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# **Taking age out of play: children's animistic philosophising through a picturebook**

**Joanna Haynes and Karin Murriss**

## **Introduction**

In discussion about deconstruction with Helene Cixous and Nicholas Royle, Jacques Derrida inserts the idea of 'returns to childhood'.<sup>1</sup> Responding to Derrida, we propose the different move of 're-turning to child', on the basis of putting picturebooks, philosophy with children and posthumanism into entangled play with one another. The figuration of posthuman child disrupts the pervasive conception of temporality that takes development and progress as inevitable. We exemplify how the nature/culture binary modernist notion of progress is de(con)structed through children's animistic philosophising. Further, with Miranda Fricker's frame of epistemic injustice, we argue that prejudices about children's authority as knowers express onto-epistemic injustice in the evaluation of young children's philosophising and that these prejudices echo dominant adultist perspectives on animist epistemologies and ontologies. We adopt the position that philosophy begins with wonder. To illustrate the generative power of children's animated and animistic thinking, we turn again to material recorded by Joanna with a class of 4-7 year olds philosophising through a picturebook called *Corduroy*.

## **Posthumanism and child as ontological other**

The recent 'material' or 'ontological turn' has informed a paradigm shift taking account of the human and the discursive, as well as the more-than-human and the material: space, furniture,

atmosphere, breath, sound, (stuffed) animals and the video-camera that does the recording<sup>2</sup>. The posthuman reorientation draws in particular on Haraway, Barad, Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari. Their project is to philosophically reconfigure who and what counts as (fully) human and show why it matters. However, there is a remarkable silence about age as category of exclusion and childism in the posthumanism literature. Our work with children's literature<sup>3</sup> critically inserts "child" in Braidotti's list of 'missing peoples', whom Braidotti describes as 'real-life subjects whose knowledge never made it into any of the official cartographies'.<sup>4</sup> Thinking with Braidotti, the liberating ethical task *we* face, according to her, is to help turn painful experiences of missing peoples' 'inexistence into generative relational encounters and knowledge production'.<sup>5</sup> We do that by stretching Braidotti's 'we' to include young children through Miranda Fricker's notion of epistemic injustice (the concept of 'onto-epistemic injustice'<sup>6</sup>). As groundwork, we disentangle some important conceptual threads for this exploration of children's animistic philosophising.

What drives western humanist binaries (between science and religion, matter and meaning, 'this world' and 'other world', alive and dead, human and nonhuman) is what Val Plumwood calls the 'hyperseparation' between culture/nature.<sup>7</sup> Posthumanism is a plea to rethink relationality *without* the Nature/Culture binary - as a *sympoietic* system. Sympoiesis, Haraway explains 'is a simple word; it means "making-with"', a 'thinking-with' and implies that human and nonhuman bodies do not move between *points* in space and time, but are always 'on the move'.<sup>8</sup> The posthuman ontology of a sympoietic system disrupts the Nature/Culture binary, reconfigures the kind of subjectivity on which modern schooling has been built and brings into existence the figuration of posthuman child.<sup>9</sup> It also disrupts the pervasive (adult) conception of temporality that takes development and progress as inevitable.

## De(con)struction and the figuration of posthuman child

Derrida derides the ways in which deconstruction passes as a ‘kind of linguisticist mania’ in some quarters. Rather, he says in an interview that

deconstruction began by suspecting the authority of language, of verbal language, and even the trace, which is not yet, which is not language, which is not verbatim, which is not human, so, the child, *infans*, is not man. *Infans* is what is not yet man. Hence the question of the animal which is everywhere, no? Between the child and the animal, there are obviously all the links you imagine. Deconstruction is animal from this point of view. It is childlike and animal-like.<sup>10</sup>

With Derrida, we embrace the methodological possibilities of deconstruction as childlike and acknowledge the need to break open progressivist notions of child. Karen Barad offers a political and material vision of history outside the temporality of progress through her reading of Walter Benjamin’s take on destruction and construction. Despite Derrida’s distancing from Benjamin’s insistence that destruction is the condition of the possibility of construction, Barad takes de(con)struction further through her relational- materialist analysis.<sup>11</sup>

Benjamin speaks of the methodological need to ‘blast open the continuum of history’, a kind of *destruction* from an explosive device that is an essential ingredient for the possibility of ‘construction’<sup>12</sup>. What *flashes up*, crystallises, in the breaking up of the continuum of history as a political act is ‘a material de(con)struction of the continuum of history’.<sup>13</sup> Such de(con)struction brings the ‘energetics of the past into the present and vice versa’.<sup>14</sup> And here the potential for

justice comes to the fore.<sup>15</sup> Breaking down ideologies of progress and the unilinear direction of history, justice is not about human-centred hope projected into an imagined future, but ‘the potential for justice [that] exists in the thick-now of the present moment - what Benjamin calls “now-time” (*Jetztzeit*)’.<sup>16</sup> Karen Barad explains the political and methodological implications:

The radical political potential that exists in the thick-now of this moment requires thinking time anew - diffracting the past through the present moment, like the play of light inside a crystal.<sup>17</sup>

De(con)struction ruptures and blasts open the temporality of a continuous and unilinear unfolding of children’s abilities and capacities in terms of universal stages and sequential age-bound phases they supposedly have to develop through. Unlike the clock time of developmentalism, in the thick-now of each moment and threaded through each person *is* already their situated childhood as well as their future and the present – ‘times are bleeding through one another’<sup>18</sup>.

Developmentalism works as a theoretical justification to treat children as intellectual and emotional primitives. A good example of this, is adults’ dismissiveness of young children’s animistic thinking (see below), that is, children’s apparent inability and immaturity to distinguish between what is alive and what is dead matter or do “proper” philosophy.<sup>19</sup>

Posthumanism reconfigures child (and adult) as always already in human and more-than-human company: ‘cells, atoms, wind, fibers, dust, metal, skin, ant legs, soil, paper, government,

concepts, policies, language, touch, atmosphere, and so forth'.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the posthuman reconfiguration of the subject as *part of* and *with* the world and not "in" it (as Newton thought), is already evident in animistic perspectives. Tim Ingold explains animism as a condition of being in the world rather than a belief about the world. He writes 'The animacy of the lifeworld, in short, is not the result of an infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but is rather ontologically prior to their differentiation'.<sup>21</sup>

What 'flashes up' through the figure of posthuman child is what Benjamin would regard as a release of 'the enormous energy of history' as it blasts away developmentalism by doing justice to the crystallisation of past-present-future in 'now-time'. Rupturing unilinear time and the Newtonian notion of space-as-container, the explosive methodology of de(con)struction expresses the subject as an unbounded sympoietic system. Understanding child as a human/nonhuman entanglement helps to move away from deficit discourses about child and childhood as it *decenters* child as a *being* (with a stable personality, characteristics and essence) whose *age* determines her abilities. The shift in subjectivity is not a denial that there are individual children who exist but the reconfiguration resists erasures between past and futures. The past and the future are always already threaded through the present - childhood is not something adults leave behind. Thus we focus on all the *relations* child is part of, material and social, and not on the 'individual' child as we illustrate through our re-turning to an episode of young children's philosophising.<sup>22</sup> Central in both the text and film renditions of the picturebook that provokes enquiry is the character of an animated toy bear, a bear that moves and is also moved to enquiry, desire and action. In the picturebook the animation emerges through a series of drawings intra-acting with text and readers; in the film through the enlivened body of a toy teddy bear, movement, music, affect. The ontological turn makes adults in the west think

differently about objects and whether matter is alive or dead. Both animism and the posthumanism that follows and returns to animism, make room for a re-evaluation of young children's animistic thinking and taking their philosophical wonderings seriously.

### **Playful animistic philosophising in communities of enquiry**

In his book *Making*, Ingold<sup>23</sup> writes that every living organism is a site of infestation, it is not a thing that moves, it is rather 'composed in movement' and 'fundamentally animate' (93). He describes animacy as a dance (100) and he suggests that animacy is an opening, whereas embodiment is bent on closure. Through his enquiry on making, he argues that we are not packaged but moving and moved, corresponding with things around us – we are our bodies but we are not 'wrapped up' in them (like Haraway's *sympoiesis*). He describes the body as a tumult of unfolding activity – something to think from rather than about (94) and that things can exist and persist only because they leak (95). Reflecting on the examples of artist Andy Goldsworthy's throwing of clay and the flying of kites, he writes that these relationships are 'not so much the outward effect of embodied agency as the propulsion of animate being as it spills out into the world' (104). Ingold is interested in enquiry-making as an affective relationship of moving and being moved and this chimes with our sense of the movement of children's philosophising. Our interest in children's animistic philosophising has grown out of our work on picturebooks as philosophical texts, our broader scholarship in philosophy of childhood, Philosophy with Children (P4C)<sup>24</sup>, and our participation in the international P4C community. P4C has sometimes been described as a *movement*, which helps to describe how P4C works through the opening of spaces for creating communities of philosophical enquiry. The term "movement" refers to

physical, cultural and political actions and collectives. To be moved is to be taken to a different or enlarged place of thinking, and to be affected, emotionally, physically, spiritually or intellectually. The term movement speaks to these wider reverberations and acknowledges the creative opportunities and animated discussions afforded through the pedagogy of community of enquiry. In this paper we take the idea of P4C and movement further, and consider the connections between philosophical wonder and animation. In the context of practices of P4C, we are particularly interested in the relationships between authors, readers and the power of particular picturebooks to generate animated philosophical play and animistic thinking - an exploration of a philosophy that embraces qualities of liveliness and relationality to all matter.

Our innovation and experimentation with P4C as an age-transgressive practice calls into question many assumptions about age: it engages children (including very young ones) in kinds of thinking that have traditionally been reserved for adults and it proposes that adults who want to philosophise could benefit by re-turning to child/hood and becoming more childlike in their thinking.

Picturebooks are central to this enquiry and as post-age, philosophical texts have brought these ideas and experiences into being.<sup>25</sup> They can constitute a kind of curriculum for intra-generational education. In humans, play is most often associated with the early part of life, with being childlike. The concept of “childlikeness” has been a focus of extensive discussion in the field of P4C. Through consideration of qualities such as playfulness, transgression and unrepeatability, that seem to keep philosophy open and alive, debate in the field of P4C has opened up not only the notion of ‘children as philosophers’ but also ‘philosophers as children’.<sup>26</sup>



However, in the P4C field, young children's philosophising tends to be compared with that of adult philosophers in order to be credible, or to count as "real" philosophy.<sup>27</sup> For example, in his review of Matthews' *Philosophy of the Young Child (1980)*, Matthew Lipman explains that young children's thinking involves 'crude puzzlement and fresh wonder' by raising similar questions as adult philosophers about the meaning of concepts – everyday language that non-philosophers tend to take for granted.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Lipman also observes that children's philosophising pushes at the boundaries of what counts as philosophy; although children might be less likely to generalise or formulate rules. After all, he observes, 'children do not establish the priorities'.<sup>29</sup>

Children's philosophical wonderings can be as brief as 'pre-Socratic utterances' or like 'the parables and myths of Platonic and Eastern philosophy'.<sup>30</sup> Gareth Matthews argues that children do not only ask the kinds of sophisticated questions that are challenging for the most reflective of adults, but their playful enquiries can also disrupt the binary logic of (adult)Western metaphysics. He writes:

Stories and nursery rhymes actually encourage children to think animalistically (objects and forces are alive and have intentions, just as people do), though they are also expected to grow out of such ways of thinking after they go to school.<sup>31</sup>

The animalistic idea that objects are alive, speak and move are of course common themes in stories for young children, they are introduced by adults, but a contradiction emerges when children respond to these themes. Whilst literature for children and adults alike often incorporate

animism, children's animistic thinking is often dismissed as 'cute', 'magical' and expressive of a limited and distorted understanding of the world. It doesn't count as real knowledge. Since the 19th century, animism is negatively characterised as "childish". As Edward Taylor puts it:

He who collects when there was still personality to him in posts and sticks, chairs, and toys, may well understand how the infant philosophy of mankind could extend the notion of vitality to what modern science recognizes as lifeless things.<sup>32</sup>

In this paper, we bring child and Braidotti's new people, 'non-human agents' (organic *and* '[so-called] inorganic'<sup>33</sup>), together. We argue that playful animistic philosophising is not an immature, underdeveloped form of enquiry that needs to progress into more rational, abstract and sophisticated argumentation.

Postcolonial children's literature scholar Alice Curry points out that for West African writers, "organic" is not a separate category to be labelled as, for example, "environment" or "natural world", but is the 'bedrock of the human imaginary'.<sup>34</sup> Although invisible to the human eye, the stories of West African traditional cultures speak of vital forces animating all earthly creations whether alive or dead, with 'porous boundaries between the earthly and spiritual, living and dead, human and nonhuman'. Curry points out that the 'stumbling block for many western cultures' to caring about the earth is the nature/culture binary that is successfully deconstructed by an 'animistic mode of being-in-the-world', often through characters in stories with hybrid identities.<sup>35</sup> In-between identities make it possible to be neither one, nor the other, and both at the same time (e.g. alive and dead). Drawing on Val Plumwood's concept of 'traitor', Curry argues

that such a character has a ‘view from both sides’ and is ‘able to adopt multiple perspectives and locations’.<sup>36</sup> Hybrid identities (like a moving teddy bear in our example below), can magically give ‘voice to, a specifically ecological other’ and precisely because they do not belong to the human world ‘propel protagonists into solidarity with the nonhuman world’.<sup>37</sup> Brian Massumi makes an interesting observation when he suggests that we should become aware of the ‘all-too-human’ of the political and see our own anthropomorphism not only in the way we think about animals, but also about humans—another example of our ‘vanity regarding our assumed species identity’, based on our claimed sole possession of ‘language, thought and creativity’.<sup>38</sup>

Elsewhere, we explore Massumi’s fascinating exploration of play and how it involves putting the human back on the animal continuum, without erasing difference between human animals and nonhuman animals, but resisting prioritising identity.<sup>39</sup> For example, it is often argued that what children like to do “naturally” is to immerse in fantasy play which imitates the “real” adult world. Children often transgress boundaries between animate and inanimate, and therefore - claim cognitive developmentalists - they are not yet sufficiently developed. Being unable to make the distinction between reality and fantasy is typically regarded as symptomatic of a particular stage of cognitive development and note that such an analysis is only possible *after* these boundaries between real and fantasy are drawn.

**What is matter and why does it matter?**

In an interview, Karen Barad talks about the resilience of the animate/inanimate dualism ‘that stops animacy cold in its tracks, leaving rocks, molecules, particles and other inorganic entities on the side of those who are denied even the ability to die, despite the fact that particles have finite lifetimes’.<sup>40</sup> Language has instilled a deep mistrust of matter, figuring it as mute, passive, immutable.<sup>41</sup> Language and discourse have positioned “us” adult humans as thinkers above or outside the (material) world, and with that same move have distanced us, “fully-human” adults, from both matter and child (and other so-called “illiterates”). But in fact, Barad argues, matter is dynamic and an active participant in the world’s becoming.<sup>42</sup> We make the case that this posthuman orientation flattens the playing field somewhat ontologically by queering binaries that include and exclude: adult/child, human/human, animate/inanimate, although it would be more accurate to call the ontology *folded*, or even fractal, because ‘things’ are not ‘things’ in the first place.<sup>43</sup>

In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett offers a version of vital materiality that can take shape *again* in later life and is a re-minder of ‘childhood experiences of a world populated by animate things rather than passive objects’.<sup>44</sup> She uses the term ‘thing power’ to express the idea that vitality is neither a separate force that inhabits things, nor is a thing a “container” of power, but rather matter is “alive” because of its capacity to animate and produce effects. This is not a childlikeness to arrogantly reject as “primitive” and pre-rational, or to grow out of or grow up from, but offers a lively world in which humans and non-humans are all immersed and emerging.

Stories too emerge in many forms; through animation, they materialise and take on a liveliness. In our exploration of children philosophising through the picturebook *Corduroy*<sup>45</sup>, we re-open

the concept of play and the animated in/between of play and thing. In using the terms “play” or “playful”, we question ageist conceptions of who or what can be playful, and we also assert that play is a significant and vital form of enquiry. We try to convey the dynamic, elusive, meandering and aeonic nature of playfulness. We endorse Rautio’s and Winston’s notion of play as both a means and an end and their account of human and nonhuman things in play ‘as intra-active – as players becoming capable of knowing in a variety of social and material relations comprising play(ful) encounters’.<sup>46</sup> We take age out of play.

Jane Bennett’s ethical ‘vital materialism’ puts humanity on a level and interdependent with the rest of the universe (life and matter are not separable) and while “vitalism” has a long history in western philosophy, Bennett makes the important distinction of not separating inert, passive material from a separate divine or mysterious force or spirit. All matter is actually moving and vibrating with energy.<sup>47</sup> So for Bennett, a levelling out of the assumed hierarchies of existence that pervade our inherited notion of existence depends on the recognition of the power of things. She insists that things are connected in mutually affecting relationships that include both the human and the non-human. The congregational agency of things (which includes us) produces new and different arrangements of energetic matter. It involves diluting and shifting the agency of the foregrounded human portrayed as central and “against” a wider “backdrop” of the nonhuman, a kind of “scenery” for human actors – rather, via congregational agency, ‘a wealth of agential entities surface’.<sup>48</sup>

### **Adult misconceptions, Ageism and onto-epistemic injustice**

We put to work Miranda Fricker's notion of epistemic injustice in order to 're-animate thought'.<sup>49</sup> For Miranda epistemic injustice is done when people are wronged specifically in their capacity as a *knower*.<sup>50</sup> Knowledge is offered by the savage/child, but not heard by the adult, because of identity prejudice (ageism) and solidified beliefs about what counts as real knowledge. This kind of prejudice is in turn related to conceptions of child and childhood and the stereotyping involved.<sup>51</sup> Fricker argues that many attributes assigned to historically powerless groups are often associated with a lack of 'competence or sincerity or both' (32), and the attributes she mentions also apply to child historically (32) on the basis of their very *being* child – hence Murrin's phrase 'onto-epistemic injustice'.<sup>52</sup>

We take up the idea of epistemic injustice to explore how prejudices about animistic philosophising express onto-epistemic injustice when children's thinking is side-lined as 'magical', pre-rational and mere fantasy, a form of thinking to be left behind in the process of growing up and to which we propose instead a re-turn. In our exploration of picturebooks as philosophical texts, we have noted that authorillustrators<sup>53</sup> who also blur such boundaries offer particularly rich opportunities for animated philosophical play and these qualities of being and becoming are reflected in our choice of children's author for this paper. In a lecture about his work on his website<sup>54</sup>, Don Freeman says:

I have not revealed anything about why I write these books for children! Maybe I have resisted speaking of the reason simply because I am not sure why except that it seems

impossible for me to draw the line between so-called reality and fantasy. Even if I could draw the line I would not want to.

We are taken with Freeman's sense of the impossibility of drawing this line and that playfulness and freedom in the story-making process are integral to its being credible. Freeman talks about the integrity of believability in a story and how, by "losing himself" in a world he is creating, the believability of the story can emerge – but this process is precarious, and the "wrong" word or image can destroy the credibility of the story. There is the sense that this "world" unfolds through his artistic and material immersion in it:

Speaking of ideas, I would like to say that in my experience, ideas seem mainly to come from things that I observed, overheard, or that actually happened to me. In many cases I have translated these ideas into a world of my own invention, usually using animals as protagonists. They seem to keep me from being too personal or specific. Children (I count myself as one) tend to relate easily to animal characters, or so I have been told.

Freeman's choice of nonhuman characters as protagonists in his stories is vital to the openings they offer. To illustrate this, we now re-turn to philosophical enquiries by one group of children exploring Don Freeman's animated picturebook *Corduroy*. These episodes were recorded by Joanna in 1995 in a small primary school in a rural area of the UK. A good number of children seemed to become very absorbed, perhaps enchanted, expressing their enjoyment and asking to repeatedly re-visit the film version of the story. We both felt doubts and discomfort about whether this was a "sentimental" story and we are uneasy about sentimentality and its tendency

to otherise child, reassert a fundamental difference and adult/child binary. We have written about these issues and their implications elsewhere.<sup>55</sup>

### **Ever more entangled re-turning to Corduroy**

Here we turn to Corduroy and the animated thinking that emerges through the entanglement of authorillustrator, the liveliness of the book, its text and imagery, the film of the book, the video player, the children's dialogue and our involvement. In our re-turning we have learned more about Don Freeman's life, corresponded with his son Roy, held our own animated conversations walking on the moors in April, dug out the yellowing transcripts of children's conversations from their dusty box in Joanna's shed. During our writing of this paper in early 2019, we discovered that an exhibition at New York City Museum, City for Corduroy<sup>56</sup>, was being held to celebrate this work of children's literature and the life and varied artistic works of its authorillustrator, his connections with the city and what Corduroy has brought to the place and people. We have read the Tweets<sup>57</sup> from visitors online, looked at photos of children and adults entering the lifesize world of Corduroy created in the exhibition, explored the enduring popularity of the 'teddy bear' and the story of an American President, and so on.

Don Freeman's popular and classic work *Corduroy* was first published in 1968. As an artist, Freeman appreciates the diversity of styles, inventiveness and freedom in the picturebook form and he has taken full advantage of this freedom. Corduroy depicts a seemingly overlooked teddy bear in green overalls in the toy section of a large US department store. It opens with the image of a young girl, her eyes alighting on the bear. While her mother comments dismissively 'he doesn't look new', Lisa identifies the green-trousered bear as the one she has always wanted.



While the encounter with Lisa and her mother makes Corduroy aware of his missing button and not-newness, it also moves him to recover the button. When the store lights are turned off at closing time, Corduroy becomes animated and embarks on a nocturnal investigation. In the process, he finds himself doing other things he has always wanted to do, like climbing a mountain (using the escalator), living in a palace and sleeping in a bed (the large furniture department).

Causing disturbance while trying to pull a button from a mattress, he is arrested in a beam of torchlight and resumes a state of inanimation. He is picked up by the night watchman and put back on a shelf in the toy section. The following day, Lisa returns to collect him with her pocket money. She replaces his missing button and names him Corduroy. In her family's apartment, he has found home and he and Lisa have both found friendship.

In this picturebook, Freeman 'animates' Corduroy through the narrative, the movements between fantasy and reality, child and adult gazes, his expressive illustrative techniques and the intraplay between text and images. The use of pen and colour-wash contrasts of night and day, natural light, darkness, shadow and the beam of the torch create atmosphere and suspense. The small size and childlike stature and movements of the bear in the scaled up "domestic" setting of a 1960s department store communicate the courage of his quest for a button and for a place to belong and fulfil his needs and wishes. Corduroy is animated only when not being watched by adults and this mystery or subversion is echoed in children's conversations about the bear's movements that we note below. The adults (sales person, security guard and parent) seem to be

maintaining the status quo, things-as-they-are, in the narrative, whereas Corduroy and Lisa both instigate change and different possibilities - they are allies and they know better.

A film version of the same story made in 1984 by Weston Woods depicts a department store set and human actors playing the shop staff, Lisa and her mother, whilst Corduroy is played by an animated toy bear, who moves his body much like a young infant does when facing things made for adult proportions. He says nothing. His silence is somehow telling. The soundtrack plays a part in the animation and unfolding of suspense. Corduroy's search to find a button to replace the one he is missing is more extended in the film than in the book. The film plays with the concept and the thing "button" as Corduroy experiments with the mechanism for starting and stopping a toy train, pulls a stopper that inflates a rubber dinghy in the camping section of the store, and tries to pull the button off a mattress in the furniture section. The pursuit of the button is also something taken up by some children in their responses. In the film, Corduroy appears more actively subversive, adventurous and evading the beam of the security guard's torchlight. He and Lisa's quest in the face of the various adults' maintenance of the existing order adds to the draw of this visual text.

Reading the transcripts of recorded dialogues , we notice simultaneous lines of enquiry. And now casting our eyes over these lines of print on mottled sheets of A4 paper, the lines of enquiry become stringlike. They are ripples flowing through the text and tides of dialogue. Here these lines have been re-created as a series of waves:

A WAVE - CORDUROY MOVING:

I found it strange when the girl hugged the bear and when the girl was hugging the bear he moved his head....

Why did the bear get off the shelf and walk?

Bears can't climb up walls...

Bears can't normally walk...

Bears never move...

The man was there

ANOTHER WAVE – TEDDIES MOVE WHEN YOU ARE NOT LOOKING OR UNDER COVER OF NIGHT:

Teddy bears when you go out of your room they can move...

No they can't

It's not real

It is really dark but I didn't notice that

They don't move when you are in the room...they don't want you to know they can move

Every time I go out of my room and come back in to play something has moved...

When you are asleep I think bears move as well because every time I wake up in the morning something has gone...

One night when I woke up in the morning my blue teddy had disappeared and I looked everywhere and I couldn't find it anywhere

When I'm out my teddy bear runs off and goes for a picnic and I can't find him...

I left my teddy in my room and she moved all the way to the car...

My teddy bears talk to me in the night

When I go to sleep my teddies climb over and cuddle me

## EXPLANATIONS

Maybe the teddy didn't want anybody, the owner to see them moving...

Somebody moved it...

The mum or dad might move them...

My mum can't move the teddies cos she only goes in to change the bed

Somebody put magic dust on the teddies

A fairy might be coming in your room and making them move

All this talk about teddies moving in the night, they might be moving in the day...

## KEYHOLE EPISTEMOLOGY

I always look through the keyhole so I can see them moving

I looked through my keyhole so I could see them moving

They keep coming out of my wardrobe

We are not talking about the film.....

I see their tummies go up and down when I cuddle them

Their tummies and their eyes start to move slowly

They're breathing

## A BIGGER WAVE – TEDDIES BLASTING OUT

He went in the park with my bed

He wanted to go on the slide

My teddy drives the car

My teddy was driving a motorbike

My teddies were playing in the mud

I've forgotten

They are very bored and they want to find something to do

They are angry

They want attention

They don't like you so they run away

WATCHING AGAIN DIFFERENCES

The video didn't want to show it, it missed it out

Because it didn't like it

Because it went a bit wrong

It might have been lazy

The video player went on holiday

The video player might have died

It might have went into space...to have a picnic on the world.

## **Flashpoints**

Fricker's framework for thinking about injustice in epistemic relations has been particularly helpful for theorising the dis-ease of subjecting children's enquiries to prejudicial forms of analysis. Unpacking hermeneutic forms of epistemic injustice she argues that a society and its

cultural discourses can be deficient in the hermeneutic resources needed to respond fairly to particular categories of knowers, contributing to their exclusion. It also explains how epistemic injustice becomes systematised and naturalised, for example in school curricula, teaching materials and in pedagogic relations. Children's ideas are dismissed on the grounds that they come from children, *and* when they do not conform to established rules and practices of a subject, such as philosophy. Whilst P4C sets out to challenge many prejudicial ideas about children and their capacities as thinkers, the western philosophical tradition and methods are often implicit within the materials, methods, forms of training and practice of promoting critical thinking associated with P4C. The "movement" of P4C embraces both the contradictions and the possibilities of the encounter between philosophy and childhood and these are wonderfully generative flashpoints. We have exemplified such flashpoints in our paper.

In our research through Philosophy with Children, we have been seeking to adopt post-qualitative forms of enquiry and Jane Bennett's "thing power", as well as Tim Ingold's articulation of "animacy" and of "making enquiry" have resonated with us, including in our practices of teaching, research and writing. Ingold suggests that making does not depict a project that goes from idea through material to artefact but making as a kind of growth, change and emergence; making as a confluence of forces and materials, producing something new. For us as educators and researchers in childhood, picturebooks and philosophy with children, what emerges from this exploration of movement and animation is a sympoietic epistemology of learning with, rather than about, the world.

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<sup>1</sup> **Derrida Cixous and Royle** REFERENCE TO BE PROVIDED BY THE EDITORS

<sup>2</sup> Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre, 'Post-qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26:6 (2013), 629-633; Elizabeth St. Pierre, 'Writing post qualitative inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry* 24:9 (2018), 603-609; Naza Snaza and John A. Weaver, J.A. (eds), *Posthumanism and Educational Research* (New York and London, Routledge, 2015); Hillevi Lenz Taguchi and Elizabeth St. Pierre, 'Using Concept as Method', *Educational and Social Science Inquiry Qualitative Inquiry* 23:9 (2017), 643-648; Carol A. Taylor and Christina Hughes, *Posthuman Research Practices in Education* (Basingstoke, England, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016); Karin Murriss and Joanna Haynes (eds), *Literacies, Literature and Learning: Reading Classrooms Differently* (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the research project *Decolonizing Early Childhood: Critical Posthumanism in Higher Education Project* (DECD). This research project was funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa between 2016-2018 and is still ongoing. It has its own website ([www.decolonizingchildhood.org](http://www.decolonizingchildhood.org)) and Facebook page.

<sup>4</sup> Rosi Braidotti, 'A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities', *Theory, Culture and Society* 0: 0 (2018), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Braidotti, 'A theoretical framework', 21.

<sup>6</sup> Murriss fabricated the notion of ontoepistemic injustice through a diffractive reading Miranda Fricker's work.

<sup>7</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism: attentive interactions in the sentient world, *Environmental Humanities* 3 (2013), p.94.

<sup>8</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016), 58.

<sup>9</sup> Karin Murriss, *The Posthuman Child: Educational Transformation through Philosophy with Picturebooks* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> **Derrida Cixous and Royle** SEE COMMENT 1

<sup>11</sup> Karen Barad, 'What Flashes Up: Theological-Political-Scientific Fragments' in Catherine Keller and Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Entangled Worlds: Religion, Science, and New Materialisms* (New York, Fordham University, 2017), p 77, footnote 7.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin quoted in Barad, 'What flashes up', 22.

<sup>13</sup> Barad, 'What flashes up', 23.

<sup>14</sup> Barad, 'What flashes up', 23.

<sup>15</sup> Barad explicitly refers to Jacques Derrida's notion of 'historiality' as a more appropriate term than 'historicity' to indicate that time is an 'operator, not a parameter'. In Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.

(Durham, Duke University Press, 2007), 438 footnote 84; Barad's idea that identity is performed,

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rather than given builds on Derrida's notion of performativity and after him Judith Butler's, see Barad, *MUH*, 413footnote39.

<sup>16</sup> Barad, 'What flashes up', 21.

<sup>17</sup> Barad, 'What flashes up', 22.

<sup>18</sup> Karen Barad, 'Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness: On the Im/Possibilities of Living and Dying in the Void' in Matthias Fritsch, Philippe Lynes and David Wood (eds) *Eco-Deconstruction. Derrida and Environmental Philosophy* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2018), 220.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Mereweather refers to the Western abnegation of animism's origins in nineteenth century anthropology which categorised human cultures as either 'primitive' or 'cultured' and she describes how the highly influential psychologist Jean Piaget also associated animism with young children's pre-rational and primitive thought, a view that has dominated discourses of child development and early education. In: Jane Mereweather, 'Listening with Young Children: enchanted animism of trees, rocks, clouds (and other things)', *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 27: 2 (2019), 233-250.

<sup>20</sup> See: *The Posthuman Child Manifesto* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikN-LGhBawQ>.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London, Routledge, 2011), 68.

<sup>22</sup> Joanna Haynes, *Listening as a Critical Practice: Learning from Philosophy with Children* (PhD thesis submitted for examination to University of Exeter, 2007).

; Joanna Haynes and Karin Murriss, *Picturebooks, Pedagogy and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge Research in Education Series, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture* (London, Routledge, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Philosophy for Children as coined by Lipman.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Haynes and Karin Murriss, 'Intra-Generational Education: imagining a post-age pedagogy', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49:10 (2017), 971-983; Murriss and Haynes, *LLL*.

<sup>26</sup> David Granger and Maughn Gregory, 'John Dewey on Philosophy and Childhood', *Education and Culture: The Journal of the John Dewey Society* 28:2 (2012),1-25.

<sup>27</sup> Karin Murriss, 'Can Children Do Philosophy?', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34: 2 (2000), 261-279.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Lipman 'Hearing Children's Conversation'. Review of Gareth B. Matthews. *Philosophy and the Young Child* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), *Harvard Educational Review* 51:3 (1982), 348.

<sup>29</sup> Lipman, 'Hearing', 351.

<sup>30</sup> Lipman, 'Hearing', 351.

<sup>31</sup> Gareth Bernard Matthews (Undated, after 1984), 'Children's Thinking' in Lauren S. Bahr, Bernard Johnston, Louise A Bloomfield (eds), *Collier's Encyclopedia*. New York, Macmillan, n.d.), 226H-226J.



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- <sup>32</sup> Edward Taylor quoted in Mary-Jane, ‘The Matter with Pantheism: On Shepherds and Goat-Gods and Mountains and Monsters’, in Keller and Rubenstein. *Entangled Worlds*, 174.
- <sup>33</sup> See, Barad in the only correct published version of her paper *On Touching - The Inhuman That Therefore I am* she acknowledges. See (footnote 3): <https://www.diaphanes.fr/titel/on-touching-the-inhuman-that-therefore-i-am--v1-1--3075>
- <sup>34</sup> Alice Curry ‘Traitorousness, Invisibility and Animism: An Ecocritical Reading of Nnedi Okorafor's West African Novels for Children’, *International Research in Children's Literature* 7:1 (2014), 38.
- <sup>35</sup> Curry, ‘Traitorousness’, 39.
- <sup>36</sup> Curry, ‘Traitorousness’, 38.
- <sup>37</sup> Curry, ‘Traitorousness’, 39.
- <sup>38</sup> Brian Massumi, *What Animals Teach Us about Ethics* (Durham, Durham University Press, 2014), 3.
- <sup>39</sup> Haynes and Murriss, ‘Intra-Generational Education’.
- <sup>40</sup> Barad in interview with Malou Juelskjaer and Nete Schwennesen, ‘Intra-active entanglements: an interview with Karen Barad’ *Kvinder, Koen og Forskning* 21:1-2 (2012), 10-23.
- <sup>41</sup> Barad, *MUH*.
- <sup>42</sup> Barad, *MUH*, 136.
- <sup>43</sup> Keller and Rubenstein, *Entangled Worlds*, 2.
- <sup>44</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Economy of Things* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010).
- <sup>45</sup> Don Freeman, *Corduroy* (Harmondsworth, Picture Puffins, Penguin, 1976).
- <sup>46</sup> Pauliina Rautio and Joseph Winston (2015) Things and children in play–improvisation with language and matter. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36:1 (2015), 15.
- <sup>47</sup> Bennett, *Vital Matter*, 55.
- <sup>48</sup> Pauliina Rautio, P. (2013). Children who carry stones in their pockets: on autotelic material practices in everyday life. *Children's Geographies* 11:4 (2013), 397.
- <sup>49</sup> Ingold, *Being Alive*.
- <sup>50</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).
- <sup>51</sup> Karin Murriss, ‘The epistemic challenge of hearing child’s voice’, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32: 3 (2013), 245–259.
- <sup>52</sup> Murriss, *The Posthuman Child*.
- <sup>53</sup> A term we coin to convey the intra-active process of drawing/writing that is particularly characteristic of the best picturebook creators.
- <sup>54</sup> Don Freeman <https://donfreeman.info/about-don/dons-lecture/> accessed 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.
- <sup>55</sup> Haynes and Murriss, *PPP*.
- <sup>56</sup> City of New York Museum 2019
- <sup>57</sup> <https://twitter.com/hashtag/CityforCorduroy>