

Dina and Mo spend their days at the Portman Centre but lately things haven't been a lot of fun. The Black Hole has eaten all their coins and the Centre's activities are being drastically reduced. Dina and Mo seek help from the Portman staff to get to the bottom of the situation but discover that something more sinister is at play ...

"*Who Cares?* is a book for children and their carers. But it is more than that. At its heart, *Who Cares?* questions the story that values independence over dependency and the inequalities and corruption that keep this narrative intact. It is a book that recognises that independence is not how most of the world works. It is not how we are born, or how we grow up. It is not how we learn, how we eat, how we love nor what, in the course of life, we spend our most necessary hours doing, that is, being dependent, interdependent and working to enable care for ourselves and with others." — Janna Graham

Who Cares? is the result of a residency by artist Adelita Husni Bey at the Portman Early Childhood Centre, curated by Alex Thorp. Commissioned and generously supported by Serpentine Education as part of the Changing Play programme.

Who Cares? Adelita Husni Bey and the Portman Early Childhood Centre

Who Cares?



a ~~children's~~ book about
what we owe each other.

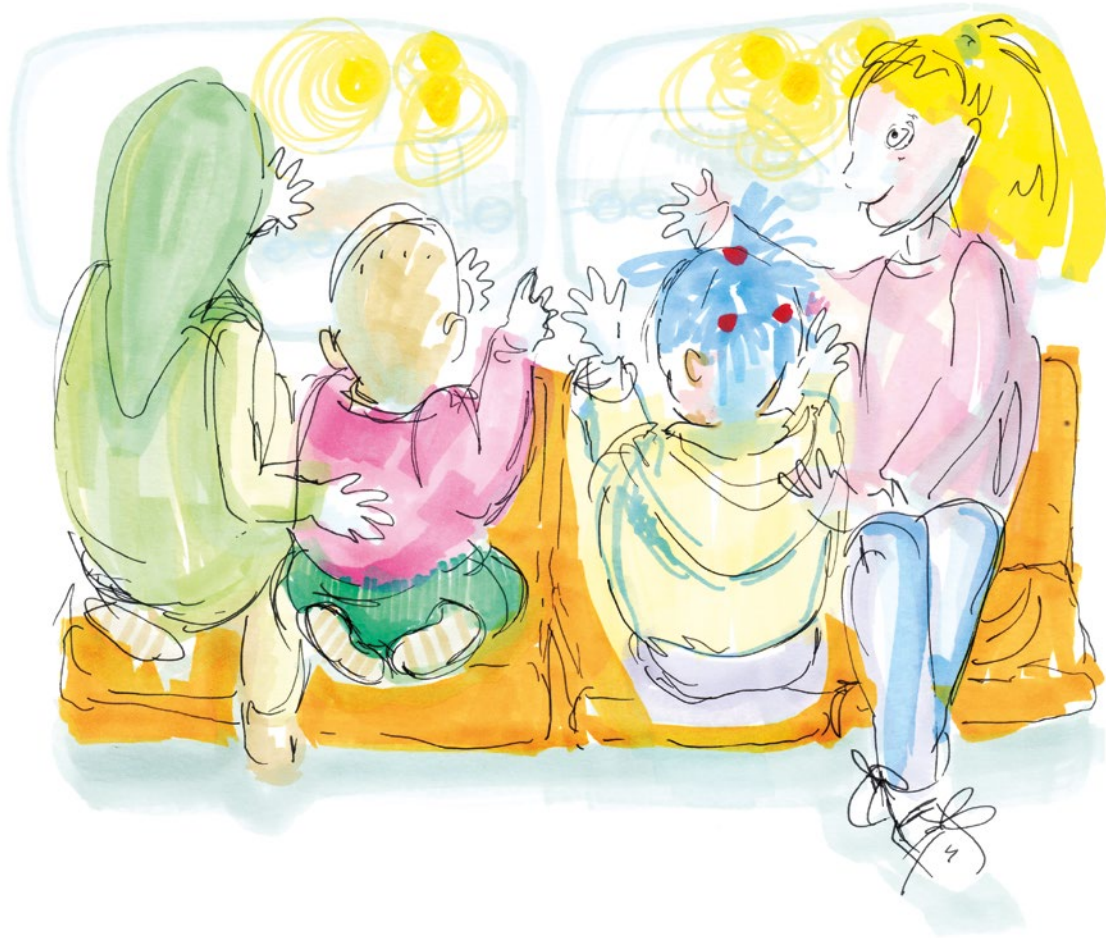
Inspired by real events at
the Portman Early Childhood Centre.
Dreamt up by Adelita Husni Bey
in collaboration with
the centre's parents and
care workers.



Dina and Mo go to
the Portman Early Childhood
Centre.



Hoda and Becky are
care workers at the
Portman Early Childhood
Centre,



Hoda and Becky care for
Dina and Mo by watching the
trains come and go from
Marylebone Station together.



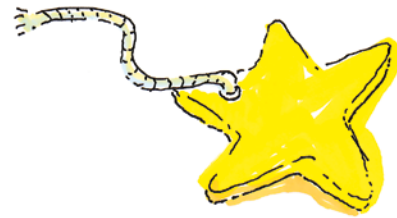
Hoda and Becky care
for Dina and Mo by
taking them camping,

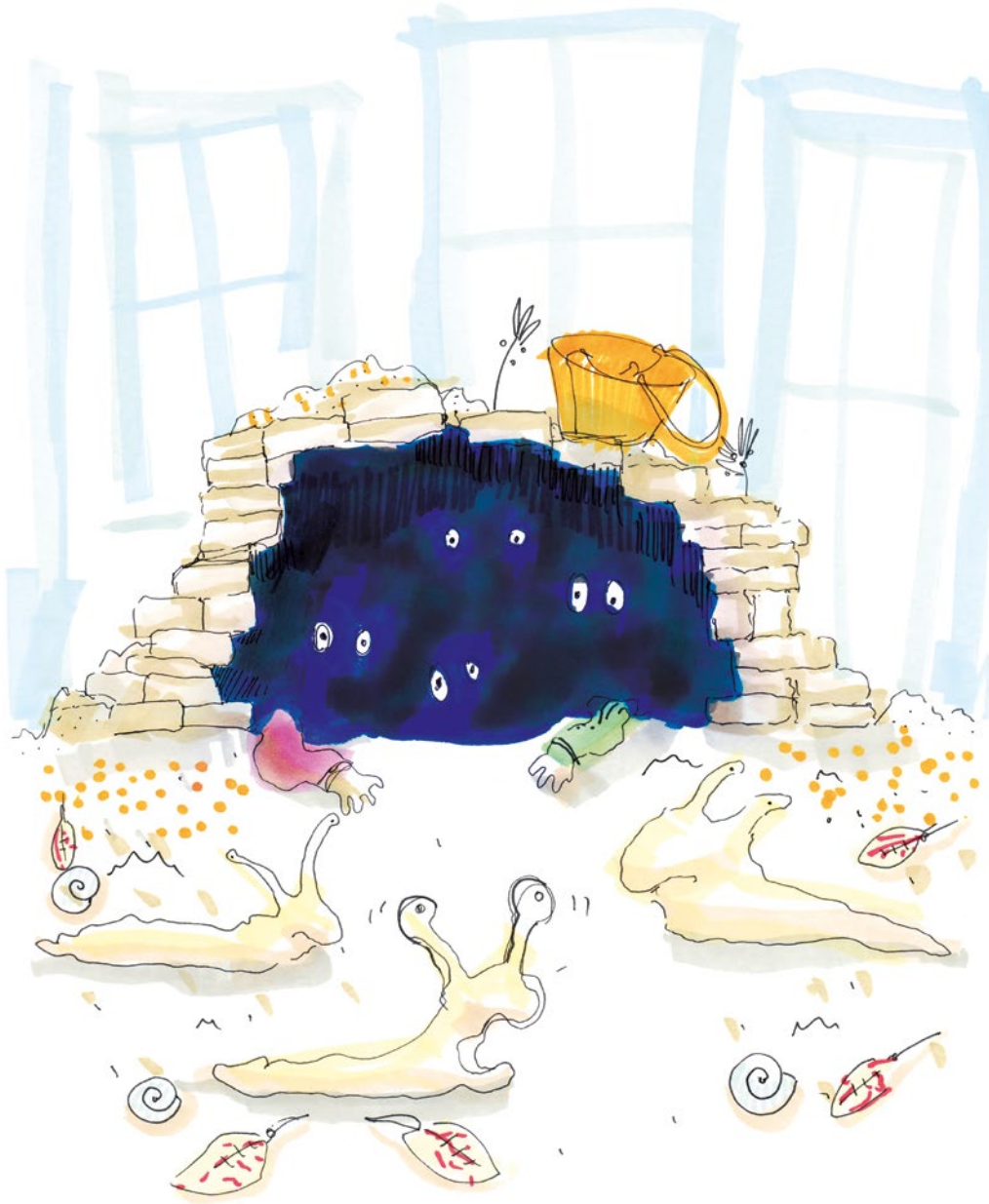




Hoda and Becky care
for Dina and Mo
by taking them on
beach trips to Brighton.

Dina and Mo care
for Hoda and Becky
by taking them on
journeys to the moon.





Dina and Mo care for
Hoda and Becky by taking
them on a slug hunt.



Dina and Mo care for
Hoda and Becky by
taking them to
Treasure Island.





Dina and Mo are trading shells they found on the beach, but they are getting bored.

"Can we go to the library
today?"

No,

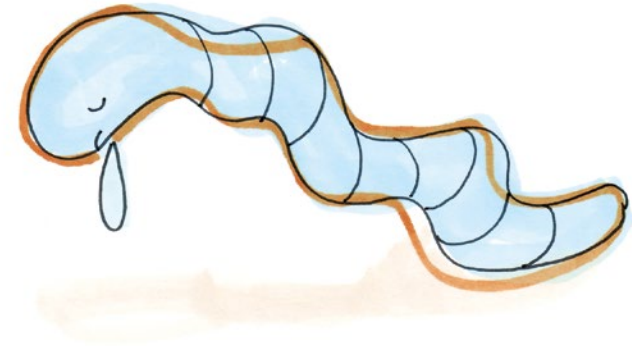
"What about the Natural
History Museum?"

No,

"Can we go play at the
Virtual Reality Centre?"

No.

Mo demands;
"But WHY can't we go??!"



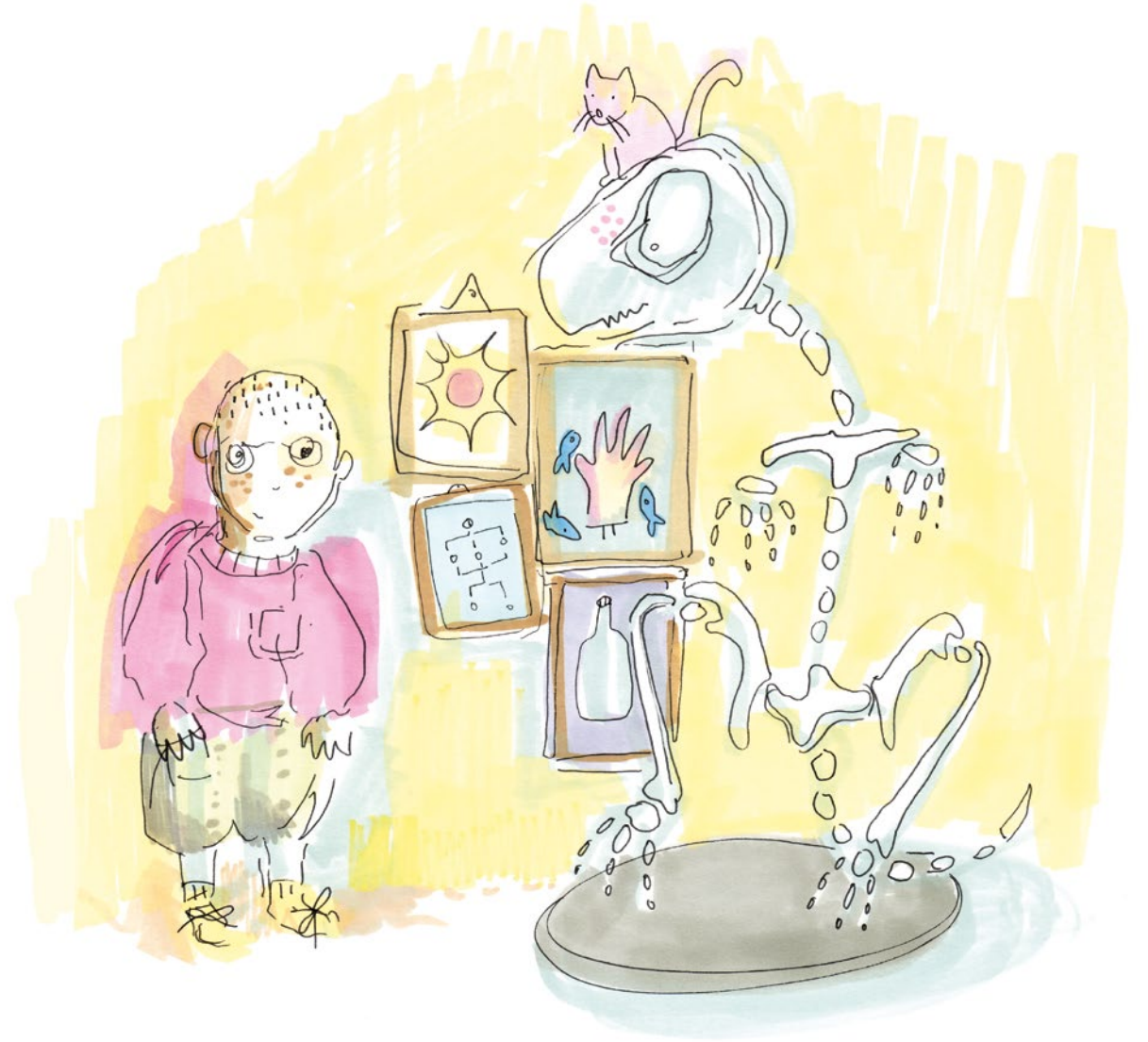
"Because we need coins to
get on the bus and the
train that will take us,..."





... to the library,

... to the Natural History
Museum,





... or to the Virtual Reality
Centre,"



"... But we have no coins today.
We gave them all to Mayor Slug
and he said they got eaten
by the Black Hole,"
reply Becky and Hoda.



Dina and Mo head to town to
speak to the Black Hole,



"Dina and Mo, I really don't
know where your coins did go!"
said the Black Hole...
"but I did see high rises rise and
slugs eating supple frog thighs..."





...and I struggle to think you don't know: Mayor Slug cares more for his kin, than the fate of the beings that live around him."



"Oh no! Are all of our coins really gone??!!" despaired Mo.

Dina thought really hard and then exclaimed:

"What if we sell our shells?!"

Mo didn't like the idea much, but they agreed.





Back at the Portman Early Childhood Centre, Dina and Mo set up their stall.



Hoda and Becky ask with concern: "Why are you selling your beautiful shells?"

"Black Hole didn't know where our
coins went",...

"This is not right!"

Modesta, Fatima, and Samar exclaim,



"What if after the market we gathered everyone from Portman and paid Mr. Slug a visit?"





"Mayor Slug, the Black Hole told us it didn't eat our coins and that you know where they are!"

"See, caring for us is your job, and if you cared for us like we care for each other you'd never make our coins disappear!"



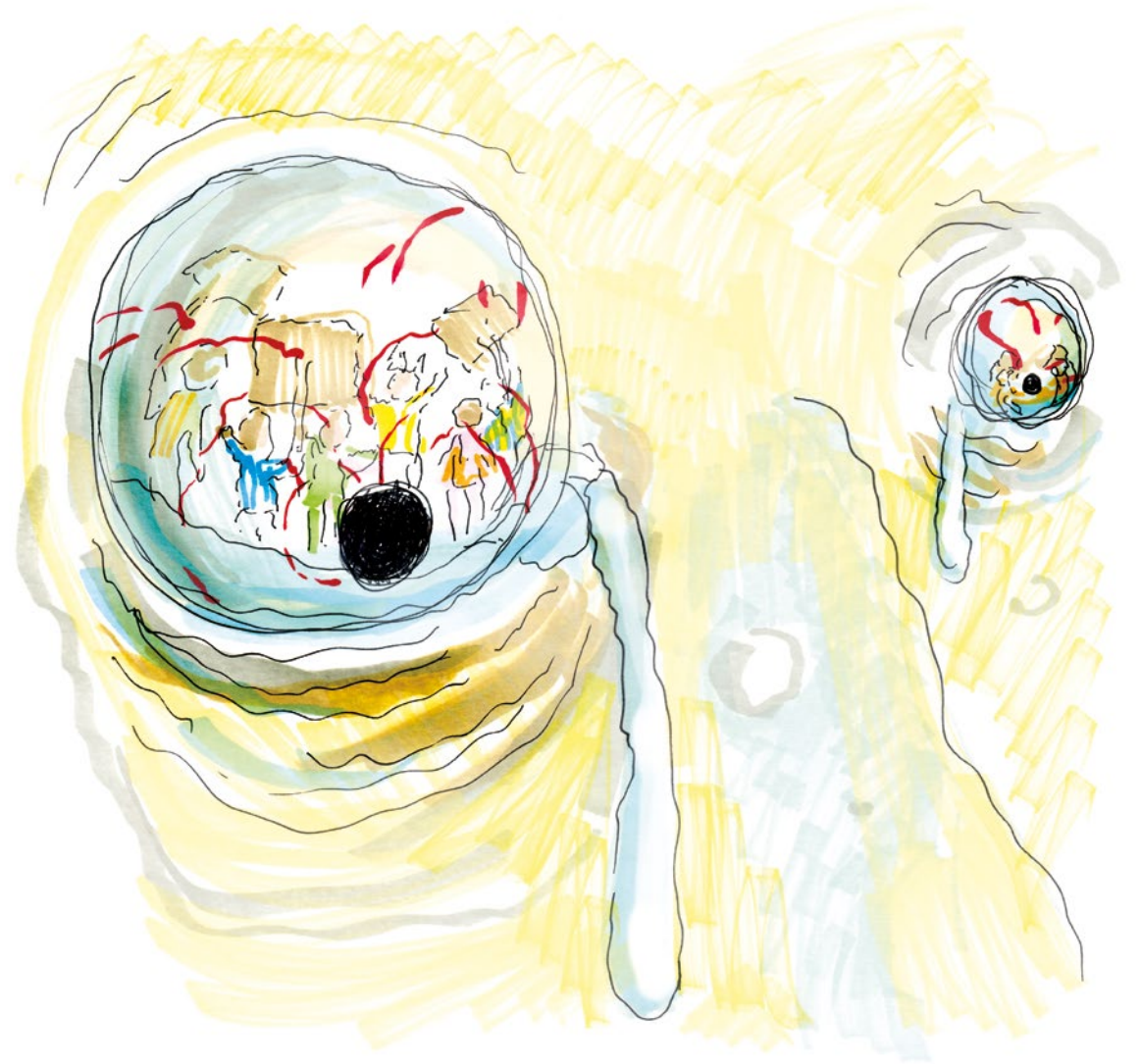


The crowd chanted:

"We should care for each other!"

They continued:

"And many more coins are owed to those who have less!"





"You are right children! I should have never lied! Your coins weren't taken by the Black Hole! I took them and gave them all to the slugs!"



Dina and Mo use Mayor Slug's electric telepathic machine to send a message to the whole of London:

"Beings of London! From now on we will take care of each other.

We'll share the resources we have from each according to their means to each according to their needs!"





That very evening Mo, Dina, Hoda, Becky, Samar, Fatima, Modesta, and Mayor Slug went to the beach together and watched the slugs swim out to sea.

The Coming Care

Janna Graham

Currently in the UK, dependency is a dirty word. On all fronts, in the face of those seeking social assistance, those needing to be housed, those needing support to survive the uneven effects of a hot and more turbulent planet, the refrains we hear are to *get off the dole, get back to work, become individually resilient, be independent*.

While for some independence may indeed be a goal and a possibility, at its heart this mantra shames dependency. Like a song that you cannot forget, it pushes an idea that governments need to take hold to justify their systematic stripping of common and public assets, the politics and policies of austerity that force us to be painfully and often detrimentally independent, whether we like it or not. If there is a call for community, for interdependence, it is usually made of the most precarious, the most under-resourced, the ones with the least time and capacity to pick up the slack that has been left behind.

Who Cares? is a book for children and their carers. But it is more than that. At its heart, *Who Cares?* questions the story that values independence over dependency and the inequalities and corruption that keep this narrative intact. It is a book that recognises that independence is not how most of the world works. It is not how we are born, or how we grow up. It is not how we learn, how we eat,

how we love nor what, in the course of life, we spend our most necessary hours doing, that is, being dependent, interdependent and working to enable care for ourselves and with others. *Who Cares?* asks, like the text by Eva Feder Kittay that inspired it, if independence is the dominant story of value in our time, how do we write new stories (and accompanying realities) that position dependency and care as abundant, at the centre, even as the systems that support caring are dismantled all around us?¹

It does so from the perspective of the carers, kids, and parents that make up one particular community of care, the Portman Early Childhood Centre. The Portman Centre is a very special place. Near the Church Street Market in West London, between Edgware Road and Lisson Green, it is a nursery, a meeting place for parents, grandparents, carers and childminders. It has a crèche, children's centre, adult education and employment services, discussion forums, and support groups for local community in one of London's lowest income areas. It was set up in a time when the provision of resources for working class and migrant communities were not seen to be signs of dependency but the outcome of localised community struggle, of movements demanding the state provide resources that would enable them to care and be cared for. Like the very few centres of its kind that still exist within the state funding apparatus today, it has been reduced in scale and services. As we read in the conversation between Adelita Husni Bey, Jo White and Alex Thorp, the story of Portman is a story of constant

cutting — most recently a real term cut of £400,000 over three years — of endless gnawing away at the labours of care at the core of this community.

The protagonists of *Who Cares?*, Dina and Mo, children at the Portman Centre, ask a series of simple questions like: “Can we go to the library today?”. To which their carers Hoda and Becky must repeat a mournful “No.”

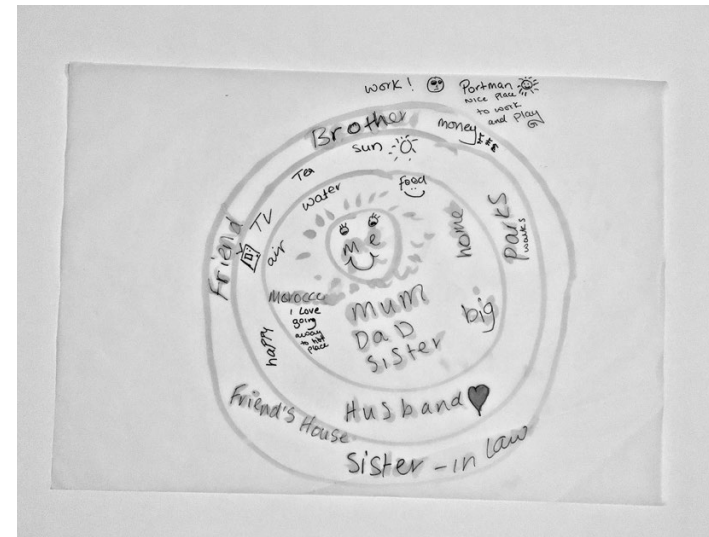
What follows is the children's vigilant investigation of where these possibilities (and the coins that enabled them) have gone. Their investigation brings them into encounters with a rather slippery Mayor Slug, who nervously obfuscates to an amorphous Black Hole. The Black Hole, more transparent than most, reveals it has not seen nor had any business with the coins. With the various twists and turns of their investigation, the children realise that, coins or no coins, at the heart of the impossibilities they experience is a deep undervaluing of what they are and what they have: a community of care.

Slug and Black Hole aside, the questions of Dina and Mo are echoed in care centres across the country. Why are there no trips? Why are care hours cut? Why do families go into debt to pay for care work? Why are those who literally produce the lives of our future, paid so little, if at all?

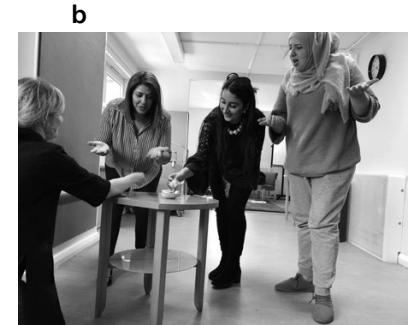
This book was written with these questions in mind. Working with Husni Bey, a group of care takers and care workers spent a number of sessions together, getting to know one

another and finding ways to narrate their relationships of care, what was enabling and disabling them. They began by drawing care diagrams, moving in concentric circles from the care that they experience themselves and perform with the people in their lives, outward to the spaces where care feels either impossible to receive or to provide. Many of the diagrams were deeply imbalanced, the spaces of care outweighed by the hours spent in jobs, services and a general milieu that structurally disables them from caring and taking hours, energies and resources away from the things they value most. This imbalance was amplified for those at the intersections of class, gendered and racialised forms of oppression, for whom the tight and semi-autonomous circles of care they have created for survival are far outweighed by the acts of non-care, of governments and a corporate class that literally wage war on their very existence.

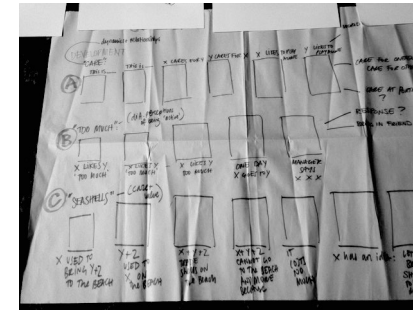
“What of it, what can be done?” they asked. From these care maps (■a), the group worked through techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed, a participatory form of theatre developed by Brazilian director Augusto Boal to support collective analysis of power and oppression in their lives. Using gestural and dramatised scenes (■b) they played to each other the concrete scenarios through which care and interdependency are undervalued and made possible and impossible in their lives. These scenes were then illustrated by Husni Bey and repeatedly brought back to the group to instigate the shape, direction and terms of the evolving narrative (■c), a



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b



C



technique described by the Brazilian emancipatory pedagogist Paulo Freire as “codification and de-codification.”² These embodied dramatisations, illustrations, and the resulting narrative conundrums relayed a number of experiences. First, that care happens at all levels of the Portman. The children are, at times, caring for each other and the staff. The carers are like parents, attempting to put caring for special needs at the fore, rather than an exception to their care practices. They also showed the carers struggling with their dwindled roles, which necessitates that they perform only the basic functions of care. They are often forced to spend more time measuring care than engaging in it, and are less able to address the complexity and possibilities of more creative ways of organising themselves and their caring labour. The greater situation is one in which resources for care workers in their pay and budgets continue to seep away and the demands for the production of *good citizens* and upholders of perceived *British values* remain high. They struggle to enact the most important possibilities of care — to turn the tables on these demands and instead facilitate young people, fellow carers, parents and communities to be more radically questioning, democratic and organised in waging a battle for resources and a definition of care that is more plural, more equitable and more reflective of their lives and needs. Through their theatricalised and narrative attempts at re-orienting acts of oppression towards more emancipatory and caring lives, they began to move beyond the kind of care that is expected — a care that seems neutral, detached,

task-oriented and pacifying — towards stories of collective struggle, action and organisation.

So, where are the coins and how does this story end? This, says the artist and group that took part in its making, was the hardest part of the process of making this book. Indeed, we can imagine a number of different endings.

The first one requires no real imagination at all, as we already live it. We pick up the slack, work unpaid, exhaust ourselves raising funds, trying to make businesses — social enterprises — out of things that have no relation to profit and that side-track us from the work of care. In the book this happens when children and carers go to the beach, take some shells and try to sell them to get money for their trips. This, they realise, will not solve the problem. Even without the clear ecological issues, this is distracting, contrary to their work and does not deal with the problem of care for anyone but themselves.

The second option is also familiar: to protest to the Mayor for more coins, for a return to a time (or a perception of one) when the state cared for us. While this might be necessary, what the book reveals is that the Mayor and his political class do not have the interests or the care needs of the people in their heart. As the Black Hole poignantly observes: “I really don’t know where your coins did go! ... but I did see high rises rise and slugs eating supple frog thighs ... and I struggle to think you don’t know: Mayor Slug cares more for

his kin, than the fate of the beings that live around him ...”.

If raising money won’t work and the politicians and corporate elites are wound tighter than a pretzel, what is to be done? No spoilers here, but I will say this, where we end is here and now, in the struggle for planetary care at its early inceptions. This struggle is seen in the recent women’s strikes that — similar to campaigns like Wages for Housework in the 1970s — operate under the slogan “when we stop, everything stops!”. The cry demands the re-valuing of care, the understanding that nothing works when those most responsible for caring in a society do not.

UK groups like Sisters Uncut, and movements from the global south like Ni Una Menos (Not One Less!), autonomous unions working with cleaners and other underpaid care workers like United Voices of the World and the UK’s Women’s Strike Assembly, are all calling for care strikes of the present to demand not only for the restoration of funding to sites of public care but a complete overhaul of the economy, to place care for, with and by those most vulnerable — migrant women, sex workers, trans women — at the centre. An orientation that is from and for care (or what they term *social reproduction*) is also a call for the end of capitalism, which has always relied on ignoring — and impoverishing — the work of care and the role of carers in society. As Silvia Federici argues in *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (2018), capitalism is fundamentally built on theft of the

commons and the making invisible and invaluable the work of care, and indeed that of women. Here, questions of pay and job parity are not the end game. The end game is the fundamental overturning of the system that values capital over our lives: a care revolution that puts a stop to the production of the coins for the profit of others at the great expense of those who care.

In this, *Who Cares?* is like the socialist children’s tales of the turn into the twentieth century, which aimed broadly “to upend the presumption of capitalism as the natural and rightful order of society,” but here, written by the people whose labours are at once the most devalued and the most necessary.³ But it goes further, as its process of production emerges — not from an author — but from the collective analysis of communities of care themselves. They imagine what it would mean to take over the means of production and discourse, to be enabled to care.

Here the change in the story is two-fold. There is the story that circulates, the one we get read, a story that transforms our perceptions and narratives of care. The second story is still an open one — the story of groups coming together to analyse institutions and experiences of care from within, to make them collectively resistant to the forces of bureaucracy, containment and precarity imposed on them and to organise with others in struggle for care at the centre.

While such an idea may seem much bigger than the battles waged around care in our

everyday lives, calls emerging around women's care labour and for a shift to practices of ecological care, are deeply grounded in the realm of our own experiences. It is in life, the maintenance and repair of it, the daily-ness of our routines and desires that we find the very potential of what a world re-valued around care might look like. All the beautiful moments we wish to sustain, the caring work that could be done but we never get to, the groups we'd like to set up but don't have time to, the neighbour we'd like to support but have been unable to, the democratisation of processes we know are wrong, but find too exhausting to do anything about, the inequalities that hit us at our core, the places and habitats we want to be there for the generation that the Portman Centre and others like it are so labouriously caring for. These unfulfilled moments, desires and communities are at the heart of what life could be in a society that valued equally distributed, radical and autonomous care over the exhausted states of half-caring we manage to muster under current conditions of precarity and forced independence. "See, caring for us is your job, and if you cared for us like we care for each other you'd never make our coins disappear!" cry the children in *Who Cares?*.

The struggle for care is the story we need for our times, of demanding supported, communal, caring interdependency as a value and as a right. It is a story that will require us to take a stand, to stake out our plans and demands, to re-direct energies. But it is not an unimaginable story. The seeds of it are already with us. The answer to the book's

fundamental question, then is quite simple: we care. But we do it by breaking our backs, exploiting ourselves, putting everything on the line. Its authors show us why we must refuse to care under these conditions and how to demand and imagine them otherwise.

"Beings of London! From now on we will take care of each other. We'll share the resources we have from each according to their means to each according to their needs!" demand the children and their carers, in a re-formulation of Marx's statement from the 1875 Critique of the Gotha Programme. Care as radical dependency. Care as appropriation of the means of production, distribution and narrative. This is the care story of our future.

- 1 Kittay, Eva Feder, 'The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability,' *Ratio Juris*, 24 (1), 2011, pp. 49–58.
- 2 Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, pp. 114–124.
- 3 Pan, J. C., 'Fairy Tales for Young Socialists,' *The Atlantic*, 4 January 2019.

Policies of Care

Jo White (Headteacher, Portman Early Childhood Centre), **Adelita Husni Bey** (artist and pedagogue) and **Alex Thorp** (Education Curator, Serpentine Galleries) discuss the effects of government policy on care.

Adelita Husni Bey

Jo, Portman is the early childhood centre where *Who Cares?* takes place. The story is based on the experiences of teachers, early years workers, family support workers, children, and parents who are the stakeholders of the Centre. This book has been focused on what care means on many levels. There is a continuum from how we personally tend to each other's needs in families to how care is paid for, organised and described when observed as a funded service in our society. I don't mean to equate care and funding but, instead, to draw connections between the available funding and how its allocation supports the various strands of work that are loosely described as *care*. When you came to the Portman, what was the funding situation?

Jo White

In 2000, Portman was re-configured from its main role as a family centre providing day care and support for local families. Up until that time, it had been led and managed by the social services department of the council. Following the appointment of its first headteacher, its designation was changed, and a nursery school was established. This gave access to a budget provided by the Depart-

ment for Education, in addition to the budget from Westminster City Council, and then additional central government funding came from the Sure Start programme.

A great deal of the emphasis for Sure Start was to fight child poverty, which was seen as a blight on the lives of too many children in the UK. One of the ways to do this was to ensure that the number of workless households was reduced and to encourage women into work outside the home. All laudable intentions, but with some unintended consequences in my view, because at the same time this policy was being developed the evidence was becoming very clear. The quality of care and education offered to individual children did make a difference to the intellectual and social development of that child.

The employability strand of the Sure Start programme therefore became a possible negative for some children. The number of organisations offering childcare for working families grew as a direct response to the initiative. Employment is a good thing, something that as a society we want to encourage, but, and there is a but, providing high quality childcare in order that women, in particular, were able to return to the workforce was a huge task and in some cases the quality of that childcare was less good than it needed to be to fulfil the dictionary definition of care. The focus, in my view, is too often on the quantity of childcare provision rather than ensuring that all settings were of the very highest quality.

Childcare and early years education in too many instances became separated in the policy-makers' minds. I do not believe that you can care for a child without educating them at the same time and equally you cannot educate a child to their full potential unless you care for them. Is it childcare or is it education? It can't be either, it has to be both.

Adelita Husni Bey

In *Who Cares?*, I've tried to portray the diversity I encountered at the Portman, the range of needs and their expressions. For example, one of the characters in this book is inspired by a child at the Portman who has been turned away from schools because the lack of funding in education has made schools less willing to take neurodiverse and disabled children on. You've laid out a policy history for us, but what is the climate *now*, especially for children who benefit from more interaction?

Jo White

Most nursery schools and a large number of primary schools across the country are now in deficit. High quality services including education are more resource intensive for children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds. The levels of need, including for those children with a disability or special educational need, will require a higher level of investment in order to ensure good outcomes. Schools and maintained nurseries are struggling to access the level of resource needed. Likewise, the private and voluntary sector have very little access to additional financial support over and above the basic

fee income which, in a very competitive market is always going to be limited. The pot is very small and is under huge pressure across the country. These children haven't got time to wait for the boom to come back, they're here now, today, and we need to be supporting them and their families.

Not supporting these young children and their families at the earliest opportunity flies in the face of any financial or humanitarian logic. It contradicts all local authority's documents regarding the need for early help and it flies in the face of all the research on the value of early identification of need.

Alex Thorp

Over the last few months we've seen an increasing number of parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) taking the government to court to force them to meet their legal responsibilities in providing education for children. Three families have won the right to have the government's funding policy examined in a landmark judicial review in June 2019. They claim that the government is unlawfully underfunding the education of children with SEND. This action reminds me of the scene in the book where the children gather together with their friends and families to challenge the mayor and to ask for their money back. In the story we learn that the mayor has favoured his friends at the expense of citizens, though ultimately collective action forces him to repent. So far, the government appears unmoved by personal appeals from children, teachers and

parents, but I hope that contesting through the courts, in combination with the many grassroot groups campaigning for disability rights, will lead to real changes for children and families. How hopeful are you, Jo?

Jo White

The lack of funds for children with SEND is a national issue. Those families taking legal action are, for the most part, in the situation of their child's needs being legally recognised and have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) issued by their local authority and this is a legally binding document. For the children and families we are supporting, the final documents have not yet been completed, because we are continuing to assess the child's level of need, therefore there is nothing legally binding to be challenged. We need the time to get sufficient information from a range of partners so that a plan can be submitted and during this period there is little financial assistance, but the children still need additional support to ensure their safety and well-being as well as that of the other children attending the nursery. This is one of the many hurdles.

Alex Thorp

On top of policy that is often out of sync with how the centre can account for and process a child's needs, funding cuts have already forced many centres to close down. A recent report by the Sutton Trust showed that as many as 1000 Sure Start centres have closed since 2009. State-maintained nursery schools such as the Portman, who offer the highest level of support for children with

SEND, don't have adequate long term funding, meaning they may have to reduce the services they offer or close their doors in the coming months and years.

Adelita Husni Bey

How are funding cuts in combination with certain policies affecting the Portman in very specific ways besides the ones you just described? What other services would you be able to offer before that you now cannot? When working on this book some of the staff who took part in writing it remembered beach trips and how being outside the Portman was an exhilarating experience for the children and staff alike, but now Portman is finding that they can't afford to take the children on trips, mostly because of staffing constraints.

Jo White

The local authority is very clearly telling us that cuts will have to be made. We have to present a balanced budget. How this will be achieved is not hard to fathom. Our greatest cost is staff — highly qualified committed staff who support all children to reach their full potential — and it is this that will be the first to go. We're going to have to rely on the few charities that are around, but with the knowledge that everyone is chasing the same finite amount of money.

Adelita Husni Bey

What you just said reminds me a little bit of one section in this book, which is when the two main characters, Dina and Mo, find out that they cannot access things that they

had access to before, and so they decide to sell shells they've found on the beach to fund some activities at the Centre. I tried to include some of the sacrifices that everybody feels they need to make, and how unfair they are in light of the fact that it is fundamentally a question of redistribution and not that there is 'no money' or that 'money is scarce.' Austerity measures rely on that mantra. The same mantra Mayor Slug, another character in the book, relies on by saying the money has been eaten up by the Black Hole when in fact he had just allotted it for something else. It is the relationship between the slugs and Mayor Slug which constructs a different reality, a reality that cuts part of the population out from having economic recourse.

Jo White

My worry isn't only economic, it is the increasing density of the primary curriculum and the reduction in the specialist teacher training required for those wanting to teach in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The tendency for leadership teams in primary schools not to understand that the curriculum is different for these young children, just watering down a curriculum used for older children for the nursery and reception year, is counter-productive, as is the growing downward pressure to perform according to a very inflexible script. I believe that teaching young children is different to teaching children of six or seven years old, this differentiation is at risk in the current climate.

Alex Thorp

I've heard you discuss 'integration' before as a possible solution Jo, did you mean between education and social services?

Jo White

Yes, no one service will ever be able to support the complexity of some children's lives, or their families' lives. We've got 52% of children in Church Street who are living in poverty, and many have poor and inadequate housing. It is very difficult to be focused on your child's need to be read stories if you're not sure where you will be living in six months.

Many of the children we see at Portman have speech and language delay and we know that having poor communication skills remains one of the biggest reasons for children failing to access the wider curriculum and therefore unable to reach their full potential at school. We've got to be working with health professionals as well, we need to be working with Citizens' Advice Bureau, housing charities, financial advisers, mental health services, domestic violence charities; families come in a myriad of different guises, they are complex and sometimes fragile, the need for holistic and integrated services has never been so essential.

We need to work together. No one organisation or professional body is going to be enough to ensure that all children and families are thriving, that society is giving everyone the opportunity to achieve the best that they can, and it is this truth that lies at the heart of the Portman ethos.

Alex Thorp

You've mentioned to me before that there are certain 'targeting' measures which are there to help children and families but end up creating more inequity because they don't take into account the capacity of that family to be vocal for their child, and how that's problematic.

Jo White

We have a family with us at the moment with a child who has verbal apraxia, this means that he requires high levels of specialist support from a range of professionals, one of the key people being the speech and language therapy service. His parents are both doctors with a very clear knowledge of their son's needs. They are able to articulate this with vigour and passion for which I applaud them, and their son is receiving the speech and language therapy that he needs. There is no other child in our nursery that has been awarded that level of intervention and this has to make us ask the question, why? The level of targeted intervention relies on the ability of a family being able and willing to fight for their cause and that can't be right. It's a criticism of the system. I'm delighted that that little boy is going to get more, but why doesn't the boy next door get more when the mother doesn't speak English or just doesn't have that confidence? I think part of our role is to be that advocate and say: 'that's not fair.'

Adelita Husni Bey

Looking at the etymology of the word *policy* which has been at the centre of this conversation, I found the French word

policie, and further back the Greek word for proof which is *apodeixis*. Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the word policy shares its roots with police, as in to police and to prove. I wonder if one can care from a place where they are also policing and proving? And my answer would be no, that is not possible. Policy, especially the targeted policies we have discussed, coupled with funding cuts, remind me that policing can come in the guise of care. Policy or policing might not be the place where to look for refuge or where to search for care. Refuge and care happen outside of policing, outside of policy. What seems to be asked of children and their caretakers in the UK is for them to fit into ever-shrinking notions of normality, where you have to reach a certain level both as a child and as an institution in order not to be penalised. This type of relationship between goals and assets seems to require constant and ruthless policing from the state, resulting in limited and targeted access to provisions. As a point of departure from this kind of system, what would a nourishing early years education system look or feel like to you?

Jo White

Well, I think for me it's about supporting children to have a disposition to learn throughout their lives. We have no idea what children are going to need to know in 20 years, but we do know that they're going to have to be flexible thinkers and to be resilient. I think part of our job will be, and is to be, an advocate for children and families, to work to improve services and to highlight

to our politicians how services are best delivered to ensure that children and their families thrive and are able to fully contribute to their community. To have any chance of this becoming a reality we need a system of integrated care and support that provides ongoing contact and is trusted and valued by the community it serves.

I've always said my most favourite questions that should be regularly asked by us all are: Why? Why are you doing it? Why not? Why aren't you doing it? We all need to be able to answer both those questions honestly.

Contributors

Adelita Husni Bey is an artist and pedagogue interested in anarcho-collectivism, theatre, law and urban studies. She has organised workshops, produced publications, radio broadcasts, archives and exhibition work using non-competitive pedagogical models through the framework of contemporary art. Working with activists, care workers, architects, jurists, schoolchildren, spoken word poets, actors, urbanists, athletes and teachers across different backgrounds, her work focuses on unpacking the complexity of collectivity, to make good what can never be made good: what we owe each other.

Alex Thorp is an educator and curator based in London who has been working in the field of arts education for over 12 years. As Education Curator at the Serpentine Galleries, she leads on collaborative programmes and projects with children, families and young people.

Becky Stringer is mum to three beautiful girls: Izzy, 16, and Millie and Grace, 10 year old twins. She is an early years worker at Portman where she has been a care worker for the past six years. Before working at Portman, Becky attended the centre as a parent and considered Portman as her second home. Portman played an important role in the early years of her twins' lives and continues to play a part in the lives of many families that cross its path.

Dina and Mo are children who attend the Portman Early Childhood Centre.

Fatima Bouskri Harrou is a lead early years practitioner at Maida Vale Children's Centre, where she has worked for the last eight years. She lives in South West London and enjoys socialising and meeting people from various cultures and backgrounds. She also loves travelling, listening to different types of music from jazz to hip hop, cycling and going for walks in nature.

Hoda Choai is an early years practitioner at Portman Early Childhood Centre. She has been a key member of staff for over 10 years and has played a significant role in running speech and language groups, as well as parenting workshops for the local community. Hoda is the daughter of Moroccan immigrants. She was born and raised in a vibrant inner London estate, where she continues to support local initiatives. Her interests include travel and exploring culture and art, principally across the Middle East. She has a particular interest in and appreciation of the region's music.

Janna Graham is a researcher, curator and educator who has developed texts, exhibitions, and education projects at the intersection of art and contemporary social urgencies including the struggles around migration, gentrification, education, anti-racism and indigeneity. Graham currently runs the BA Curating at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is a member of the international sound and political collective Ultra-red.

Jo White is Headteacher and Head of Centre of the Portman Early Childhood Centre and Portman Nursery School Westminster, London.

Samar Farish is mother to one daughter, Dina, who is diagnosed with autism. She works part-time as an assistant for children with special education needs. In her free time she likes to go shopping, drink coffee, cook, walk in the park and feed the ducks. She especially enjoys the holidays when she can spend more time with her daughter.

Who Cares?

Adelita Husni Bey in collaboration with Hoda Choaibi,
Samar Farish, Fatima Bouskri Harrou and Becky Stringer,
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