject of much methodological discus-

sion. Nonetheless, the author offers detailed descriptions of the sensory (embodied) experiences she has while listening to her research recordings of a sexuality education classroom. We 'witness' the author as she closes her eyes while listening or as she puts on noise-cancelling headphones to hear better. The connection of these descriptions to the 'listening as a holistic and immersive act' (p. 110) that goes beyond merely 'ear-ing' (p. 110), which the author argues against in her theoretical framework, is not clear. Further attempts to apply new materialist thought seem somewhat mechanistic, and their relevance for sexuality education research or practice, or for expanding its ontological borders, remains obscure. For example, when describing her research recordings, Allen writes that some of the sounds were mundane and went unnoticed by her on the first listening, which she argues only testifies to their power in creating the educational space. What we should make of this power, however, is not explained. Similarly, her descriptions of feeling the vibrations of her desk (caused by a passing helicopter) while listening to the research recording, or her recognition that the walls, the ceiling, or any open or unopen windows affect the way sound resonates in the classroom and consequently contribute to the intra-active generation of 'embodied student affects' (p. 117) lack relevance to the overarching research question: 'What might multimodal listening offer sexuality researchers that is more expansive than traditional approaches to listening to participants?' (p. 100). The answer seems to be: not much.

In the following chapters, which further argue for a more 'sensuous education' and 'ethical engagement with the world', the author seems to run out of proverbial breath, failing to introduce any fresh intersection or ideas and instead revisiting formulations or quotations that have already appeared (sometimes word for word) throughout previous chapters.

We do not, in fact, progress beyond the ontological and philosophical inspirations that the author purports to expand upon; rather, we listen to their reverberations (as the author herself calls her philosophical experiment in the concluding chapter). That 'reverberations' on their own do not form a sufficiently stable basis for theorising proper is made more evident in the application of these ideas to the pedagogical practice of sexuality education. To demonstrate the 'agential intra-active materiality of sound' (p. 105), for instance, the author gives an example of a lesson in which the lecturer performs a pop song, exposing herself to student evaluation and making herself vulnerable. Clearly, this example relates more to the reconfiguration of teacher-student roles than to the new materialist ontology of sound as 'agential intra-active materiality'. Elsewhere, Allen draws from the geographer Pyry and her photo-walks pedagogy, in which students photograph the everyday life that surrounds them, moving beyond the visual and disembodied cultural interpretations into the domain of the embodied and lived. Unlike Pyry, however, Allen does not propose a practice necessarily devoid of predefined cultural meanings and interpretations. She suggests students take photographs of '(1) How they learn about sexuality at school [and] (2) How they learn about sexuality outside of school' (p. 158). While Allen trialled this exercise in secondary schools and claims that students' 'success in taking photographs relating to sexuality at school attests to the viability of this as an exercise' (*ibid.*), she does not reflect on the fact that students were only asked the first question, possibly restricting their explorations within the boundaries of the dominant discourse. Furthermore, her statement that 'students took photographs successfully' does not demonstrate how this activity may 'challenge or expand their understandings of sexuality shaped by the dominant discourse' or how it awakened students' 'dwelling with the

world', 'enchantment', or 'ontological immersion in spatial-material reality' – concepts repeatedly theorised on the preceding pages. These are only some of many examples and Allen herself acknowledges that 'some who read this experiment in thought for re-organising sexuality education pedagogy will be sceptical of its practical feasibility' (p. 140). Unfortunately, she does not attempt to address these doubts.

The topic that Allen discusses is of undeniable academic and political importance, and the link she draws between sexuality education and Todd's ideas on the ontology of education provides fertile ground for a reimagining of this curriculum subject. However, the book suffers from a collection of uncontextualised thoughts, which, upon closer inspection, reveal themselves to be rooted in the same ontological framework. This results in the author reiterating her (and Todd's) arguments and ultimately arriving at conclusions that fail to significantly push the boundaries of the ontological and epistemological borders of sexuality education. This is not to say that sexuality education should not move in a more sensory/sensual/embodied direction as suggested by Louisa Allen, but it undermines the need to dedicate a substantial portion of the book to philosophical thought, which is not utilised.

While the claim that providing students with the right knowledge will not lead to desirable ethical behaviour comes across as clear and well argued, it would be beneficial to gain the author's perspective on current public policies and educational documents. Some of these documents themselves criticise frontal teaching, the authoritative role of teachers, and the transmission of predetermined moral values in sexuality education and suggest a course of action that is not based on aesthetic/sensuous/embodied practice.

Concluding this review, it is essential to raise a question as to who is the intend-

ed reader. As far as the philosophy of education is concerned, the book does not present a novel synthesis of ideas; it is rather a collection of various concepts that often fail to establish meaningful connections with each other and remain underdeveloped throughout the book. If the intended readership is practitioners in the field of sexuality education, much of the theorising and concepts ring hollow. Why do we need to delve into considerations of new materialism if the ultimate conclusion is that attention should be directed towards the material attributes of a classroom?

Additionally, the book's desired outcome is to open up 'more expansive understandings of sexuality and the related experience of gender' and to create spaces for 'expressions and manifestations currently designated "unnatural", "uncommon", or "stigmatized"' (p. 161). However, the author seems to overlook the fundamental fact that sexuality education does not take place in a socio-cultural vacuum, and that two critical factors come into play. First, the school as an autocratic institution with fixed hierarchies is a point acknowledged by Allen but not explored further in terms of how it may affect the realisation of her philosophical ideas. Second, the intensifying culture wars over the definition of sexuality education (whether the sexuality of children and young people is spoken about at all and whether it is a public matter) link the curriculum subject to broader sociocultural structures that significantly shape sexuality education. This point does not feature in the book at all. The author wraps her sexuality education in an approach that presumes if not the same view of sexuality, then a mutually shared respect for the right of children and adolescents for sexual and gender self-determination. Ignoring the ever-growing anti-gender movements that challenge the very inclusion of sexuality education in formal education and exert significant pressure on public in-

stitutions will not make this cultural conflict go away. It is precisely in a book of this kind, written with an activist tone of voice, that different socio-cultural perspectives on sexuality and sexuality education need to be reflected and a platform for communicating different perspectives needs to be opened. Otherwise, we will risk committing the very forms of egoism Allen condemns in her book – the colonisation of other people, other ideas, and other cultures.

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**Elisabeth Anderson: *Agents of Reform. Child Labor and the Origins of the Welfare State***

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Although a rich body of scholarship has gradually unpacked how the umbrella concept of a 'welfare state' emerges from the multi-faceted challenges of modernization, the common denominator has remained a macro-structural approach predicated on testing the causal strength of individual variables. Picking up the gauntlet, Elisabeth Anderson 'refocuses attention on the modern *regulatory welfare state*' and argues that its emergence, as a key component of overarching social states (to use the terminology of Moses, J. 2018. *The First Modern Risk: Workplace Accidents and the Origins of European Social States*. Cambridge University Press), cannot be explained without accounting for the role of agency (pp. 1–3). By focusing specifically on child labor laws, understood as an early a component of the worker protection that underscores modern welfare states, Anderson's book dissects how 'middle class and elite reformers'