Growing up and growing old with television: peripheral viewers and the centrality of care

AMY HOLDSWORTH AND KAREN LURY

'Katie Morag' lives on the (fictional) Scottish Island of Struay. Every night, before she goes to sleep, she shines a torch from her bedroom window across the moonlit bay. From out of the darkness a small light twinkles in response, as one of Katie's grandmothers, 'Grannie Island', shines a light back to the young girl. Adapted from the books by Mairi Hedderwick (first published in 1984), *Katie Morag* (2013–) is a recent success for CBeebies, the digital preschool channel of the BBC. This oft-repeated, flickering night-time communication, reflecting the special bond between child and grandmother, is central to our discussion of the alliance between the 'old' and the 'young' that opens our investigation of television and care. *Katie Morag* is symptomatic of a cluster of programmes that bring older people, often through familial connections, into the young child's world. In addition, and also set within seaside communities, there are the adventures of a magically shrinking grandfather, played by James Bolam, in *Grandpa in My Pocket* (CBeebies, 2009–) and the tales of a retired fisherman in *Old Jack's Boat* (CBeebies, 2013), in which 'Jack' is played by Bernard Cribbins.[1] The children's documentary series *My Story* (CBeebies, 2012–) and *My Life* (CBBC, 2012–) have also emphasized intergenerational relationships through family histories and contemporary realities.

The voices, performances and stories of the 'old' or 'elderly' are not necessarily a new phenomenon within children's television: the stop-motion animation series *Gran* (BBC, 1983) or the live-action superhero series *Super Gran* (ITV, 1985–87), for example, offer

earlier iterations of the adventurous or magical grandparent. We might also look to literary examples (such as Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1881) or George Elliot's redemption narrative *Silas Marner* (1861), and more recently Michelle Magorian's novel for children *Goodnight Mr Tom* (1981). Placed together, however, the above programmes suggest a significant and perhaps increasing interest on the part of the BBC to engage their young audience with older generations. These largely positive representations of older people and their relationships with children might be read as a response to a rapidly ageing population and the increasing visibility of grandparents as carers for their grandchildren, or the recognition of the value of intergenerational education and relationships.[2] However, we would like, temporarily, to side-step questions of the *representation* of care to investigate how, within these often mild and nostalgic narratives, we might question the normative understanding and address of television to its child and (older) adult audiences and explore the affective aesthetics of programmes that care for and about their audiences. Through textual experiences of time and space and the operations of care, what we recognize is the reciprocity and interdependence between generations. This recognition, we argue, offers a new mode of engagement with the challenges of 'growing up' and 'growing old' on and with television, and potentially creates a new and more expansive model of subjectivity. It is through this generational alignment that we aim to intervene in a series of different discourses and debates centred on ideas of care, specifically notions of 'autonomy' and 'dependency', and how they might be thought through in relation to television. Engaging with feminist work on the ethics of care and notions of (inter)dependency, our focus on the intergenerational dynamics within children's television opens out to consider a series of programmes, practices and audiences that are often marginalized within the study of television but that nevertheless make visible dynamics of care within and between production and reception, text and context – television and its audience as both cared for and carer.

There is a clear link here between our concerns and the earlier projects of both Paddy Scannell and Roger Silverstone that sought to make visible the 'taken-for-granted' and common-sense aspects of television that had become naturalized within the routines and apparent entitlements of everyday life. Within both, 'care' emerges as a conceptual category. Silverstone remarks on television's 'consistency of care'[3] in a way that is not wholly unrelated to Scannell's use of 'care' to highlight, first, why we should care about the place of broadcasting in everyday life and, second, why we should be concerned with how and why it is meaningful.[4] However, in both projects discussions are distanced (deliberately by Scannell) from an understanding of care as an ethical concern (that is, caring *for*). Conversely, we ask what might be revealed by placing such an understanding at the centre of our concerns? For example, television's 'duty of care' (within both public service and commercial systems) is arguably heightened in its recognition of and (anxious) responsibility for the child audience.[5] Within this regulation and control of the child *for their own good* is an understanding of care as a paternalistic and civic concern that has produced within public services a longstanding tension between needs and wants – the dynamic of parent and child mapped onto institution and audience/user. Whilst writing within a very different context (in relation to diabetes health care), Annemarie Mol considers how the paternalist mode within healthcare situations has been replaced by a language and logic of choice (what the patient 'wants' rather than what the patient 'needs') – a move that is akin to the shifting rhetoric of both commercial and public service broadcasting.[6] As Jane Roscoe has written in relation to the different models of consumption on offer via digital television and their promotion by industry, 'Choice is the buzzword'.[7]

The alignment between health and broadcasting as public services in popular and political discourses is certainly not unprecedented. For example, in the British context, former Labour Shadow Culture Secretary Chris Bryant recently described the BBC as 'our

cultural NHS' as a way of articulating its centrality, importance and continuing value against attacks from Conservative government. A recent study by Patricia Holland, Hugh Chignell and Sheryl Wilson also aligns the BBC and the NHS, as they explore the legacy of Margaret Thatcher's government on the BBC in the 1980s.[8] The three draw on Colin Leys's earlier study that describes the political and cultural shift in that period as installing 'not just a liberal-market economy, but a liberal-market society and culture, based not on trust but on the most extreme possible exposure to market forces'.[9] Whilst their argument is concerned more directly with the erosion of public trust in these institutions, what is also evidently ushered in by this new ideology is the prioritization of consumer choice and autonomy, and a neoliberal medical and cultural orthodoxy that positions want against need.

The recent proposed and actual changes to the BBC and the NHS by a contemporary and hostile Conservative government therefore provide a significant context in which to foreground and reimagine care as a politicized concept. This requires that we think about care differently from the paternalist mode associated with the delivery of our cultural needs in which adults are implicitly 'infantilized'. Infantilization in the new neoliberal ethos is inherently associated with the restriction of choice and autonomy, as Shirley Letwin describes:

> The Thatcherite understanding of Britain [is] as a nation of individuals who could and should run their own lives and whose self-respect would be violated by bureaucrats or doctors who ordered them about like children being forced to do what is good for them.[10]

The US philosopher Eva Feder Kittay suggests, however, that 'paternalism is the only alternative to autonomy when autonomy is the norm of all human interaction'.[11] In contrast to this, how might the engagement with a more expansive and reciprocal model or ethics of care be used to disrupt neoliberal discourses and orthodoxies? What might it look like to place, as

Kittay argues, 'dependence as a central feature of human life and human relationships and interdependency rather than independence as a goal of human development'?[12]

It is this understanding of care that challenges certain assumptions feeding conventional understandings of democracy, citizenship and subjectivity in relation to television. Within the discourses of film and television studies, for example, the focus is often on autonomous individual desire (implicitly with wanting rather than needing) and this rests on the figure of the 'competent' or 'normative' spectator for whom speech, vision, hearing, mobility and cognition are often assumed to be unproblematic. In this model, questions of dependency and need may be acknowledged yet remain peripheral to dominant theoretical models and seem redundant in relation to the contemporary fascination, within television studies, with long-form narratives and high production values – programming, in other words, that makes particular demands on viewers and provides apparently complex pleasures for its audience.

The challenge to notions of independence and autonomy presented via a feminist ethics of care is also one that questions the underpinning of common assumptions about ageing and development that remain dominant within screen representations of both childhood and 'old age'. By aligning older and younger characters and audiences we resist the normative chain of associations where ageing is represented as growth, and growth is associated with development. For the child, this model appears unproblematic and even inevitable: ageing = growth = development. Emerging from within a paternalistic, empiricist and imperial world-view, this model has already been exposed to a stringent critique by many authors from a number of disciplines including sociology, psychology and literary theory.[13] Yet the popular and continuing investment in this framework is evident through familiar rituals that attempt to capture the child's growth (in annual school photographs, height-marks on the bedroom wall, or smartphone apps that track developmental milestones) and through

medical practices that remain routine in the UK and elsewhere, such as the unquestioned use of percentile charts by midwives and the mothers they care for.

These everyday practices commemorating, celebrating and monitoring growth-as-development shore up the success of film projects such as Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* (2014), in which the central conceit is that the young child actor actually ages over the course of a twelve-year filming period, and in the artist/filmmaker Frans Hofmeester's *Portrait of Lotte* (2014), in which his daughter's growth is captured via fifteen seconds of filming every week for fourteen years. The fascination with these film projects is due in part to the way in which ageing is (re)presented as a kind of 'time lapse' photography in which the ongoing or experiential invisibility of the child's day-to-day ageing (the child as 'being') is stilled, pictured, then reanimated and edited into a comprehensible linear narrative (insisting on the framing of the child as 'becoming'). In all these projects, the narrative structure is always chronological, with no flashbacks or flashforwards. While the films may be dependent for their effect and interest on the way in which the filming context offers the possibility of contingency (the appearance of the child and the extent of the actual child's growth and physical changes could not have been preplanned) the narrative economy established in each text, mapping the child as 'growing up', affirms the significance of 'progress' and development for the version of the child ultimately constructed by the adult filmmakers. Equally, on television, high-profile longitudinal documentary series – such as The *Up* series (ITV, 1964–) and *Child of our Time* (BBC, 2000–) – are equally explicit as to the relationship between ageing, growth and development. As the years go by, in individual episodes we may go back in time and 'replay' highlights of the biography of each subject – but only as an opportunity to remark on the individual's progress or, in a move intended to provoke schadenfreude, to note their lack of progress, to remind viewers of a potential future that was thwarted by chance, or illness, or both.

In contrast, ageing for older individuals is associated not with growth and development but with decline. The current media interest in dementia, a condition that is predominantly associated with old age, in which the 'loss' of memory and the subsequent 'social death' arguably overdetermines the representation of older people's subjectivity and their future(s) as backward-looking and increasingly restricted. In this context, it is no coincidence that in the same year *Boyhood* is nominated by the Academy for Best Film, Julianne Moore wins an Oscar for her performance in *Still Alice* (Wash Westmoreland, 2014) as a middle-aged woman living with early-onset Alzheimer's. Old age, even for those who are not afflicted with this condition, is commonly understood to be about dwindling capacity – physically and mentally – that leads to increasing restriction in an individual's emotional and social well being. In this context it is not hard to understand why old age – which could otherwise be distinguished, as childhood is, as a time of relative freedom from responsibility – is seen as something that is to be feared rather than embraced.

However, as Feder Kittay has argued, if we recognize that we are all, at some point in our lives, likely to inhabit positions as both carers and as 'cared-for', we could also suggest that it is the norm of the independent autonomous adult that is actually periphery to a more plural understanding of subjectivity, since we are all always already or becoming dependent.

> From this perspective, we reason that our societies should be structured to accommodate inevitable dependency within a dignified, flourishing life – both for the cared for, and for the carer. […] if we see ourselves as always selves-in-relation, we understand that our own sense of well-being is tied to the adequate care and well-being of another.[14]

This would invert the usual hierarchy of subjectivity, so that those individuals who have been conventionally positioned as 'other' in terms of their selfhood (the elderly, young children,

the disabled) are no longer marginalized as either 'declining', 'becoming' or 'lacking', but integral to a more diverse and fluid understanding of subjectivity over the life-course.

To further challenge this conventional positioning of the young child in relation to the older adult, we invoke Carol Mavor's playfully suggestive essay, 'Alicious objects: believing in six impossible things before breakfast; or reading *Alice* nostologically', and in our analysis of the programmes, adopt a 'nostolgic' attitude, where nostology provides an alternate understanding of gerontology (the study of ageing).[15] From this perspective, old age is released from a sense of loss, shame or decline, and might be considered more optimistically as a 'return home'. This enables us to think again, perhaps controversially, about what it might mean to suggest that old age provides a 'second childhood'. Mavor's 'nostolgic' and the nostalgic are caught up in the same curious spatiotemporal dynamic in which the home is to be returned to *in the future* – a revisiting of childhood that is, depending on the discourse, desired or feared. What interests us in the wilfully obtuse and looping complexity of Mavor's arguments are the different movements and temporalities that she points towards and the way in which she challenges the singular motion of progress and decline that has previously characterized our perceptions of development and ageing. The positive alignment between childhood and old age that is present in many of the programmes we discuss also challenges the inevitability of the developmental trajectory and presents the passage (between the status, capacity and experience of child and older adult) as continuous – a process of give and take. It is this oscillation that we believe is mirrored not only in the content but in certain textual and experiential characteristics of television. We suggest further that the nonverbal qualities of touch, texture, repetition and rhythm within children's television[16] offer an affective aesthetics that aligns with the small pleasures and gestures articulated within both Mol's and Feder Kittay's writing on care.

From our perspective, care is an attitude, a disposition and a practice that can make certain kinds of television visible; television that may otherwise be seen as unremarkable and repetitive, economically and aesthetically 'cheap' or, in certain instances, even exploitative. In that sense, this kind of television is specifically aligned with 'care' and 'carers' whose actions and needs are often repetitive and mundane and who remain, in our societies, undervalued, underresourced and potentially exploited. As Nicky James has argued, 'a major difficulty in recognising and taking account of the components of care is their invisibility'.[17] Often taking place behind closed doors, care, along with those who provide and receive it, is marginalized and undervalued. Work on both care and emotional labour has clearly exposed the gendered and classed inequalities in the delivery of domestic and social care.[18] Here, though, we recognize how the invisibility of care takes on another dimension and learn from Mol et al. who argue that 'writing about care […] means that we need to juggle with our language and adapt it. However, the most difficult aspect of writing about care is not finding the words to use, but dealing with the limits of using words at all'.[19] What we concentrate on in our analysis of the programming, therefore, are the 'nonverbal' aspects of caring, for as Mol et al. suggest, care is not necessarily verbal. 'It may involve putting a hand on an arm at the right moment, or jointly drinking hot chocolate while chatting about nothing in particular'.[20] What their essay also emphasizes is the role of technology in practices and processes of care as shared work between human and nonhuman actors: 'A noisy machine in the corner of the room may give care and a computer may be very good at it too'.[21] What we suggest, through this essay, is that television in certain instances (and perhaps particularly in relation to the programmes produced by a public service institution such as the BBC) is a 'caring technology'.

By observing and championing the 'small pleasures' offered by these texts, we recognize that it is their routine qualities, repetitions and diversions that reflect and articulate

the important relations of care. 'Small pleasures' is a phrase we adopt and adapt from Feder Kittay, who offers this within a description of her interdependent relationship with her daughter, Sesha. Embedded within the everyday and extensive labour of caring for Sesha (who has multiple disabilities), Kittay identifies joyful moments – temporary, awkward, touching and ordinary – 'small pleasures' that for her and Sesha may be provoked by a familiar game of 'laughing, ducking, grabbing and kissing'.

> They are 'small' pleasures, to be sure, but pleasures that provide so much of life's meaning and worth that they permit the deep sorrows of Sesha's limitations to recede into a distant place in the mind: they are small joys, but are so profound that they even make me question that very sorrow.[22]

It is the pleasures and resonances of this 'familiar game' – small gestures, behaviours and joys repeated over time – that chimes with the characteristics of children's television attended to within this essay: the small gestures and pleasures nestled within a (televisual) experience of space and time.[23] The relation between care and television is also pertinent and resonant because, like the practice of care itself, television and television programming operate and are responded to on both a micro and a macro scale – experienced as intimate, personal and subjective but also, and often at the same time, recognized as a public good, as generators and representatives of a wider societal ethics. It is this oscillation between the micro and the macro that we attempt to capture through our attention to both textual detail and the rhythms of the programming and of the medium, illuminating the layered temporalities of television and care as both momentary and durational.

Here we return again to *Katie Morag* and travel, in line with the lyrics from the theme tune, 'far away across the ocean [and] over the sea to Struay'. This is a journey that is made at the opening of each episode. Accompanied by a tinkling piano riff and a Celtic musical arrangement is the image of Katie Morag skipping down a hillside meadow, with red curls,

white Aran jumper and tartan skirt (instantly familiar from Hedderwick's illustrations). Gesturing towards its status as an adaptation of an illustrated book, the opening sequence continues with a simple line drawn animation as a seagull flies across the ocean and towards the island, then over the bay where the inhabitants live to settle on a line of traditional white cottages. The animation transitions to the filmed image of the still bay as the sequence draws to a close. Smoke rises from the chimney-pots of the line of red-roofed cottages. In the foreground is the post office, where Katie Morag and her family live, with an old-fashioned bicycle leaning against its side wall. Other houses are dotted around the craggy bay, with the island's green hills in the distance and the silver sea stretching towards the horizon (figure 1). This is a selfconsciously idealized and nostalgic vision of Scotland's Western Isles and of a rural childhood.[24]

Seaside towns, villages and communities reoccur across children's television as sites for intergenerational encounters.[25] Southwold doubles for Sunnysands in *Grandpa in my Pocket*, Tobermory for *Balamory*, and the Yorkshire fishing village of Staithes is the location for *Old Jack's Boat*. Whilst arguably part of an iconography of landscape on British television that has been read as a 'nostalgic, "heritage" image of an "unspoilt Britain" entirely devoid of urban space or industrialization',[26] these locations also represent relatively unmediated spaces and places where particular movements – often associated with leisurely time – can be articulated. Tides and boats go in and out, visitors come and go, and island crossings are emphasized (the tension between 'authentic' and slow-paced island life and busy, 'metropolitan' mainland life is articulated through Katie Morag's very different grandmothers). Retired Jack, with his trusty Salty Dog, goes around and about the village, up and down cobbled streets, meeting and greeting its warm and friendly inhabitants. Likewise Katie Morag meanders back and forth between island adventures and near calamities. Outside of 'working age', both Jack and Katie can and do 'take their time with space'.

Our attention to spatiotemporal delay is drawn from Steven Connor. In an essay on 'fidgeting' he considers the nature of loops as opposed to a straight line. Loops, he argues, 'tarry, temporise, dilly dally, and in every way take their time with space'.[27] This looping is reminiscent of the back and forth of the television series and the mirroring of beginnings and endings. It is seen, for example, in the ocean journey of Iggle Piggle to and from the Night Garden that bookends *In The Night Garden* (CBeebies, 2007–09), which recalls the same movement of retreat and return taken by Max in Maurice Sendak's book *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), or the back and forth of the torch light between Katie and Grannie Island. At the end of each episode of *Katie Morag*, for instance, we also return to the beginning and to the same image of the bay at Struay – this time at night, as the moonlit waves softly roll in and out and an orange glow shines from the cottage windows (figure 2).

The expansive time of the very young and the old is not necessarily aligned in terms of the likelihood of boredom (though this may be the case incidentally); rather in these programmes it is a temporality manifest with opportunity and contingency. There is time 'enough' to meet with (happy) accidents, within which chance encounters with humans and animals, sticks and stones, wind and weather are fully realized and enjoyed. There is pleasure and absorption in 'the roundabout' and frequently time is occupied by the child or the older adult engaged in mundane operations of care; while narratives are not action-packed they may concern the finding of a lost scarf, some mislaid keys, a trip to give presents, a message to be delivered, or a story to be told. Older people and young children share a kind of agency here – they 'take their time' – often to the frustration of others embedded in a different mode of temporality.

The resistance of these narratives to the linearity of time passing is further underpinned by the way in which episodes within these series are structurally repetitive: beginnings and endings are echoed, while the actual episodes themselves may be repeated on

air, on demand or online. The pattern or rhythm of television, its 'ebb and flow',[28] therefore allows these television series (as opposed to film-based narratives such as *Boyhood*) to challenge the unidirectional movement or the aspiration of stories of childhood to be chronological and teleological and instead reimagines such narratives as simultaneously folding and unfolding, looping between times and spaces that pull together the experiences and tales of those at the 'opposite' ends of the life course.

The looping of narratives and repetition that resists linearity is not the same as 'binge viewing' and its desired immersion in a detailed story-world; rather its origin is instrumental, enabling care-givers to enforce (or enhance) everyday routines and periods of respite (such as naptime, bedtime or 'five minutes peace'). In tandem with this, the form of narrative satisfaction derived by those 'cared-for' by this kind of programming is not about the satiation of desire (character development or narrative resolution) but about the small pleasures established through the continual repetition of the same simple stories, characters and musical motifs, reflecting the mundane and necessary practices of care (washing, tidying, dressing, explaining, story-telling) that need doing 'again, again'.

While this process of looping and reiteration is explicit in the fictional series we have discussed so far, interestingly it also emerges in a recent episode of the CBBC series *My Life,* entitled 'Mr Alzheimer's and Me'. In this thirty-minute documentary, three children share their experience of loving and caring for grandparents suffering from various stages of dementia. Whilst not wanting to reassert the centrality of the dementia narrative to older adults (something that the fictional series do much to resist) in this context we do wish to assess this remarkable episode for the way in which it, too, demonstrably resists the narrative of development and decline and aligns the older adult and the child through a narrative marked by ebb and flow and the operations of care.

Nine-year-old Hope lives with her Nana (Mary) in Wales. In the first sequence in which we meet Hope she is lying in bed. With one eye on her grandmother, who is also going to bed, she calls across the landing, 'Nana take off your glasses'. Mary replies, 'Thank you pet, I'd forget my head if it wasn't for you'. As we continue our acquaintance with Hope and Mary, we see Hope care for, entertain and hug her Nana. In return her Nana caresses and laughs with Hope, and teaches her how to cook. Unfortunately, as Mary explains, 'Mr Alzheimer's' is encroaching on their relationship. In one particularly painful sequence, Mary becomes aware that Hope believes that they can 'defeat' Mr Alzheimer's and that her Nana will return to full health. In an intimate conversation conducted in the sunlit everyday of a suburban dining kitchen, Mary gently explains that this will not happen. Dismay, fear and desire flicker across Hope's face; she does not cry, and while we can be certain she has heard, she may be unwilling or unable to understand. By the end of the programme we see Mary (who is now, as she explains and as we can hear, losing her speech) write a letter to Hope, to help her remember 'everything she meant to me'. Hope receives the letter from Mary when they are sitting on a sandy beach, both looking out to sea, arms wrapped around each other. This is the final shot of the documentary. It chimes indirectly with an earlier sequence in which eleven-year-old Joshua presents his Grandfather with a 'memory box' filled with model spitfires, photographs of his Grandfather's wedding, his 'fancy' wedding tie and a 'selfie' of Joshua with his grandfather, taken just a few months before on the boy's last day of primary school. Poignantly, the Grandfather remembers his wedding and the tie but cannot recall the occasion for the photograph with his grandson. Initially, therefore, the sequences correspond to one another as they refer to 'gifts of memory' – a letter written to Hope's future and a box made by Joshua in the present to hold his Grandfather's memories safely into the future. A give and take that is not unidirectional, that is also not secure in its success (Joshua is sad when he realizes that recent memories are those that are most easily lost) but

done in each instance hopefully and with care. Mary's letter is hand-written, Joshua's box carefully covered and wrapped with his drawings of fighter planes. These gestures and the underpinning aesthetic is direct and effective: indeed, children's television remains one of the key genres in which the basic aspects of television's aesthetic character (its use of direct address, personalization, exposition and colourful graphics) are used routinely across both fiction and factual programming.

Intriguingly, the scenes are also similar in that they both take place near or by the sea and the beach. Whilst Joshua presents his memory box to his Grandfather inside what appears to be a hotel or restaurant lounge, the sequence as a whole takes place in Brighton (identified in exterior shots by the pier and by Joshua's commentary), and earlier scenes have shown Joshua pushing his Grandfather up the slope from the beach in his wheelchair. As the documentary was evidently shot in the summer months in the UK, it is probably entirely pragmatic that these key scenes between child and grandparent occur on or near the beach. Nonetheless, the sea's reoccurrence in this documentary – outside of a fictional context – emphasizes again how potent the beach and the sea are as symbols, and in this context we cannot ignore that the beach provides an environment whose essence is of a confusion between the end (of the land) and the beginning (of the sea). As a landscape that is marked by change, it is significant that these developments are iterative and incremental rather than dynamic and linear.

The beach and the sea as a site of liminality, liquidity and change recur frequently across many screen texts.[29] It is often a site for the uncanny rendering a pattern of return and for the blurring of the line between life and death (as, for example, in gothic television dramas *Whistle and I'll Come to You* [BBC, 1968; 2010] or in the recent series *Remember Me* [BBC, 2014]).[30] The pervasiveness of the beach and sea across such a wide range of dramatic forms must be related to their status as 'layered sites' that offer a series of contrasts: while

British seaside resorts have a long-established association with medicinal benefits for young and old, equally they are sites of pleasure and escape; and while subject to rapid expansion at the end of the nineteenth century, by the end of the twentieth century they were more commonly presented as symptomatic of erosion and decay. In all of these instances, however, they are, as Steve Allen suggests, places 'beyond the routines and landscapes of working life'.[31] More prosaically, we might also note that in the UK many seaside resorts have emerged as retirement sites (with many residential homes for the elderly often facing out to views of the sea), while at the same time they continue to serve as desirable locations for childhood/family day-trips or holidays. The seaside town – both naturally and culturally – therefore offers a landscape shared by children and older adults that is betwixt and between, a liminal space in which the future and the past may be held together. In the exchange of gifts, the shining of torches, the pushing of wheelchairs, or the close embrace of Mary and Hope, entwined and looking out to sea, a reciprocity between future(s) and past(s) is suggested (figure 3).

Within this programming we therefore see the playing out of an alternative understanding of the relationship between younger and older generations and a demonstration of the interdependence of individuals and their adherence to an ethics of care. In these examples, care and caring is not marginalized or devalued but placed centre-stage. Indeed, care is, in this alternative context, not individualistic but holistic – 'both a practice and a disposition'.[32] Wriggling free but not wholly disconnected from the 'proper' relations of care enshrined by contemporary society, where it is apparently prompted by biology (kinship), romance, property and authority, care that is demonstrated and enacted here occurs across and between generations, and by doing so it quietly confounds the naturalized but ideological narratives of ageing as development or decline. The 'young' and the 'old', the caregiver and care receiver, within this new framework of relationships are mutually reinforcing. Like Hope

and Mary's conversation across the landing at bedtime, or Katie and Grannie Island's torchlight give and take across the bay, they confirm the existence of one another: hopeful as well as vulnerable, tactical rather than strategic, wholly unimportant but very special.

This kind of television programming and the practices of care in which it participates are often overlooked in theoretical models interested in form and affect.[33] In the UK, public service television funding is also increasingly precarious in an economy and culture now firmly imbued with neoliberal principles and ethics. As television for children (in the UK and elsewhere) is often legitimated, and in part protected, through a professed desire to 'develop' and 'educate' younger audiences, it does so through reference to the concept and belief in a 'normative' subjectivity, something that we have specifically challenged here. To suggest, as we have done, that 'children' and 'old people' are not 'special' (that they are not, first and foremost, vulnerable and peculiar) is perhaps a dangerous proposition. Yet like Hope and Mary, or Katie and Grannie Island, we act hopefully and tactically, seeking to champion television's modes and practices of caring, while at the same time asserting our desire for a more expansive model of television viewership: one that can entertain simplicity as well as complexity; needing as well as wanting.

---

[1] These figures are preceded by characters such as 'Edie McCreadie' and 'Suzy Sweet' (who were older but perhaps not 'elderly'), from another series set within a seaside community, *Balamory* (CBeebies, 2002–05).

[2] The Intergenerational Learning Centre in Seattle is one such initiative, uniting senior citizens from the local community and care homes with preschool children. See <http://www.intergenerationallearningcenter.org/school.html>, accessed 29 March 2016.

[3] Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

[4] Paddy Scannell writes that 'things matter for us (no matter what), the ways in which they matter and the extent to which they do so, mark out the boundaries of our concerns', in *Radio, Television and Modern Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 144.

[5] This 'sense of care', David Oswell writes (albeit sceptically) in *Television, Childhood and the Home* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 21, is not unique to public service broadcasters but is apparent in the educational promises of a range of children's media producers.

[6] In contrast, Annemarie Mol states the value of a 'logic of care' as 'not a limited product but an ongoing process', in *The Logic of Care: Health and the Problem of Patient Choice* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 11.

[7] Jane Roscoe, 'Multi-platform event television: reconceptualizing our relationship with television', *The Communication Review*, no. 7 (2004), p. 366.

[8] Patricia Holland (with Hugh Chignell and Sherryl Wilson), *Broadcasting and the NHS in the Thatcherite 1980s: The Challenge to Public Service* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[9] Colin Leys, *Market-Driven Politics: Neo-Liberal Democracy and the Public Interest* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 34.

[10] Shirley Letwin, *An Anatomy of Thatcherism* (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 207.

[11] Eva Feder Kittay, 'The ethics of care, dependence and disability', *Ratio Juris*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2011), p. 55.

[12] Eva Feder Kittay (with Bruce Jennings and Angela A. Wasunna), 'Dependency, difference and the global ethic of longterm care', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2005), p. 453.

[13] See, for example: Jenny Hockey and Allison James, *Growing Up and Growing Old: Ageing and Dependency in the Life Course* (London: Sage, 1993); Allison James and Alan

Prout, 'Re-presenting childhood: time and transition in the study of childhood', in James and Prout (eds), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: Falmer Press, 1977), pp. 227–46; Nick Lee, *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2001); Erica Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (2nd edn) (London: Routledge, 2008); Emma Uprichard, 'Children as "being and becomings": children, childhood and temporality', *Children and Society*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2009), pp. 303–13; Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child: Or, Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

[14] Feder Kittay, 'The ethics of care', p. 54.

[15] Carol Mavor, 'Alicious objects: believing in six impossible things before breakfast; or reading Alice nostologically', *Photographies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2011), pp. 45–66.

[16] For recent work on preschool television that focuses on textual and textural detail, see, for example, Amy Holdsworth, 'Something special: pre-school television, care and the dis/abled child', *Journal of Popular Television*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2015), pp. 163–78, and Rachel Moseley, *Hand-Made Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[17] Nicky James, 'Care = organisation + physical labour + emotional labour', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1992), p. 496.

[18] See, for example: Arlie Russell Hothschild, *The Managed Heart* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1983); Nicky James, 'Emotional labour: skill and work in the social regulation of feelings', *Sociological Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, (1989).

[19] Annemarie Mol, Ingunn Moser and Jeannette Pols, 'Care: putting practice into theory', in Mol, Moser and Pols (eds), *Care in Practice: On Tinkering in Clinics, Homes and Farms* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), p. 10.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Eva Feder Kittay, 'When caring is just and justice is caring', in Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen K. Feder (eds), *The Subject of Care: Feminist Perspectives on Dependency* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p. 266.

[23] It is interesting to note that John Caughie, in his work on serial costume drama, has also employed the term 'small pleasures' to describe (via Naomi Schor's work on the feminist aesthetics of detail) the pleasure in observation, the ornamental and the everyday. These pleasures, like the spheres of care, are predominantly associated with the feminine. See John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 213–16.

[24] A childhood that distant Canadian cousin Donald John, in 'Katie Morag and the Family Tree' (series two, episode two), is desperate to nostalgically recapture.

[25] We also note Andrew Kotting's coastal travelogue *Gallivant* (1996), in which he travels with his intergenerational companions, his seven-year-old daughter Eden and eighty-five-year-old grandmother Gladys.

[26] Helen Wheatley, 'Beautiful images in spectacular clarity: spectacular television, landscape programming and the question of (tele)visual pleasure', *Screen*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2011), p. 235.

[27] Steven Connor, 'A philosophy of fidgets', talk given as part of the Liverpool Biennial, 17 February 2010, <http://stevenconnor.com/fidgets.html> accessed 29 March 2016.

[28] Amy Holdsworth, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[29] Perhaps one of the most famous (open) endings in art cinema is the 'freeze frame' of Francois Truffaut's boy protagonist (played by Antoine Doinel) on the beach at the end of *Les 400 Coups/400 Blows* (1959).

30 We also note the recent and very successful detective drama *Broadchurch* (ITV, 2013–), which centres on the murder of a child and the discovery of his body on an idyllic beach. Set in a very similar coastal town to many of the series we have referred to, the opening sequence of the first episode, in which a variety of characters (all essentially suspects) meet and greet one another, is uncannily like the regular encounters of 'Old Jack' with the inhabitants of his seaside village.

31 Steven Allen, 'British cinema at the seaside: the limits of liminality', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2008), p. 57.

32 Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 104.

33 For work on reality television in which care, intimacy or emotional labour emerge as an explicit concern for both participants and viewers, see, for example: Alexia Smit, 'Care, shame and intimacy: reconsidering the pleasure of plastic surgery television', *Camera Obscura,* vol. 29, no. 2 (2014), pp. 59–83; Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Helen Wood, Beverly Skeggs and Nancy Thumin, '"It's just sad": affect, judgement and emotional labour in "reality" television viewing', in Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows (eds), *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 135–50.