

Editorial

Zsuzsa Millei et Camila Rosa Ribeiro

Volume 48, numéro 1, janvier 2023

Time Special Issue

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1097281ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202321217>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian Association for Young Children

ISSN

2371-4107 (imprimé)

2371-4115 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Millei, Z. & Rosa Ribeiro, C. (2023). Editorial. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, 48(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs202321217>

Copyright © Zsuzsa Millei, Camila Rosa Ribeiro, 2023



Cet article est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

éru
dit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Editorial

Zsuzsa Millei and Camila Rosa Ribeiro



Image 1. "Futures in Display" by Felipe Ávila

The special issue's cover photo extends time and the critique of modernity's structured developments to a visual terrain, enacting the image of a time calcified with the materiality of everyday life. This everyday materiality also includes dumped waste and its residual contamination, confusing linear perspectives of time by stretching the present to the future making the waste a relic of the past. In the piece *Futures in Display* (Image 1), the Brazilian artist Felipe Ávila puts together small cast sculptures, modelled by combining traditional sculpture materials such as cement and plaster with contaminated residues, alongside objects and debris collected from polluted areas in different regions of Northern Europe. The objects were found in multiple sites where large-scale industrial activities or environmental disasters have taken place. By assembling and isolating the objects in the glass cabinet, Ávila has brought their uncanny aspect to the fore, allowing visual contact but rebuffing the possibility of defining their temporal and spatial origins. Displaying these objects as artifacts separated from the position where they were collected enhances their panoptic presence in spatial-temporal terms: as contaminated debris/waste that could be found anywhere, and as perduring apparitions due to their inorganic materiality that ensures their long-lasting static present accompanying future generations. *Futures in Display* causes a strong sensorial impact for assembling objects that make visible how material and temporal domains entangle across a ruined reality. The piece aligns with this special issue's interest in bringing together a critique of modernity's

destructive telos to acknowledge and celebrate the coexistence of multiple temporal patterns and to demonstrate its effects on the physical reality of earthly nature.

This special issue dwells in time entangled in practices, materialities, affect, and the unfolding of children's lives. Time, which is unseen for not bearing an intrinsic materiality in itself, grants us creative pathways to confront children's apparent lives in ways that have not yet been exhaustively explored in academic circles. Here time is handled as a transdisciplinary frame cutting across this special issue's contributions; however, time is taken by authors as a uniquely flexible and transfiguring kind of frame, due to its formidable extension of intellectual traditions and disciplinary approaches (Sandbothe, 1999). Each contribution draws our attention to the myriad ways time materializes in children's lives, or critically appraises how time prefigures thinking within fields of critical childhood studies and education. Consciously or not, these fields of study activate conceptual time-configurations to explore topics pertaining to children and childhood. Conceptual apparatuses of time are mobilized to discern what and who a child is, and to create age categories or sequential modes of observation and documentation of children's everyday lives, as just a few examples.

Authors seek to unsettle the tyranny of linear modern time over childhoods and children's lives by introducing a variety of time theorizations to describe and critique its operation. Authors' use of nonlinear conceptions of time allows readers to take a fresh look at children's everyday lived experiences. The applied philosophical and epistemological positions expand the types of questions that can be posed about children and childhood once the imagination is released from the grip of linear temporality. Two thematic axes compose this special issue. The first addresses the intersections of time, politics, and childhood seeking to repoliticize humanist progress and liberation so entangled with notions of linear time. The second explores time within the flow of life, dethroning the linearity of human-centered time and its onto-epistemologies from the fields of childhood explorations.

Politicizing time and childhood

Modernist, Eurocentric, and industrialist notions of linear time and historicity have been questioned since the 1960s, more pronouncedly in physics, evolutionary biology, and postmodernist philosophy. Some of the alternative theoretical, cultural, and historical notions of time return to premodern notions of temporality or pay attention to nonhuman temporalities in postanthropocentric thinking. These are also the intellectual resources to which some authors in this special issue turned for inspiration. However, despite new attempts at theorizing time, the vexing question stays with us: How are progressive social, political, and environmental transformations possible "if we can no longer ground our theories and political practices in enlightened narratives of humanist progress and liberation" (Rossini & Toggweiler, 2017, p. 6)? Some of the special issue authors attempt to respond to this question either by investigating how childhood and time are used by policies, interventions, and politicians to reinstate social and geopolitical hierarchies, or through the political activities of children and youth in which they politicize time and temporality to make a stance on their futures.

Annie McCarthy reveals how linear time inscribes children's bodies through visualization of growth and with "untimely" development reproducing also societies as lagging behind Western trajectories of growth. Exploring photographic media of children's stunting allows McCarthy to understand how the biomedical paradigm prevalent in developmental discourses utilizes a temporal regime that imposes an irreversible lack over children's lives, and, by extension, their societies. By focusing on before and after photographs portraying Western feeding interventions on children from the Global South, and images of children having their bodies measured, the author indicates the ways in which time is marked and made visible in developmentalist projects to record, monitor, and predict children's growth. The article's archival approach brings into sharp contrast how such type

of documentation practices has been utilized to construe the distinctions between savages and human beings, or between the highest and the lowest categories of children and societies.

Linking mobile childhoods and time, Vijitha Rajan depicts temporary migrant children's move between villages and cities in India and how the children become subjected to educational inclusion that, in a paradoxical manner, made them abject finding themselves on the margins of modern childhood. Without receiving age-appropriate education which is only possible if one stays put, developmental and learning outcomes are not achieved. In this way, via discourses of linear temporality, educational practices and policies construct mobile children as educationally deprived and uneducable. Education that emphasizes personal and moral fulfillment in this way only remains in the reach of those who are sedentary, and in turn sedentariness is reinforced as a moral demand. The attention to NGOs renders perceptible how NGOs preserve and persevere on this "sedentarist mindset" when they school migrant children and are unable to accommodate to the fluid spatio-temporalities of those on the move. The modern ideals of developmental sequential time, and the educability and sedentariness of modern childhood produce migrant children as irremediable, thus a failure to modern teleology and progress.

Scrutinizing President Modi's nationally televised engagements with children as part of Teachers' Days in India, Nisha Thapliyal includes a temporal perspective to the ways in which elite childhoods and children in the Global South serve as important raw materials and narrative resources for his exclusivist Hindutva nation-building purposes (while other childhoods are discarded). Paying attention to multiple temporalities, such as mythological racialized time, cyclical and "idealized patriarchal dominant caste Hinduized notions of time," mixed with capitalist, neoliberal, Protestant Christian and colonial notions of time appearing in these speeches, Thapliyal demonstrates how time is linked to values, hierarchies, and belonging. Thus, time and childhood appear as highly politicized in Modi's speeches, creating legitimation for the hierarchies of a Hindu nationalist nation.

Young people's sense-making of their own activism is interpreted by Eleni Theodorou, Spyros Spyrou, and Georgina Christou in their analysis of the movement Youth for Climate Cyprus. The climate crisis is presented as an intergenerational justice issue as the youngsters see themselves as those who must bear the burden of past generations' choices. Activists articulate intergenerational collaboration and confrontation as necessary for shifting the current exterminatory, profit-driven value systems. Thus, they utilize multiple temporalities to legitimize their voices and to destabilize generational and interspecies hierarchies. The youth achieve this goal by connecting with people and places that are not within their space and time and by decentering the supremacy of humans' time over other species' cycles and temporalities. Time in this way serves as a potent political resource for youth activist practices.

Threading intergenerational relations further, Georgina Christou renders visible the multispecies, multigenerational, and multispatial entanglements activated by young activists. While what she calls *chronocratic practices* govern subjects' actions by constraining them to age norms, children and youth build alternative communities and forms of relationality that challenge age norms hegemonic in modernity. For instance, by escaping school, children engage in "degrowing" or "becoming minor" in public domains as political actions. Their activism is achieved through a conscious antihegemonic practice to linear development and anticipated progress, and against the image of the isolated, schooled, and individualized child subject of modernity. Youths' antihegemonic practices broaden time with attention to irregularities, inconsistencies, and overlaps of time—what Christou terms *disordered time* and *distended time*—and draw on the existence of alternative subjectivities in these disfigured notions of time.

Child climate activists in Australia enact with their poster slogans complex temporal compositions that are

explored by Lucy Hopkins. Politicians' climate-denialist perspectives utilize a linear temporal logic to position child activists in a paradoxical position of valuable future citizens and yet presently unsuited to claim political and economic changes. Rendering present and future as separated temporal domains, a focus on the child's futurity allows adults to defer present action and engagement by ignoring and discursively disempowering children in the political sphere. Hopkins shows through these cultural artifacts of protest how children challenge dominant discourses of childhood, time, and climate activism through their representational politics to free themselves from confining adult politics in Australia and to reconstruct the climate emergency on their own terms. Children's temporal compositions trouble childhood's futurity with precarity as the basis of childhood subjectivity.

Troubling human-centered time and its onto-epistemologies

Time is present in human life as part of complex interactions at biochemical, cellular, and systemic levels. Relationships between circadian time and life-forming microscopic processes can hardly be claimed as fully dimensioned and measured for they involve an enormous array of cyclic, rhythmic, and seasonal tendencies converging within one functional phenomenon, such as the links between the human circadian clock and the rhythmicity of cells, microbes, and viruses, for instance (Murakami & Tognini, 2020). What is known and partly described is the mutual influence that different living forms have upon each other through evocative connections or speculative possibilities of linkages. No matter how blurred these zones of knowledge might be, they draw our attention to life circumstances when correlations and regulating moments seem to interlink apparently disparate points. In circumstances such as these, for biologists time operates as a connecting tissue between events independent from exterior forces. Instead of trying to describe time as a *thing* or a *what* that can be known and submitted to the regulatory practices of a scientific truth, such investigations focus on *how* time is creating conditions or qualities of dynamics for sensing and effect in a complex choreography of operations that sustain life.

Time connects the experiences of children and the more-than-human world narrated in autobiographical memory stories of adults in Mnemo ZIN and Camila da Rosa Ribeiro's article. The authors pay attention to the entanglements of biographical, generational, historical, and political times in memory stories taking place during the Cold War. Barbara Adam's concept of timescapes—connected to life as biographical and generational time or lifespan—helps the authors to make unfamiliar the modern(ist) narratives of linear progress and to bring into view a world outside the brackets of technical development. Life organizes into timescapes the complex dimensions of human and more-than-human temporal cocompositions. The emotionally charged stories present different rhythms as the children pick berries in the forest, collect cucumbers on a collective farm, or harvest apples in a family orchard. Children in the memories experienced time as more-than-human life's temporal orders, which often collided with the temporal norms and expectations mastered at school and home.

The multitemporal nature of memories is the tool for Ketevan Chachkhiani, Garine Palandjian, Iveta Silova, and Keti Tsofniasvili to trouble linear time and socialization to modern progress and temporality through early literacy textbooks. Memories inherently connect the past with the time of telling in the present and with a view of the future. The authors pay attention, with a diffractive analysis using childhood memories, to the multiple temporalities that have always coexisted alongside each other in children's experiences, unlike those portrayed in the books. Memories help the authors to introduce and politicize the concept "pedagogies of time" as it captures normative modern socialization and opens space for noticing other temporalities and the possibility of change. Their thought and speculative experiments recreate early literacy texts to reflect different temporal experiences composing the time of "being a child."

The boundaries of the Zoom screen frame Ruth Boycott-Garnett's exploration. The Zoom frame however is made leaky by tiny babies. Leaky Zoom screens serve as a constant reminder of that which is unseen and unknowable and is still always present when considering the lives of babies. Zoom undercuts the ethnographic authority of an authentic "being-there and perceiving-while-there" position. The lives of the babies in this research are never fully knowable to the researcher because encounters on Zoom keep a question mark beside what we can see and interpret of babies' lives. Between focusing in on the Zoom screen and foregrounding the flickering presents, time serves as a connective tissue for dynamics to take shape which then become those researchable but fleeting moments. Time as it follows its own path creates conditions and dynamics for understanding babies.

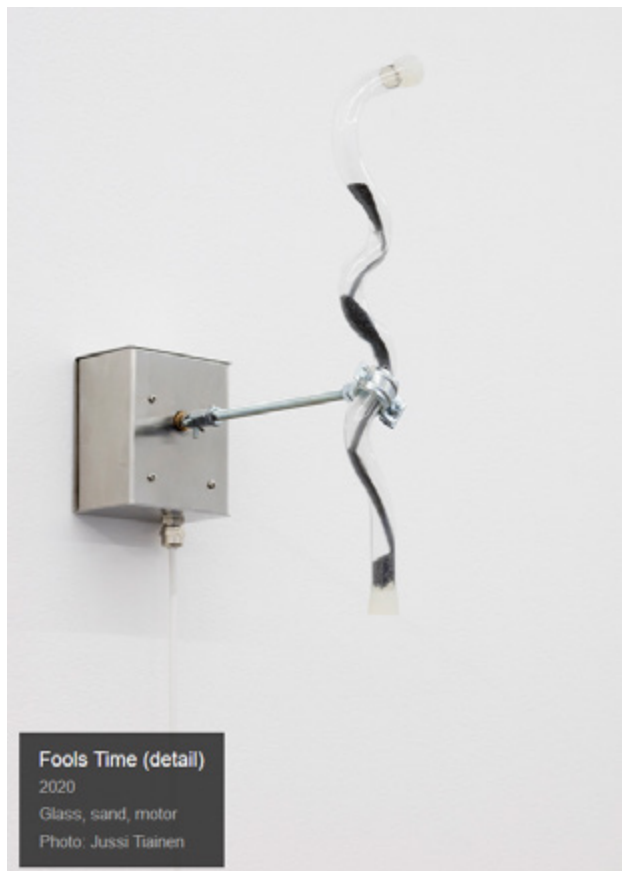
The philosophical, ontological, and epistemic (posthumanist and Indigenous) scholarly positions of a collective of authors (Camila da Rosa Ribeiro, Zsuzsa Millei, Riikka Hohti, Walter Omar Kohan, César Donizetti Pereira Leite, Norma Rudolph, Ingvild Kvale Sørensen, Karolina Szymborska, Tuure Tammi, and Marek Tesar) are used as starting points to release time and childhood from a linear trajectory and the civilization project brought upon children by the modern nation-states and their institutions. Through multidisciplinary engagements, the article collectively unsettles standardized progressive development, the linear trajectory that constitutes the child as less than an adult, the liberal progressive teleology of childhood, and attempts to rescue childhood by the humanitarian West and presents paths to alternative temporalities and onto-epistemologies to research childhoods.

As these contributions indicate, there are abundant benefits in disturbing linear temporality for scholarship delving into childhood and children lives. Perhaps the most important is acknowledging how linear time operates as the cornerstone of the coloniality of Western thought. Therefore, educational projects interested in dismantling such framework must devote critical attention to coloniality's underlying assumptions about children's subjectivity and capabilities spined by modern time. What if, instead of resigning childhood scholarship to the reactive tendency of observing and analyzing children's present, the field could repurpose itself as an activator of unorthodox futures? This could happen, for example, as in the understanding of circadian time, by paying attention to dynamics for sensing and effect in a complex choreography of operations that sustain life. For that matter, we would like to invite you to notice other senses of time, such as those presented drifting freely in Heini Aho's *Fool's Time III*. (Images 2 and 3). Time flows as sand, trapped in a bend and then it moves again. In its self-dynamism of affecting, time evades human control. The hourglass, the device to measure time, is reshaped to allow the sand to flow, and the gravitation makes the glass turn. Instead of arresting and measuring time with the hourglass, here the glass is turned as an effect of gravitation, releasing time from human control. Earthly energy releases time from the modernist quests for control and civilization, sensorially affecting our perception in the dynamisms of life.



Fools Time (detail)
2020
Glass, sand, motor
Photo: Jussi Tainen

Image 2. "Fool's Time III" by Heini Aho



Fools Time (detail)
2020
Glass, sand, motor
Photo: Jussi Tainen

Image 3. "Fool's Time III" by Heini Aho

References

- Murakami, M., & Tognini, P. (2020). The circadian clock as an essential molecular link between host physiology and microorganisms. *Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcimb.2019.00469>
- Rossini, M., & Toggweiler, M. (2017). Editorial: Posthuman temporalities. *New Formations*, 92(6), 5–10. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NEWF:92.INTRO.2017>
- Sandbothe, M. (1999). The temporalization of time in modern philosophy. In P. Baert (Ed.), *Time in modern intellectual thought* (pp. 17–35). Elsevier. <https://www.sandbothe.net/244.html>