

Philosophical enquiry and autism: story/ing/ied bags of unexpected human and more-than-human encounters in speech-language therapy and classroom spaces



Sumaya Babamia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

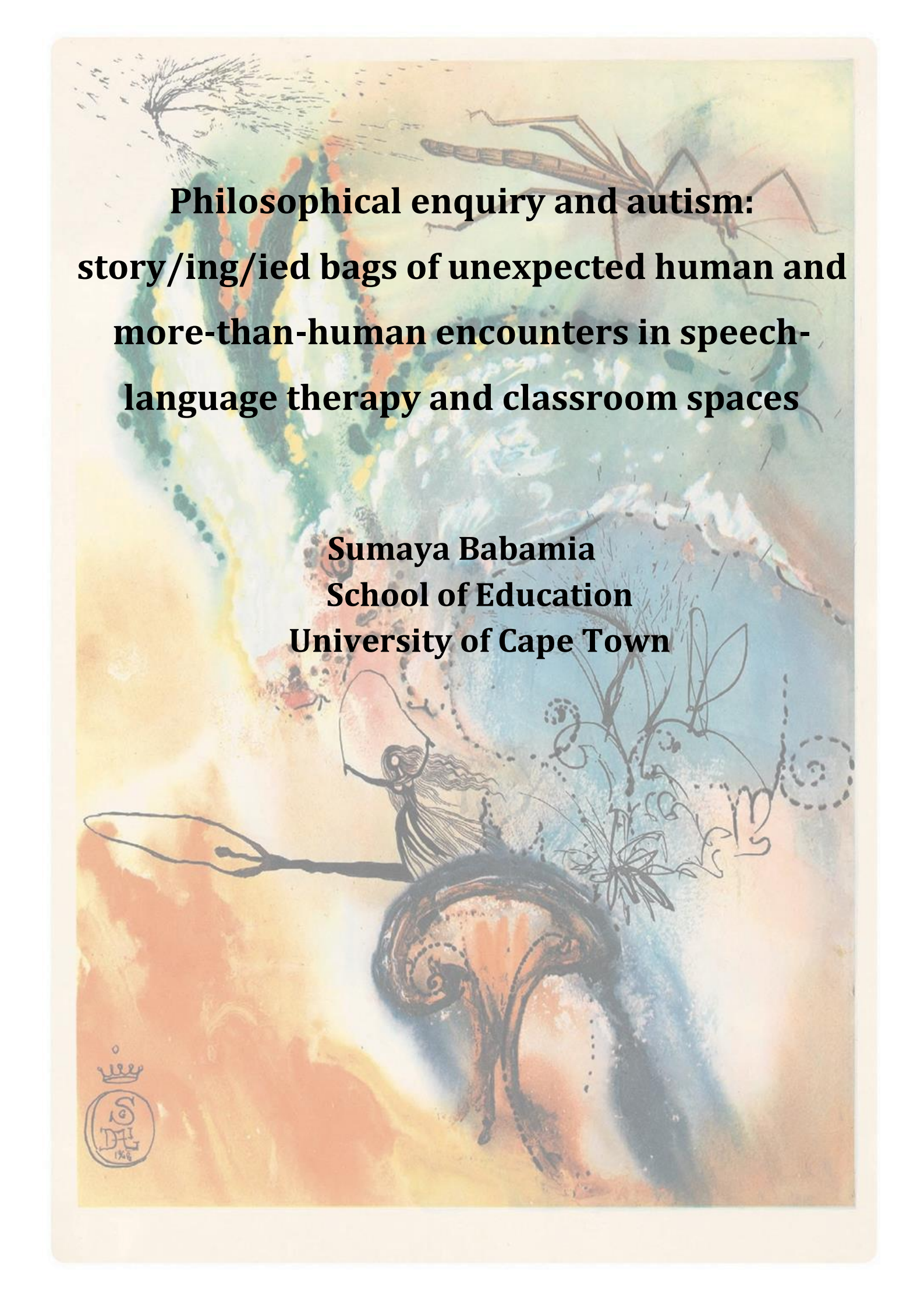
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The background is a vibrant watercolor illustration. It features a large dragonfly in the upper right, a bird-like figure in the center, and a hand reaching out from the right. The colors are a mix of blues, greens, yellows, and oranges, with some darker, more defined shapes in black and brown. The overall style is artistic and somewhat ethereal.

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: agential realism, autism, child, diffraction, education, ontoepistemic justice, Philosophy for/with Children, posthumanism, postqualitative research, speech-language therapy, storytelling, transdisciplinary practices.

This study is located within early childhood education, early childhood intervention and childhood dis/ability studies. The aim of the thesis is to explore the concept of ontoepistemic injustice for autistic children with/in educational and therapeutic settings.

Current pedagogies and interventions are embedded in human-centric ontologies that position autistic child as lacking, immature, and often incapacitated epistemologically. Drawing on critical posthumanism, notably Karen Barad's Agential Realism, the study asks: how might the community of philosophical enquiry be put to work with children who present with significant challenges to enquiry-based learning? How can subjectivity for autistic children be re-configured outside of humanist narratives of mastery, skill and performance?

The research questions were explored through postqualitative storytelling practices where communities of autistic learners participated in a teaching and learning approach known as Philosophy for/with Children. The philosophical enquiries took place at two learning centres in Johannesburg, South Africa. These centres were 'outlier' educational facilities that accommodated the learning differences of children who were deemed to be intellectually in/eligible for mainstream or remedial schooling. Despite learning, language and communication dis/abilities, the enquiries produced philosophical thinking that emerged in unexpected spaces and times. Often, the thinking that emerged worked outside of language and voice yet were weighty and imbued with intensity as well as affect.

The postqualitative analysis in the thesis disrupts the nature/culture binary which has historically positioned autistic child as being of dis/ordered mind. Diffractive engagement with the co-created data of videotapes, photographs, drawings, and fieldnotes troubled normative theories of child development in early childhood education and early intervention that still rely heavily on language and cognition. Of significance in this study is the re-configuration of child subjectivity 'outside' of the adult human-centred privileges of language, power and agency. Postqualitative research methods highlighted the agency of the material-discursive and troubled the ontoepistemic status of autistic child as 'lacking' and 'less-than'. The study shows how Philosophy for/with Children, when theorised as a posthumanist transdisciplinary theorypractice of deep, attentive listening to children's questions and ideas, contributes to and innovates within the fields of autism studies, early childhood education and early intervention.

Declaration of Authorship and Intellectual Property

I, Sumaya Babamia, do declare that this thesis, **Philosophical enquiry and autism: Story/ing/ied bags of unexpected human and more-than-human encounters in speech-language therapy and classroom spaces**, is my own unaided work, both in concept and execution, and that apart from the guidance from my supervisor, I have received no assistance.

I also confirm that apart from submission of this thesis to the School of Education, UCT, neither the substance nor any part of this thesis has been in the past, or is being, or is to be submitted for another degree at the University of Cape Town, or any other university.

Artwork on cover page
Down the Rabbit Hole by Salvador Dali (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)

CONTENTS

Cover page	i
Title page	ii
Abstract	iii
Declaration of authorship and intellectual property	iv
Contents page	ix
List of figures	xii
Acknowledgements	xv
Dedication	xvii
Writing conventions	xx
Glossary of terms	

<u>CARRIER BAG I</u>	1
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STORY GATHERINGS

Down The Rabbit Hole

CHAPTER 0	4
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LINES OF FLIGHT

Becoming Posthumanist Researcher

0.1. Re-configuring the autism-m/otherscholar dynamic	5
0.2. Entangled storying practices	9
0.3. A feminist posthumanist approach to subjectivity	25
0.4. Becoming researcher as open-ended storytelling practices	30

CHAPTER 1	32
------------------	-----------

STORYLINES

Postqualitative Storying Practices

1.1. Storying the doctoral story	32
1.2. A(n) (ethical) re-storying of the study	37
1.3. Putting ethics as storyteller to work	38
1.4. Storying as posthumanist research creation	42
1.4.1. Salvador Dali and Alice in Wonderland	44
1.4.2. Karen Barad and agential realism	49
1.4.3. Tim Ingold and the wayfaring line	51
1.4.4. Ursula le Guin and the carrier bag theory of fiction	53
1.5. Storytelling as research method	57
1.6. Be(com)ing phenomena	58

CHAPTER 2	60
(RE)SEARCHING (FOR) AUTISTIC CHILD	
Ontoepistemic Injustice	
2.1. Un/doing a calloused conscience	61
2.2. (Un)(re)callousing practice in ECE and ECI	62
2.2.1. Disruptive moment 1: De-centring human knowledge and knowledge-making practices	63
2.2.2. Disruptive moment 2: A(n) (in)significant rationale for intervention	64
2.2.3. Disruptive moment 3: A critique of sameness: a call to re-evaluate research and clinical practices with/in autism research	65
2.2.4. Disruptive moment 4: 'Does it work?'	66
2.3. (Re)searching (for) autistic child	68
2.3.1. Situating autism-education-intervention	69
2.3.2. Epistemic injustices	72
2.3.3. The mattering of ontoepistemic injustices for autistic child	74
2.4. Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) and the community of philosophical enquiry (CPE): A brief exploration	76
2.4.1. The history of P4C	77
2.4.2. Theoretical foundations	77
2.4.3. The reflective model of education	78
2.4.4. The community of philosophical enquiry (CPE)	79
2.5. Why P4wC and autism?	80
2.6. Situating the thesis and re-search questions	81
2.7. Storying the thesis	83
Diffractive Thinking Time 1: Missing Narratives of Autistic Females	85
<u>CARRIER BAG II</u>	
<u>DOING POSTQUALITATIVE RESEARCH THROUGH SLOW SCHOLARSHIP</u>	91
A Mad Tea-Party	
CHAPTER 3	95
KNOTTED LINES	
Engaging In Slow Research Practices	
3.1. The colour with/in boundaries	95
3.2. What is posthumanism?	98
3.3. How is ontology re-configured in posthumanism?	99
3.4. What is problematic about the human of humanism?	100
3.5. Why does posthumanism contest language and representationalism?	103
3.6. What is the relevance of posthumanism in education and therapeutic spaces?	105
3.7. What is the link between posthumanism and PQR?	106
3.8. How is PQR situated in relation to qualitative research (QR)?	107

3.9.	How is PQR theorised and practised?	108
3.10.	How is research enacted without the 'rigour' of method?	109
3.11.	How does posthumanism and PQR work in this study?	111
CHAPTER 4		114
LINES OF SPACETIMEMATTERING		
The Community Of Enquiry As Philosophical Wanderer		
4.1.	The CPE and un-doing the container metaphor	115
4.2.	Spacetimemattering	118
4.3.	Re-configuring the CPE as philosophical wanderer	119
4.4.	Tracing the entanglements of the (CPE) philosophical wanderer	121
4.4.1.	The land	121
4.4.2.	Threading enquiries through the land	125
4.5.	Re-membering the COE as wanderer	131
4.6.	Autism in sub-Saharan Africa	132
4.7.1.	The educational crisis in South Africa	134
4.7.2.	Special and/or inclusive education in South Africa	134
4.7.3.	Issues of accessibility for children with severe to profound intellectual dis/ability in South Africa	136
4.8.	Re-turning the CPE as philosophical wanderer	137
CHAPTER 5		140
DISRUPTING DATA LINES		
Diffracting Data Through Ontoepistemic Injustice		
5.1.	The intra-action of data and ontoepistemic injustice	141
5.2.	The politics of researching injustices	142
5.2.1.	Qualitative research (QR) and social injustice	145
5.2.2.	The politics of evidence	146
5.2.3.	The status of data	148
5.3.	Re-turning storying as data	149
5.3.1.	Storying	149
5.3.2.	Re-configuring data that glows	150
5.4.	Putting data-stories to work and the politics of injustice	152
5.4.1.	Story 1: Reflective practices	152
5.4.2.	Story 2: Be(com)ing autistic	154
5.4.3.	Story 3: The materiality of data	156
5.5.	Data and ontological incommensurability	157
5.6.	Data-stories and inheritance	158
Diffractional Thinking Time 2: Neurochthonics		161

<u>CARRIER BAG III</u>	165
<u>A POSTHUMANIST PERFORMATIVE APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRIES WITH AUTISTIC CHILD</u>	
The Queen’s Croquet Ground	
CHAPTER 6	170
LINES OF QUARKS/QUIRKS	
Un/Dialogical Encounters With/In The Community Of Enquiry	
6.1. ‘Why do dialogical pedagogy if there is no dialogue?’	171
6.2. Dialogue with/in the CPE	174
6.3. The story of the monsters	176
6.4. Event 1: A (monstrous) fight	179
6.5. Event 2: Be(com)ing monsters	189
6.6. Re-turning the data	197
6.7. A P4wC perspective of dialoguing with data	197
6.8. The data-dialogue entanglement	200
6.9. Disrupting dialogue through quarks/quirks	202
CHAPTER 7	204
LINES OF (HAUNTOLOGICAL) ENQUIRY	
Philosophy With Matter? Philosophy That Matters?	
7.1. Re-turning the concept of progress in the CPE	204
7.1.1. The structure of the CPE	207
7.1.2. Troubling (human-centric) CPEs	209
7.2. A posthumanist hauntology of re-remembering	211
7.3. ‘Fidgety’ bodies	213
7.4. Un-doing clock time	215
7.5. Philosophy and picturebooks	217
7.6. Diffracting through vignette 5	220
7.7. Re-turning Scrumpy	221
7.8. Diffracting through vignette 7	224
7.9. Diffracting through vignette 8	226
7.10. From facilitating to philoso-tating to difficultating	229
7.11. Re-remembering as a practice of response-ability	231
CHAPTER 8	235
DISRUPTING THE (LINE)AGE OF CHILD	
The (Posthuman) Autistic Child	
8.1. Datatext as diffractive potentialities	236
8.2. Alice and the Red Queen	237
8.3. Disrupting the nature/culture binary through posthumanist figurations of child	240

8.4.	Disabled childhood studies and the construction of dis/abled child/hood	243
8.5.	Autist-eins as figurations of autistic child	247
8.5.1.	Autistic child as ‘monstrous’ child	248
8.5.2.	Autistic child as ‘idiot’ child	249
8.5.3.	Autistic child and the nature/culture binary	250
8.5.4.	Autistic child as commodity	251
8.6.	‘Galvanising’ autistic child through datatext	252
8.7.	Posthuman autistic child	255
8.7.1.	Autistic child as ‘i’	255
8.7.2.	Autistic child as ‘l’	256
8.7.3.	Autistic child as ‘ii’	257
8.7.4.	(Posthuman) autistic child as ‘iii’	257
	Diffractive Thinking Time 3: Listening With/In The Void	260
	<u>CARRIER BAG IV</u>	266
	<u>KEEPING THE STORIES GOING</u>	
	Re-turning Alice	
	CHAPTER 9	268
	TENTACULAR LINES	
	Posthumanist Transdisciplinary Practices For Autistic Child	
9.1.	Re-turning the thesis	269
9.2.	Re-thinking (with) the thesis	271
9.3.	Re-situating the thesis	274
	<u>APPENDICES</u>	
	A. Reference list	
	B. Salvador Dali’s twelve heliogravures of Alice in Wonderland	
	C. Ethical clearance	
	D. Information sheet and consent form (child)	
	E. Information sheet and consent form (principal)	
	F. Information sheet and consent form (teachers)	
	G. Information sheet and consent form (parents)	

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure CB I. Down the Rabbit Hole (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)
Figure CB II. A Mad Tea-Party (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)
Figure CB III. The Queen's Croquet Ground (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)
Figure CB IV. Frontispiece of Alice (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)
Figure DTT 2A. 'Impulsive neurons' (Morris, 2018)
Figure DTT 2B. 'Neurochthonic' (Neurons in the Human Brain: Structure and Function, 2023)
- Figure 0.1. Karin Murriss comment (1)
Figure 0.2. Bowser and his son Bowser Junior (Kay, 2023)
Figure 0.3. A synopsis of the Super Mario Brothers videogame created with Bowser Junior
Figure 0.4. Karin Murriss comment (2) on Bowser Junior's apparent disinterest
Figure 0.5. Bowser Junior and Luigi from the Super Mario Brothers
Figure 0.6. Supervision correspondence between Karin and Sumaya
Figure 0.7. A void in the writing
Figure 0.8. Re-writing Bowser Junior's thoughts on philosophical thinking
Figure 0.9. Bowser Junior with Mario from the Super Mario Brothers
Figure 0.10. Karin Murriss supervision comment (3)
- Figure 1.1. Research information letter created for the children in this study
Figure 1.2. Foxy Fnap 1234 assent form
Figure 1.3. Avatar assent form
Figure 1.4. Moleskin 18-month diary 2019/2020. Limited edition blue hardcover 13x21cm, 208 pages
Figure 1.5. Wonderland Games: The queen's guard giant playing cards
Figure 1.6. Description of the cards
Figure 1.7. Thomas the Engine assent form
Figure 1.8. Hulk assent form
- Figure 2.1. Human and more-than-human entanglement (Jones, 2017)
- Figure 3.1. A diffractive journal entry
- Figure 4.1. Diffractive journal extract pertaining to the CPE
Figure 4.2. 'Leafy' northern suburbs of Johannesburg in which both schools are located (Google (n.d.))
Figure 4.3. Google earth map of the schools situated in the broader metropolis of Randburg, Gauteng, South Africa (Google, n.d.)
Figure 4.4. 'Making it fit': Un/doing a circle during a philosophical enquiry
Figure 4.5. The 'common area': What the table makes possible
Figure 4.6. Doors and gates that include/exclude
Figure 4.7. Be(com)ing friends on the playground: An encounter with a leaf and chalkboard figure
Figure 4.8. Thursday mid-morning golf lessons at the nearby golf course
Figure 4.9. Midweek outing to the local pizzeria

- Figure 4.10. Discussing Disney on Ice during an enquiry
- Figure 5.1. Data that glows
- Figure 5.2. Data that glows
- Figure 5.3. Data that glows
- Figure 5.4. Reflective practices
- Figure 5.5. Reflective practices
- Figure 5.6. Reflective practices
- Figure 5.7. 'Being' autistic
- Figure 5.8. 'Being' autistic
- Figure 5.9. 'Being' autistic
- Figure 5.10. Data as material
- Figure 5.11. Data as material
- Figure 5.12. Data as material
- Figure 6.1. Screenshot of my writing during supervision
- Figure 6.2. Screenshot of Karin's response to my writing
- Figure 6.3. *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak
- Figure 6.4. The lesson plan as an apparatus for philosophical enquiries
- Figure 6.5. The material-discursive configuration of the library during a philosophical enquiry
- Figure 6.6. Human and more-than-human bodies with/in the library space
- Figure 6.7. The table asking questions of the drawings
- Figure 6.8. The material-discursive blue bowl
- Figure 6.9. Thinking with/in the blue bowl
- Figure 6.10. The camera notices the children entering the library space from the door at the lower end of the room
- Figure 6.11. The sweater struggles to get over Mario Rohito's head
- Figure 6.12. Nic Cage's jacket is central in the enquiry
- Figure 6.13. Springtrap. Fnaf 3's jacket in the camera frame
- Figure 6.14. Gun Nut assent form
- Figure 6.15. The yellow crown
- Figure 6.16. Max with his crown and sceptre
- Figure 6.17. Intra-acting with the crown
- Figure 6.18. Creating shapes in the monster
- Figure 6.19. Fingers resting on the monster
- Figure 6.20. Playdough monster 1
- Figure 6.21. Playdough monster 2
- Figure 6.22. The 'rotten' monster that died
- Figure 6.23. *Munch* by Emma McCann (2006)
- Figure 6.24. Hulk's drawing of Munch
- Figure 6.25. Avatar's drawing of Munch
- Figure 7.1. Self-portrait of Tony Stark which includes his age
- Figure 7.2. *Scrumpy*
- Figure 7.3. *Room on the Broom* sound book

- Figure 7.4. Tony Stark's illustration of Scrumpy in the marketplace
Figure 7.5. George's handkerchief shown in the centre of the drawing
Figure 7.6. Thoughts/feelings about death
Figure 7.7. Thomas the Engine's drawing shows people standing around a grave
- Figure 8.1. Posthuman figurations of child (Reprinted with permission from Karin Murriss)
Figure 8.2. Re-turning datatext as autist-ein
Figure 8.3. Thinking with datatext in aion time

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In memory of all children who have died in the violence of colonialism, classism, imperialism, militarisation, racism, and other forms of oppression.

You are never forgotten

Writing conventions

The research with/in this study is underpinned by a relational ontology and foregrounds the dynamism of matter (the lively, agential nature of non/in/more-than human bodies) in co-constituting thinking and learning practices. The material-discursive intra-actions provoke a re-orientation of writing conventions so that the shifts in knowledge brought about through a posthumanist ontology are authenticated. This study uses neologisms, word play, purposeful wrong use of grammar and punctuation, as well as terminology and expressions that deviate from disciplinary jargon. Please note that the interruptions to writing conventions should not be misconstrued as drawing comparisons between humanist and posthumanist theory. Rather, the aim is to engage with patterns of differences that emerge in thesis writing. In order to make the reading of this thesis as straightforward as possible for the reader, I have outlined and explained the disruptions to writing conventions below:

1. Please take note of the following use of punctuation and stylistic re-conventions:
 - a. Barad (2014, p. 168) explains that re-turning is a practice of “diffracting with diffraction”. It does not imply a linear return to the past, nor a space, time or matter for reflective thought processes. Re-turning invites a multiplicity of processes that turn the world, ideas, and doings over again, creating new temporalities as well as diffractive patterns. Similarly, the re- is used for words such as re-configure, re-imagine, and so forth in order to conceptually disrupt linear space, time, or matter. In cases where multiple prefixes and suffixes are used, parentheses are used to make for easier reading (e.g. (un)(re)doing). However, sometimes the forward slash is used to emphasise the entanglements (e.g. story/ing/ied). This convention only applies to root words.
 - b. The use of the forward slash (e.g. dis/ability, in/separable) purposefully discards binaries (e.g. disability and ability, inseparable and separable) by drawing attention to the entanglement of concepts and phenomena (see for example, Barad, 2007, pp. 66-67).
 - c. Outside of conventional grammatical functions (such as compound words) and where appropriate, the hyphen (e.g. material-discursive) disrupts the representationalism inherent in the grammatical function of prepositions as specifiers of spatial relationships (direction, location, place, time) amongst nouns and noun phrases.
 - d. With/in refers to the mutual relations of entities and forces that always operate with and in each other. There is no separability or privilege of materials over each other.
2. This study is written in first person language. It is not a deference to the anthropocentric ‘I’ in research, nor is it embedded in narrative research practices. Thinking with Erevelles (2014), the use of /I/ is a research writing invention that is located outside-with/in the entanglement of human and more-than-human forces

which have contributed to the (ongoing) materialisation of this study. This invention acknowledges that research is impartial to spaces and matter, and thus does not 'belong' to any one thing or body.

3. There is a distinction between dis/ability that refers to the (medical and social) construction of humans with bodily differences and Disability (as in Disability Studies) which refers to the interdisciplinary study of the economic, health, political, social consequences of dis/abled (human) bodies.
4. This thesis follows the preference of the international autism community for identity-first conventions (autistic person) as opposed to person-first language (person with autism) (see for example, Sinclair, 1993, 2013; Vivanti, 2020). The terminology matters in how the individual is situated with/in social, political and research contexts, as well as supportive/teaching/learning/therapeutic practices. Identity-first conventions reflect a paradigm shift away from deficit constructions of autism, and emphasise the unique strengths, needs, and capabilities of the individual. The study uses the term(s) 'autist' to denote the individual with autism (Murray, 2012) and 'autism'. The collective research and practices pertaining to autism is ubiquitously also referred to as 'autism'. Please note that Autism South Africa (A;SA) uses identity-first language, though this position should not be taken as representative of the rest of the country.
5. Language bears different interpretations with/in the philosophical and psycho-linguistic paradigms and requires some clarification with regard to use in this thesis. In philosophy, language is theorised in terms of ontology and epistemology, as well as metaphysics. In the psycho-linguistic tradition, which is relevant for the field of speech-language therapy, language is defined with/in the parameters of human communication and use. The speech-language literature theorises language as a set of arbitrary symbols that operate through the constructs of phonology, semantics, pragmatics, syntax and morphology. There is also an association of language skills insofar as multilingualism is concerned. However, for therapists, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is about the neuro-social-linguistic mechanisms of language acquisition rather than the degree of multilingualism an individual attains.
6. This thesis refers to speech-language therapy as *communication interventions* — an all-encompassing term for language, speech, voice, tone and prosody, instead of *language interventions*. The distinction between communication and language intervention clarifies the position of language as understood within the speech-language pathology literature in comparison to education/pedagogy and philosophy.
7. The term *autism-education-intervention* collectively refers to all (adult) pedagogical, therapeutic, and other (support) approaches, measures, and strategies implemented with autistic child. Following Dahlberg, et al., (2007), this study proposes that disciplinary differences occur primarily on an epistemological level. In all cases, the underlying ontology foregrounds human-centred knowledge practices. Thus, the

aforementioned term purposefully blurs the distinction between the fields in order to illustrate the ontological similarities.

8. There is a distinction between the Lipman-Sharp tradition of Philosophy *for* Children (P4C), and the global Philosophy *with* Children movement¹. This study resists the binary between the two approaches and uses the term Philosophy *for and with* Children (P4wC). In addition, the study draws on the conceptual work of both approaches.
9. Thinking time is a practice with/in P4wC that encourages the community of enquirers to introspect and reflect on what has transpired during the enquiry such as the level of dialogue that took place, the stimulus chosen, the affect within the group as well as new thoughts, discussions and so forth that were raised. Often, thinking time occurs at the end of the enquiry, and participants are given the choice of whether they would like to share their thoughts before the enquiry is concluded. The study puts to work *diffractive thinking* time as an alternative to summaries at the end of each chapter. Diffractive thinking time threads the P4wC notion of thinking time through the material feminist theorypractice of positive differences in order to map the patterns and effects of differences produced with/in the four sections (carrier bags) of this study.
10. Affect is theorised in this thesis from a philosophical viewpoint and should not be confused with the psychoanalytical concept of the unconscious, which draws on human experiences, memories and suppressed emotional-corporeal states.
11. Please take note of the following abbreviations:
 - a. ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - b. CPE – The community of philosophical enquiry
 - c. ECE – Early childhood education
 - d. ECI – Early childhood intervention
 - e. P4wC – Philosophy for/with Children
 - f. PQR – Postqualitative research
 - g. QR – Qualitative research
 - h. SLT – Speech-language therapist

¹ Please see the glossary of terms

Glossary of terms

This posthumanist glossary emerges through (my) intra-actions¹ with humans and more-than-humans along this doctoral journey and illustrates (my) conceptual understanding of key ideas in autism, posthumanist, and Philosophy for/with Children scholarship. The reader is re-minded that the glossary is neither a temporal-spatial fixing of concepts nor a truth-seeking endeavour as the posthumanist ontology iteratively re-configures the concepts.

1. Affect

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his co-writer, psychoanalyst Felix Guattari trace affect to the writings of Baruch Spinoza and elaborate on the concept in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* ([ATP], 1987). The book, which is translated by Brian Massumi, explains that affect is neither a word nor an entity that refers to particular emotions or states. Instead, affect is about desire, and the potential to affect and be affected. As Massumi explains (1987, p. xv), affect refers to the “prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act”. Affect is about change and transition that occurs prior to perception or ideas. It is indefinite and the product of lived encounters. Affect (in the philosophical sense) attends to forces and power as well as the potentialities of intellectual, spiritual, cognitive, and social dimensions of life that produce transformations (Clough, 2007). Affect traverses human and more-than-human bodies (including technology).

2. Agency/agential

Not an attribute of an individual body/entity but an enactment that emerges through intra-active practices. It marks changes and the possibilities of change in the material-discursive.

3. Agential cut

Unlike Cartesian cuts, agential cuts do not re-enact binaries that mark the complete separation of phenomena. Through intra-actions and entanglements, agential cuts are a “cutting together-apart” in one move so that that differentiating and entangling occur simultaneously (Barad, 2014, p. 168). It is the marking of the phenomena with/in the phenomena itself (differentiating) and holding together of the multiplicity (entanglement).

4. Agential realism

Barad’s theorypractice of being in the world through the entanglement and in/separability of ethics, ontology and epistemology, otherwise known as ethico-ontoepistemology. Murriss (2021) writes that “Agential realism is a philosophy *practiced*, and not a philosophy *applied* to practice” (p.2). The key aspect of agential realism is the relational ontology and the agency of matter which re-works agency, causality and dualisms.

¹ Please see the glossary entry on intra-action.

5. Allied health professions

This refers to a category of healthcare disciplines that are distinct from mainstream medical practice such as medicine, dentistry, and nursing. Allied health professions include therapists (art, drama, music, occupational, physio, speech-language), psychologists, audiologists, podiatrists and social workers. The aim of the allied health professions is patient care, rehabilitation, treatment, and the management of health conditions that impede human functioning.

6. Apparatus

Barad (2007) argues that apparatuses are not (passive) instruments, devices, or structures that document the world. Rather, apparatuses are implicated in the phenomena that emerge through material-discursive entanglements.

7. Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)

Supported by strong empirical research, ABA is a behaviour modification approach to intervention that is based on Lovaas's (1987) work using operant conditioning with autistic children (see for example Anderson & Carr, 2021). According to the American Behavioural Analysis Certification Board (BACB, n.d.), behavioural analysis is the scientific study of principles of learning and behaviour and includes experimental analysis of behaviour and applied behaviour analysis. The principles of behaviour analysis aim to modify, change, and shift behaviour (social interaction, communication, play, independence with grooming and activities of daily living) in relation to the environmental variables. With/in the learning context, a behavioural therapist endeavours to conduct assessments, analyse data, as well as write, implement, oversee, and revise treatment plans to measure changes in behaviour. The goals of intervention include decreasing inappropriate behaviours, and increasing communication, independence, learning, and social adaptability (BACB, n.d.). These aims are justified in the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning ([ICF], World Health Organisation [WHO], 2019), a highly influential document that mediates between the medical and social models of Disability.

Despite the many permutations of the approach, ABA is regarded as the gold-standard of intervention for autism and other developmental difficulties. However, ABA is also fraught with significant controversy in terms of the effectiveness of outcomes (Eckes, et al, 2023), approaches to treatment (Anderson & Carr, 2021), and the ethics and identity politics of 'humanising' behaviour.

8. Autism / autism spectrum disorder

Since inception in the 1940's (through the independent work of Drs Hans Asperger, Leo Kanner, and Lorna Wing), autism has been conceptualised with/in a (child) psychiatric framework that focuses on the outward behavioural manifestation (symptoms or phenotype) and the aetiology (cause). Given the medical underpinnings, autism is understood to be a neuro-biological-developmental origin which manifest in early childhood and persists throughout the lifespan of the individual. This means that, while the exact

cause and site of lesion is unknown, autism is an outcome of early, atypical brain development such as the incidence of unusually high neural synaptic connections, unusual sensory processing and motor co-ordination, irregular neural pathways and variations in the size and structure of the neuro-anatomy (see for example, Ecker, 2017).

Autism is diagnosed as per the criteria set out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders 5th edition ([DSM V], American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). A diagnosis of autism requires persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following: deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviours during social interactions, and developing, maintaining and understanding relationship. Autism occurs on a continuum from low functioning to high functioning, depending on the behavioural manifestation of symptoms, hence the reference to autism as a *spectrum* of disorders (APA, 2013).

Of recent, activists, autists, parents, researchers, teachers, and other stakeholders are calling for less emphasis on the medical interpretation of autism and greater attention to the phenomenology of being autistic. Pellicano and den Houting (2022) write that the shift from “‘normal science’ to neurodiversity” (p. 381) is necessary in order to detract from essentialist views of the medical model, to make space for autistic voices, perspectives, suggestions as well as to bridge the disproportionate gap between theory and practice in the lives of autistic people and their families. In keeping with the move towards neurodiversity, researchers and autistic scholars are calling for greater initiatives insofar as research methods that actively include autistic people (Fletcher-Watson, et al, 2019; Milton & Green, 2024).

This study is situated with/in the neurodiversity perspective and is invested in supporting the communicative, learning, social challenges experienced by autistic individuals.

9. Cartesian cuts

Embedded in representationalism, a Cartesian cut is a binary move that categorises the world into ideas/concepts with distinct ontological boundaries and separates the thinker/knower and their thoughts from the physical world. For example, male and female, adult and child, mind and body.

10. Child(hood) studies

An interdisciplinary field of study that contests a developmental view of children and childhoods. Rather than seeing children’s development as biologically determined, a child studies lens considers children’s growth and development from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Child development is not a unilinear event, but complex and unpredictable (Malone, et al., 2020). Others emphasise the troubling of the adult/child binary altogether by embracing a different temporality, that of *aion*² and a slowing down of time through philosophical questioning (Murriss & Kohan, 2021).

² Please see the glossary entry on time.

11. Community of Philosophical Enquiry (COE)

The COE is the dialogical pedagogy of Philosophy for/with Children and comprises a group of individuals who come together to participate in an open-ended enquiry pertaining to a topic or stimulus of interest (Sharp, 1987, as cited in Gregory & Lavery, 2018). The goal is to deepen thinking through active dialogue (and not conversation).

12. Concepts

In posthumanism, concepts are not a representation of ideas/thoughts that capture the world but specific material conditions and relations with/in the world. Concepts are a field of spacetime mattering (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021).

13. Critical autism studies (CAS)

Ryan and Milton (2023) write that critical autism studies (CAS) is an interdisciplinary field that was initiated by autistic people, particularly autistic scholars, and recognises the environmental and social constraints that face autism. The field focuses on un/doing the pathological descriptions of autism, re-conceptualising autistic identity, community and culture, as well as exploring practices that relate to the well-being of autistic individuals. Key to CAS are principles of neurodiversity, identity, embodied knowledge, lived experience, disability studies, disability justice, and the social model of disability (Freeman Loftis, 2023). The aim of the field is to create generative spaces in academia for the work of autistic scholars.

14. Critical posthumanism

A philosophical response to long-standing beliefs, principles and theoretical paradigms about the (privileged) human knowing subject. Critical posthumanism draws on a relational ontology and the dynamism of matter to re-think, re-orientate, and re-configure knowledge-making practices.

15. Differences

In metaphysical theories which assume an ontological and epistemic divide, differences are theorised as contrasts, inconsistencies, conflicts, distinctions, separation of independent entities in the world. For posthumanists and material feminist scholars, the agency of the material does not 'fix' the subject and object ontologically. The world does not stand still and ready for descriptions of observable differences. Barad (2010) writes that "differences are about differences-in-the-(re)making" (p. 175). Differences are enacted through agential cuts which emerge through intra-actions and entanglements. Differences are theorised as ongoing and 'with/in'.

16. Diffraction

The physical phenomena of wave behaviour when superimposed on each other create patterns of differences. Donna Haraway (1992/2004) proposes diffraction as optical

metaphors that record patterns of interactions, interferences and differences that mark a critical consciousness that disrupts reflection and reflexivity. Drawing on Haraway, Barad (2007, 2014) theorises and practises the generative potential of diffraction to map the patterns and effects of the differences.

17. Diffraction methodology

The Baradian (Barad, 2007) non/representational, transdisciplinary methodology that threads insights from different disciplines through each other in order to encourage critical engagement. Diffraction methodology re-works disciplinary boundaries in a manner that is attentive to key arguments across disciplines and engages in affirmative critique that shows the ethico-political nature of all disciplines.

18. Discursive practices

Barad's agential realism shifts theorising of the world from descriptions to performativity. The discursive does not imply grammar, speech acts, linguistic representation or semiotics as "'anthropomorphic placeholders' for individual, cultural or linguistic agency" (Barad, 2007, p. 149). Discursive practices are re-configured as 'doings' or apparatuses that produce the subjects and objects of knowledge-making practices. The discursive attends to the relationality between concept and material, as well as matter and meaning.

19. Early childhood education and early childhood intervention

Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early (Childhood) Intervention (EI/EI) are fields of enquiry that are embedded with/in the broader field of child/childhood studies. For Kennedy (2006), child studies emerged as a genealogical product of three main discourses, namely psychology, sociology and pedagogy. However, professionals in the field of EI, might differ with Kennedy (2006), arguing that dis/ability studies, child health, and neuroscience have had a far greater impact on theory-practice than pedagogy and sociology. The theoretical ancestries of the ECE and EI fields are significant as each discipline has progressed along different lines of enquiry. This is best iterated by Dahlberg et al. (2007) who write that EI is a jargon term with/in the health professions and refers specifically to children with disability and or developmental delay.

However, despite the distinction between EI and ECE, both fields operate along similar ideologies. Dahlberg et al. (2007) point out that both if not all intellectual disciplines associated with childhood studies tend to use the same language. By language, the authors refer to the dominant discourses and jargon which frame early childhood studies. Amongst the more common concepts and terminology are: enhanced school performance, supporting the learning needs of children at risk, or disadvantaged, developmentally appropriate practices, standards, measures, performances, intervention models that are outcomes driven and cost effective. This study is not concerned with the epistemological differences or details which govern each field of enquiry. In fact, posthumanism disrupts the very notion of disciplinary segregation by stimulating transdisciplinary intra-actions that work across the natural and social sciences (Barad, 2007; Snaza & Weaver, 2015). This study

is attentive to the posthumanist notion of differences and mapping the effects of differences.

20. Entanglements

Entanglements are complex networks of material and discursive phenomena that cannot be separated out. It does not entail joining or interconnectedness amongst phenomena as this would assume separability, and the existence of discrete entities in the world.

21. Epistemic injustice

Theorised by Miranda Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice refers to the harm done to a (human) subject in her capacity as a bearer of knowledge on account of prejudices and stereotypes. Prejudice occurs when the speaker is unfairly discredited by the hearer. Stereotypes refer to generalised beliefs or presumed attributes about particular social groups.

22. Ethics

A human-centric approach to ethics is premised on issues of rights and protection of the human knowing subject, and underpinned by principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, and social justice (e.g., Mauthner, 2018). The aforementioned principles attend to the call to protect human rights and dignity, ensure confidentiality, do no harm (psychological, physical), and respect the participants' right to information, consent, privacy, autonomy, freedom. A posthumanist approach does not confine ethics to (human) rights, distributive justice, or law (Braidotti, 2013). Neither is ethics the extra 'layer' that is superimposed on research method and practice. Rather, ethics, or to be ethical, requires an attentiveness to human and more-than-human power relations, political agency and the re-configuration of knowledge in relation to the ongoing changes in the world (Barad, 2007, Braidotti, 2015). The nature of existing and being in the world are practices of (ethical) accountability and response-ability. As Barad (2007, p. 185) states: we don't learn about the world by observing from the outside, instead we know by *being* in the world, where the "becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter".

23. Ethico-ontoepistemology

The in/separability of ethics, knowing (epistemology) and being (ontology) which is fundamental to agential realism. An ethico-ontoepistemic approach neither discards nor negates the human but instead re-configures the human with/in locations of dis/placed subjectivity and unpredictable worldly conditions.

24. Echolalia

Refers to when a child engages in random and repetitive speech-language behaviour in the absence of purposeful social, emotional, learning interaction. Historically, echolalia was dismissed as an aberrant autistic behaviour. Now, it is recognised as a pattern of communicative function, albeit in a non-traditional meaning-making manner.

25. Figurations

Figurations are suggested as alternatives to metaphors and subjectivity (Braidotti, 2011, 2018). Murriss (2016) explains that the aim of figurations is to move away from anthropocentric gazes of child and childhood, which perpetuate child and adult subjectivities within predetermined nature/culture boundaries.

26. Hauntology

The Derridean notion of hauntology is related to hauntings as (human) recollections of the past, which result in sedimented (human) memories. Barad (2018) writes that hauntology is not about sedimentations of time (past, present, future) but the material conditions in which time is out of sync. Hauntology is a superposition of times diffracted through each other and entangled with the ongoing historicity of the world.

27. Intelligibility

Humanism sees intelligibility as part of cognition/intellect and associated with communication between or amongst human agents. Barad (2007) explains “intelligibility is the ongoing articulation of the world with itself through a relational ontology” (p. 149).

28. Intra-action

A neologism developed by Barad (2007) through the work of Haraway. Intra-action disrupts the conventional ‘interaction’ which assumes that things pre-exist relations. Intra-action signifies the ontological relationality amongst matter and the material through which things come into being.

29. Knowing

Does not refer to human knowledge-making practices, cognition nor intellectual abilities. It is a matter of differential responsiveness to what is produced through material-discursive intra-actions (Barad, 2007).

30. The Lipman-Sharp model of philosophical enquiry

The Lipman-Sharp model refers to the philosophical curriculum that consisted of philosophical novels and teacher manuals as designed by Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp and others at Montclair State University (USA) and the IAPC (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children). This approach promoted educational reform by transforming classrooms into communities of enquiry, and through training teachers (particularly those without a formal background in philosophy) with the skills necessary to successfully implement the philosophical curriculum.

31. Matter

Matter, or the material, is not to be misconstrued with/in (poststructuralist) discursive and Newtonian interpretations, which render matter as individual objects in the world that are catalogued on the basis of physical attributes, locations, functionality, or referents (Barad, 2007). It is an ongoing historicity that includes humans and more-than-humans (animals, technological, environment). Matter is agential, performative and political. The posthumanist ontology of the material disrupts binaries such as cognition/emotion, nature/culture, and mind/body. Inclusion of matter disrupts the idea that language and discourse are the only ways in which we understand the world.

32. Material-discursive

The primary semantic units through which ontology and meaning-making become possible (Barad, 2007). The two are co-constituted and co-constituting, coming together through a relational ontology. Neither the material nor the discursive are ontologically prior and come into being through the inextricable entanglement of matter and meaning.

33. Matterphorics

A radical reworking of Cartesian representationalism and Newtonian ontology that proposes theorising (thinking) as material performances of being part of the world where matter and meaning are inseparable (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021).

34. Meaning and meaning-making

Does not refer to the property of words. It is not linguistic, semantic or cognitive. Becomes possible through specific material-discursive practices.

35. Nature/culture

Murris (2016) explains that the nature/culture binary assumes that child is a product of nature that will unfold, need to be developed, or interacted with in order to become 'fully' human. Disrupting the nature/culture binary is about undoing identity (Murris, 2016). Haraway (1988) proposes an implosion of nature-culture where the two are not dismissed but rather thought of as always in relation ('natureculture').

36. Neurodiversity

The term neurodiversity is attributed to the collective activism of autistic individuals in the mid 90's (Botha et al, 2024). Many of the activists were part of online communities such as Independent Living (started approximately in 1997) and the Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical in and around 1998. Botha et al. (2024) warn against the tendency to attribute the origin of the concept to a singular person (such as Judy Singer) for this erases the collective efforts of autistic individuals in championing the rights of and for autistic people.

From the perspective of (neuro) anatomy and physiology, neurodiversity is theorised as the range of natural differences in human neurological anatomy, development and functioning (Chapman, 2020; Pellicano & den Houting, 2022). To this extent, the neurobiological differences associated with autism are considered to be heterogeneous phenomena of the human species. By implication, 'varied' brains are not dis/abled, deviant or deficit-orientated, and should therefore not be subjected to marginalization, labelling or deemed to be inferior to the rest of the human population.

Central to neurodiversity are the issues of identity, labelling and social-political rights of autistic individuals (see for example, Dwyer, 2022). Neurodiversity troubles the social construction of abnormal/normal as well as stereotypes of autism identity, such as 'lacking empathy, 'machine-like', and 'impaired social skills/brain' (Milton, 2014). By and large, neurodiversity is about activism, and operates alongside other marginalized groups such as racial, sexual and gendered oppression (Brownlow, et al., 2023).

Neurodiversity promotes acceptance and recognition of autism while advocating for rights and emancipation from repressive neoliberal policies. From a political standpoint, the neurodiversity movement aims to cultivate a new language that affirms the ontological status of autism. Inherent to advocacy and activism of the movement is a sense of identity and belonging. Instead of curing autism, the focus is on well-being and adaptive functioning.

37. Ontology

Western philosophy defines *onto* as being (not becoming). It is fixed in space and time, forming the bedrock upon which epistemology is founded. Also referred to as substance ontology owing to the philosophical viewpoints that things exist independently in the world, and that matter (in its capacity as an inert, passive object that occupies space, time and location) can be reduced to basic atomic properties. An agential realist ontology disrupts the dichotomy of being/non-being and re-configures ontology as an ongoing openness to infinite material-discursive intra-actions with/in the world.

38. Ontoepistemic injustice

A neologism produced through Murriss's (2016) diffractive reading of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) and agential realism (Barad, 2007). Ontoepistemic injustice refers to the prejudices levelled against young children in their capacity as knowledge bearers and producers, on account of *being* children. Murriss (2016) writes that ontoepistemic injustice specifically considers the "identity prejudices that 'otherise' child in relation to the entanglement of knowledge, ethics, justice, and transformation" (p. 37).

39. Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC)

In recent times, there has been a distinction between P4C and P4wC which has arisen due to the different ideas of how to engage children in discussion of philosophical ideas. In fact, Lipman (2011) made the distinction in order to mark the changes to theory and practice in the field since conception of the P4C programme.

The P4C programme as theorised by Lipman and Sharp is often referred to as the Lipman-Sharp approach or first generation P4C (see Vansielgehm & Kennedy, 2012). Originally, P4C was proposed as a philosophical curriculum which was implemented with/in primary and secondary schools and consisted of a comprehensive set of philosophical novels and accompanying teacher manuals that were designed to engage children in philosophical enquiries with/in classrooms (Lipman, 1991, 2003). The children in classrooms were considered to be a community of enquirers with the purpose of learning. Though guided by the philosophical novels, the community of enquiry was an open space that foregrounded the practice of philosophical skills.

Philosophy for/with Children refers to the different ways of doing enquiries with children aside from the philosophical novel and teacher manuals. For Lipman, the practice of philosophical enquiry without the novels demarcated the shift away from the original programme and necessitated a category on its own. Post Lipman and given the diversity of authors and practitioners (in terms of place, position, identity, philosophical perspectives) has led to a broader, global movement of philosophical practice that has expanded upon Lipman's original ideas (Vansielgehm & Kennedy, 2012). Current innovative areas of philosophical practice include children's literature (Haynes & Murriss, 2012), global citizenship (Cassidy, 2016), jazz as philosophical education (Santi, 2017); cognitive psychology (Green, 2017), decolonial pedagogies (Kohan, 2015), and critical posthumanism (Murriss, 2016; Reynolds, 2021) to name but a few.

Today, P4wC is a significant educational and philosophical movement that is re-researched and practiced in more than 60 countries. It is multi-ethnic, multi-diverse, and multi-linguistic. The CPE has been taken up in an array of communities and spaces such as informal and formal education, adult and higher education, youth and summer camps, prisons, refugee camps, secular and religious institutions, and war-torn contexts in addition to nursery, primary and secondary schools. P4wC is also represented by many associations and organisations in different countries. ICPIC (International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children) is the international organisation that co-ordinates re-research and conference meetings biannually for its members. It is interdisciplinary and informed by psychology, critical theory, critical literacy, critical pedagogy, alternate philosophies in education and contemporary childhood studies. P4wC has contributed extensively to the field of Philosophy of Childhood, a field which explores new meanings and understandings of child and childhood.

40. Perseveration

A psychological/speech-language pathology term that refers to a repetitive language-communication response (usually words, phrases, gestures) that occurs, even in the absence of a stimulus. It is attributed to neurological injury.

41. Phenomena

The primary ontological units of existence that emerge through intra-actions and entanglements. Phenomena are not separated by boundaries and properties. Rather, “phenomena enact boundary-making practices” (Barad, 2007, p. 333).

42. Re-turn(ing)

To *re-turn* neither implies going back into the past to draw on hindsight knowledge nor to reflect on how events have unfolded over time (Barad, 2014). Such an ideology presumes a separation of past|present|future, which would re-inscribe the location of events and knowledge within specified frameworks of time and space. For Barad (2014) re-turning is about “turning (it) over and over again” (p. 168) in the making of new temporalities and patterns of knowledge. Re-turning operates with/in a material feminist ontology which disrupts human essentialism and privilege, Cartesian dualism, and the notion of matter as lacking agency.

43. Relational ontology

Barad (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021) states that ontology is neither given nor fixed but an ongoing openness to infinite and radical possibilities of re-configuring the materialisation of the world. A relational ontology disrupts dualist binaries by re-thinking conceptual relations through the agency, or dynamism, of the material. The ontological/epistemological divide inherent in Cartesian dualism, Newtonian ontology, and representationalism is disrupted by theorizing ontological and epistemological equality amongst human and more-than-human entities. There are no pre-existing subject/objects in the world. The implications of a relational ontology include the ethical response-ability that comes with recognising humans as part of and not superior to the ‘others’ of the world.

44. Representationalism

The philosophical and Newtonian perspective that the world is composed of ontologically separate entities that can only be accessed or known through mental images, language, cognition and consciousness (representations). Humans are foregrounded as the sole constructors of knowledge and knowledge-making practices. Barad (2007) describes representationalism as a tripartite relationship between knowledge (representations), the knower (human) and the known (what is purported to be represented).

45. Response-able/response-ability

Not to be mistaken for being responsible or assuming responsibility as this suggests that entities pre-exist intra-actions and relata. Response-able/response-ability is about being “ethically in touch with the ‘other’ (human *and* more-than-human) so as to render the other capable” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p.24). Being ‘in touch’ includes attending to, tracing and taking account of entanglements.

46. Situated knowledges

Haraway (1988) proposed situated knowledges as an ethical, epistemological, ontological, and political response to the militarised, racist, late-industrial, scientific, and technological policies of the US government in the late 1980's. It is a practice of knowledge-making that considers power relations and the politics of location. Objectivity is neither neutral nor given but positionally embedded in bodily, culturally, historic, and societal contexts.

47. Spacetime mattering

Agential realism re-works the 'container model of space', the spatialization of unilinear time, and the reification of matter by destabilising the ontological separability of space, time, and matter. Barad (2010) explains that spacetime mattering is a topological manifold of iterative and differentiating entanglement of temporalities through spaces.

48. Storying/storytelling

A postqualitative pedagogical and research method that works with/in a relational ontology especially drawing on Haraway. It neither subscribes to narrative discourse nor human-centric practices that locate stories in space and time. Storying foregrounds the significance of human and more-than-human relations. Haraway (2016) writes that stories are *sympoietic*, which is making and telling together with 'unruly kin'.

49. Subjectivity

Human-centric viewpoints consider subjectivity to refer to the autonomous, individual, and independent person or entity. Braidotti (2018) states that the posthuman condition exceeds 'universal' claims of human supremacy, and by implication, the pivotal role of language and consciousness in knowledge-making practices. The posthuman knowing subject is not a person but rather a material becoming that is constantly engaged in self-organisation. This subject is relational, embodied, embedded, affective and accountable.

50. Substance ontology

Substance ontologies assume that the world is composed of distinct entities with given properties that interact in container-like spaces and unilinear timelines.

51. Theorising

A posthumanist, material practice of being open to the world and part of the world's ontology. Access to the world is not mediated by language or (human) consciousness only. Theorising is a mode of experimenting with knowledge construction through direct material engagement with the world, and not standing at a distance and representing it. Barad (2007) writes that "theories are living, breathing configurations of the world" (p. 49). The world theorises as it experiments with itself.

52. Time

Kohan (2014, 2018) problematizes the concept of childhood as well as the relationship between time and thinking (also education, learning, and schooling) by drawing Aristotle and Plato's interpretation of time. He writes that *aion* and *chronos* are references for two different qualities of time.

Chronos refers to the continuous, consecutive, and successive moments of time. These moments are linear, ordered, numbered, progressive, and irreversible. An example is clock time, days of the week, months, years. Time becomes a cultural invention that is structured in definitive periods (past, present, future, yesterday, tomorrow and so forth). Kohan refers to chronos as adult time.

Aion is the time of being and intensity of life. It is neither divisible, nor measured, and always in the here and now. Aion is playful and uninhibited. For Kohan, aion is child time.

53. Worlding/Worldliness

The relational, ongoing, iterative, and intra-active material-discursive practices through which the world comes into be(com)ing.

Carrier Bag I

Story Gatherings

Down the rabbit hole

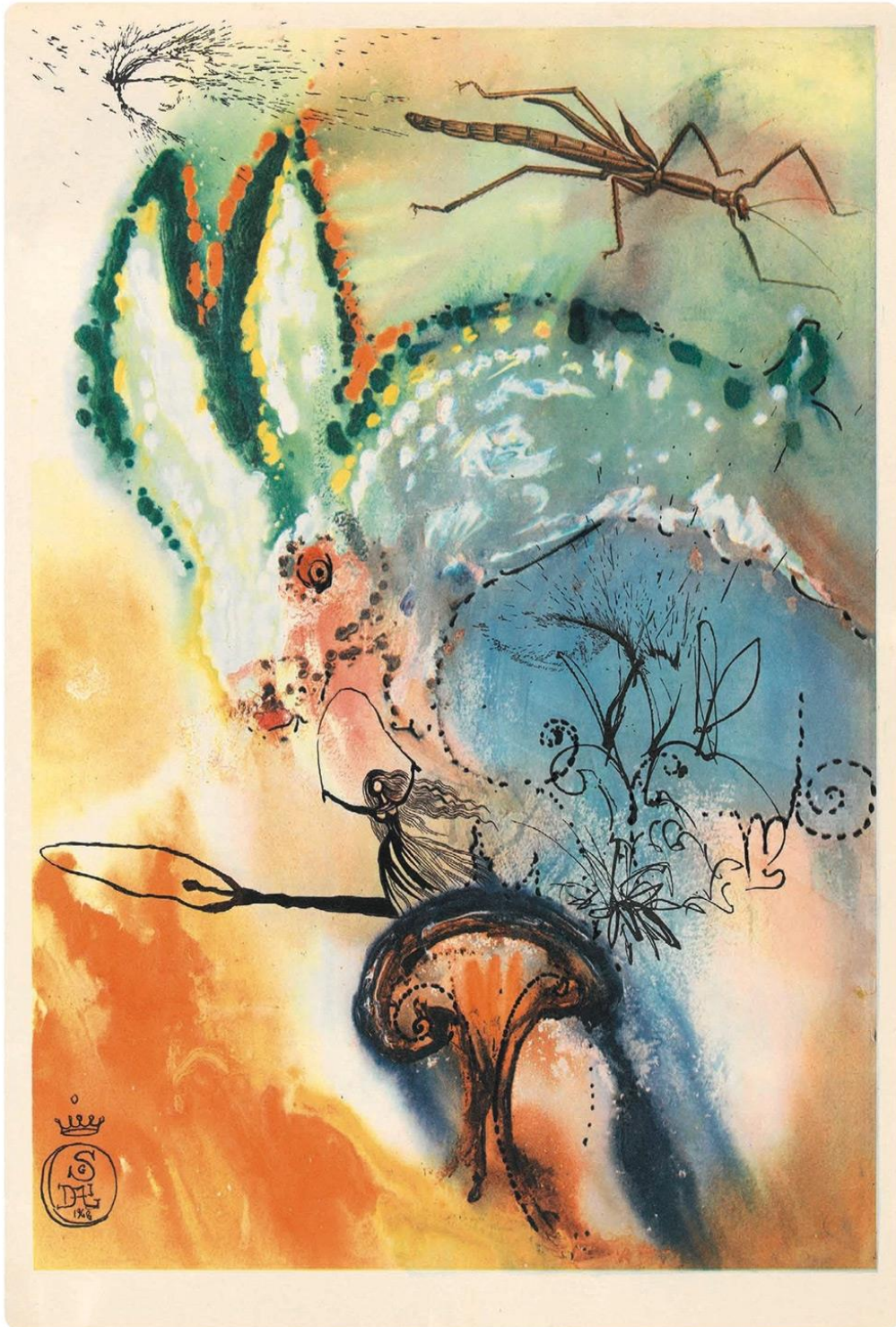


Figure CB I. Down the Rabbit Hole (Carroll & Dalí, 1969/2015)

This thesis is a collection of four storybags that are also referred to in this study as carrier bags. As will be discussed in chapter 1, the storybags draw on the work of Ursula Le Guin (1989) and are conceptualised as porous containers that carry unexpected entities and generate unanticipated partnerships. Given the critical posthumanist¹ stance in this study, the carrier bags are material-discursive² entanglements of human and more-than-human forces.

Each carrier bag emerges with/in³ one of twelve, untitled heliogravures⁴ by the surrealist artist Salvador Dali. These heliogravures correspond to each of the twelve chapters in Lewis Carroll's⁵ *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015). Carrier bag I draws on Dali's illustration of the first chapter in *Alice in Wonderland* which is titled *Down the Rabbit Hole*. Anyone familiar with the story will remember that the chapter begins with the White Rabbit, a humanimal who wears a waistcoat and carries a pocket watch repeatedly chastising himself for being 'late'. By chance, he is spotted by Alice, a young English girl who is spending her afternoon along the banks of a river. Alice, a satirical figuration of child and childhood in Victorian era Britain, is bored (Feuerstein, 2019; Ren, 2015) and much of her time is taken up daydreaming how to make her (adult-dominant) life as interesting as possible. Astounded by the sight of the rabbit, she follows the creature down a hole, where she becomes caught up in the most peculiar, complex and chaotic turn of events. Alice's encounter with the White Rabbit is the first of many episodes that rudely interrupt her somewhat regimented and prescriptive experiences with/in childhood (Ren, 2015). Playing with bent realities, unexpected characters (Cheshire cat and Mad Hatter), strange conversations (advice from a caterpillar) and bizarre events (Mad Hatter tea party), the book disrupts power dichotomies such as adult/child, rational/imagination and human/animal amongst others (Jacques, 2015).

¹ Please see the Glossary of terms.

² Please see the Glossary of terms.

³ Please see the Writing conventions.

⁴ Burstein (2015) explains that a heliogravure (or photogravure) is a type of printing technique that arose in the early 19th century through the work of French inventor and photographer Joseph Nicéphore Niepce. The technique is rarely used in current times.

⁵ Lewis Carroll was the pen name adopted by Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in 1856. Although best known for his authorship of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, Dodgson was also a mathematician who made substantial contributions to algebra and symbolic logic.

Given the surrealist nature of the Alice's adventures, it is hardly surprising that Dali was commissioned to illustrate a reprint of the book⁶ by Maecenas Press-Random House in 1969 (Burstein, 2015). Dali's creations bring to life the paradoxes, disrupted realities, dreams, wild imaginaries and distortions of space, time, logic and proportion depicted in Carroll's work (Burstein, 2015). However, Dali's illustrations should not be misconstrued as an extension of Carroll's writing. The vibrant and saturated use of colour in the heliogravures, as well as the symbolism and imagery (insects and animals) depict an alternate reality from that portrayed by Carroll (see for example Greenfield, 2016; Hiltz, 2011). What is significant is the porosity of the illustrations in 'holding' and simultaneously 'leaking' multiple pieces of Carroll's writing in relation to the colour, imagery, painting technique used to create heliogravures, and the worldliness⁷ that emerges. Dali makes visible the (silent) presence of unexpected human and more-than-human partnerships and the fortuitous phenomena that emerge from such relations. In this study, Dali's work is the impetus that brings into being the carrier bags of thoughts and ideas pertaining to the im/possible learning encounters for autistic child.

Dali's untitled heliogravure (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015) is a carrier bag that invites intra-action⁸ with the unexpected phenomena, curious thoughts, and odd spaces in which this study has dwelt. It orientates us to think with a study that has iteratively re-invented and re-written itself along lines and knots. The journey commences with three stories. Chapter 0 is a posthumanist account of shifting (my) subjectivity as a m/otherscholar through human and more-than-human entanglements. The story that follows is chapter 1, where postqualitative storying⁹ practices are outlined as research method. Chapter 2 engages with the query at the heart of this study: the concept of ontoepistemic injustice in relation to autistic child, education, and communication intervention.

⁶ See chapter 1 for further discussion.

⁷ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁸ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁹ Please see the Glossary of terms.



0

LINES OF FLIGHT

Becoming posthumanist researcher

This is a study that tells stories of a critical posthumanist¹⁰ approach to philosophical enquiries with autistic children. It explores the politics of how autistic children are positioned as knowledge-makers with/in¹¹ learning spaces such as classrooms and therapeutic environments.

Like many theses, this study was inspired by personal experiences, or rather worldliness¹², of encountering autism as mom, early childhood scholar, paediatric speech-language therapist, and Philosophy with/for Children (P4wC) practitioner. Drawing on feminist storying¹³ practices and the Deleuze-Guattarian notion of the line of flight¹⁴, this chapter is about how posthumanism and material feminism (especially the more-than-human such as materials, memories, technology, and multiple temporalities) re-configure/d (my) subjectivity as researcher during this doctoral journey, and subsequently the (dis)(re)orientation of research practices with autism, childhood, interventions and pedagogy. The stories presented here are not autobiographical but rather posthumanist practices of ongoing (re-iterative) human and more-than-human intra-actions¹⁵ with/in the world. It is about the creativity of unexpected relations amongst the overlooked bits and bobs of matter that co-generate powerful stories.

¹⁰ Please refer to the Glossary of terms and chapter 3 for further discussion.

¹¹ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹² Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms and chapter 1 for further discussion.

¹⁴ In *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Lorraine (2013) explains that lines of flight are pathways of creative mutations that emerge through implicit and virtual power relations amongst assemblages of bodies.

¹⁵ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

0.1. Re-configuring the autism-m/otherscholar¹⁶ dynamic

The story in this chapter begins with the complexity of doing research in my capacity as m/other to autistic child. Despite the urging from Karin Murriss, my doctoral supervisor, I have always been reluctant to fold (my) imprints of autism into this study. Like Antolini (2005), who has written a compelling account of having to balance the complex needs of an autistic child with PhD candidature, I was wary of re-instating the vulnerability and historical injustices against women scholars with (dis/abled) children. ‘M/otherwork’ tends to be undervalued in academia given the pressurising (post)neoliberal, achievement-orientated policies and practices (Osgood & Bhopal, 2016). The lived tensions of juggling caregiving with the demands of an academic career have produced the m/otherscholar as an identity constructed along asymmetrical (patriarchal) power relations regarding the responsibilities for procreation and parenting¹⁷ (see Boyer, 2018; Thwaites & Pressland, 2017). Bosanquet (2017) describes the ideological clashes between matricentric practices and stereotypes of women scholars as follows: “when academia and motherhood are pitted against each other, terms like ‘interruption’, ‘sacrifice’ and ‘risk’ recur” (p. 87).

Disability compounds the m/other-as-scholar dilemma, and I find myself drawn to the women in academia who write about what it means to care for children with dis/ability (see for example Antolini, 2005; Runswick-Cole, 2016). Tasked with the responsibility of ‘good’ parenting for dis/abled child, the m/other-as-scholar faces greater discrimination, and vulnerability, on account of increased care-giving responsibilities that the child requires, as well as social and developmental pressures to ‘fix’ said child (see for example, Douglas & Klar, 2020). The fixing culture is deeply rooted in early childhood educational and therapeutic interventions that aim to move dis/abled child closer to normative psychological expectations of children in capitalist and neoliberal times (Runswick-Cole & Goodley, 2018; Runswick-Cole & Ryan, 2019). Runswick-Cole (2016) describes how m/others of dis/abled

¹⁶ The term motherscholar re-constructs the mother-as-scholar identity as a site of creativity, experimentation, and transformation. Feminist work in this area engage in embodied practices that foreground the emergence of multiple subjectivities, as well as collective and collaborative research-thinking practices. The use of the forward slash as in m/other highlights the ontological in/separability of stereotypes and differences (othering) faced by many working mothers.

¹⁷ The literature refers specifically to gender differences amongst men and women.

children in academia are sometimes chastised for not taking better care of their dis/abled children or frowned upon by dis/ability advocates for the social-political implications of their m/othering choices. These m/others may encounter healthcare professionals who virtuously pathologise them as “grief stricken and coming to terms with the diagnosis” (Runswick-Cole, 2016, p. 22). Runswick-Cole and Goodley (2018, p. 235) write that:

... the roles of mothers of disabled children are expanded: they are to work, consume and care (as good citizens) and anticipate, utilise, and enact a whole plethora of specialist early interventions (which are increasingly neurological and psychological in character).

With regard to employment opportunities and options, m/others of dis/abled children tend to occupy ‘flexible’ positions that permit multi-tasking, and unexpected changes to family and work commitments as brought about by the child’s immediate health condition. Unless these m/others have very strong support systems in place, their jobs are not always fulfilling in terms of career prospects and financial remuneration, and ultimately job satisfaction. For instance, in my master’s research report (Packery-Babamia, 2009), I wrote about the joys and pitfalls that allied healthcare practitioners¹⁸ face in their daily work with dis/ability, and in their capacity as m/others of children with dis/ability. Participants reported experiencing a loss of autonomy in terms of the scope of the profession in which they work. They also tended to work in areas that related closely to their child’s dis/ability as opposed to an aspect of the profession in which they were truly interested (Packery-Babamia, 2009). Balancing work with intense caregiving requirements led many participants to share their feelings of low self-esteem amongst peers. The moms in my study found it particularly difficult to contend with perceived judgements from fellow colleagues regarding their professional viewpoints on the management of their children. Subsequent to my research, I would come to experience this judgement for myself when on more than one occasion I was told by my child’s therapist/s to “leave the researcher/therapist in you behind” and “just be ‘a mom’”. As discussed in the literature (see for example, Hodge & Runswick-Cole, 2017), I came to know only too well of the ‘epistemic gaps’ in service provision such as disjointed

¹⁸ Please see the Glossary of terms.

communication between parents and practitioners based on different life experiences. I also found that on occasion, my research was considered to be biased on account of the perceived in/separability of personal and professional life. Pushed, shunted, and stereotyped from unexpected places, as women, it becomes so much more challenging to fight the hard battle of institutional prejudice and discrimination in academia, and in life. It seemed that phallogocentric practices, where male perspectives are privileged in the construction of meaning and meaning-making, are still very much alive.

However, recent literature in m/othering increasingly foregrounds feminist politics in 're-birthing' spaces for m/otherscholars in academia (see Bosanquet et al., 2020). Such research looks at the complex, multi-layered relations and messiness as well as affect that disrupt patriarchal practices in higher education. I have come to realise the wisdom in Karin's suggestion to include my experiences as m/otherscholar in this study, and I pay tribute to her advice in this chapter. As Karin has said during supervision: "we are always transindividual, never coming to knowledge as singular and independent of forces, matter and other individuals that shape our thinking".

In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, French poststructuralist feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray (1993) argues that re-thinking subjectivity is key to disrupting phallogocentric constructions of women. Irigaray proposes a non-unitary vision of the subject, where sexual differences matter. Now, while Irigaray's notion of sexual differences includes the idea of corporeality for political and social standpoints, her work does not re-inscribe biological essentialism¹⁹. Rather, Irigaray calls for an affirmative, productive approach to embodiment, where being woman is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon. Building on Irigaray's work, Braidotti (2011, p. 211) proposes feminist posthumanist subjectivity as "an active interconnected web of social, political and epistemological conditions" and a "negotiation of the material-semiotic" that contribute to a (more than human) self that is always emerging and moving. As women, we cannot discount the materiality of changes and events in our (academic) lives brought on by our sexual differences. Birthing and publishing, conferencing, and feeding,

¹⁹ Irigaray's work on the re-construction of bodies without re-establishing racial and sexualised differences has been influential in establishing material feminism or new materialism, often considered the third generation of feminist scholarship (see Alaimo, 2010; Coole & Frost, 2010)

caregiving and critiquing, toilet training and writing, lecturing and nursing, always labouring: herein lies the power of being women. Feminist posthumanities create new stories and worldly relations that re-configure knowledge-making practices outside of dominant modes of knowing/being in the world (Asberg & Braidotti, 2018). From the perspective of situated knowledges²⁰, Haraway (1988) writes that the richness of feminist epistemology lies with/in the experience of different bodily constitutions in different locations and temporalities. For Braidotti (2011), relating feminist posthumanist experiences and subjectivity to theory strengthens connections between life and thought.

Thinking with Braidotti (2011), and Irigaray (1993), life as m/otherscholar/dis/ableist/educator/therapist becomes entangled phenomena, sensitive to histories, spaces, and materials that constantly re-configure the world. In resisting the social-political categories of inclusion/exclusion, I become what Braidotti (2011) refers to as the undutiful daughter: engaging in conceptual dis/obedience with/in rhizomatic patterns of existence, entangled in a myriad of phenomena which situate (my) bodymindmatter with/in nature/culture practices. Poised to diffract and intra-act with the material-discursive, I am always re-configured, re-shaped, re-formed, and re-theorised.

In acknowledging the feminist scholarship, and in an effort towards undoing the shackles of phallogocentric thinking, I share an entangled story of mothering, research, autism, child and P4wC. Using diffraction²¹, the story is re-turned, opening up 'empty spaces' that are alive with possibility and potential. This is (my) story of ongoing openness to re-configurations.

²⁰ Please see the Glossary of terms.

²¹ Please see the Glossary of terms.

0.2. Entangled storying practices

Please note that the information in this chapter, and the subsequent re-writing and editing that has taken place, is presented with full consent by my children. This includes sensitive information such as diagnosis, family dynamics, inventions and so forth.

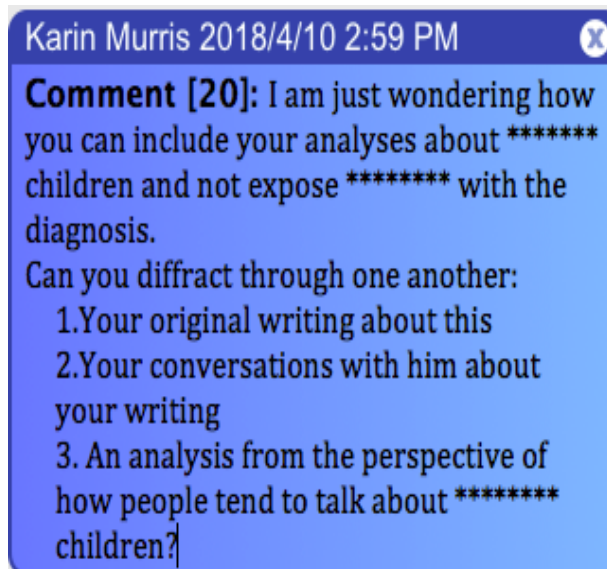


Figure 0.1. Karin Murriss comment (1)

The writing below is about re-turning the material-discursive through feminist storying practices²². Following on from Karin's comment in figure 0.1 it is a story within a story within a story, which germinated during the supervision process. The story is purposefully written three times over, and each version is depicted in different fonts and colours where applicable.

The first version was written as a research journaling activity. This version is written in Calibri font size 12, italicised and underlined.

[The second version was written in collaboration with my children in order to obtain their assent as well as their opinion on the written piece. Here, my son's re-turning of the story is significant, and the story is written as

²² Please see the Glossary of terms and also chapter 1 for further discussion.

he has intended. The stories in version 2 are written in Comic Sans font size 12, bolded and inserted between parentheses].

However, his (re)writing of the story posed some conceptual difficulties for academic writing, so the third version highlights 'bumpy moments'. Re-written with suggestions from Karin, the writing consciously heeds thoughts which are disruptive and challenging, and subsequently foregrounds a posthumanist writing style. The writing style here uses font Dreaming Outland Pro (regular) in size 12.

[It's a lazy Sunday afternoon, and our household is in 'siesta mode'. I'm in the study, taking some time to catch up on PhD writing, when my (soon to be twelve years old) son enters the room. He has a gentle presence and waits patiently for me to acknowledge him. But today I'm too engrossed in the writing. So, he enquires of me: "Hey mum, are you doing your homework?" "What is it for?" "How many words for grade PhD?" "80 000!!! I think so we will all be dead by then!"

I chuckle, yet he is somewhat puzzled by my reaction. "Oh Bowser Junior!"²³ I say, "That's so cute!", completely forgetting that he hates to be called "cute". A stormy expression clouds his face, and his voice rises: "DON'T CALL ME CUTE!!! I'm not a baby, I'm a big boy! You just disappointed me and... and... and... and that's why I can never trust you ... ever again!" he says and marches out of the room. He leaves me pondering about my sentimentalised response to his efforts to engage with me. I become aware of how my actions position his knowledge as pejoratively

²³ At the time of writing, my son was a huge fan of the Super Mario Bros, especially the character Bowser Junior. He often insisted that we forego his birth name and call Bowser Junior all the time.

child-like and lacking in maturity. Bowser Junior makes it known that he does not appreciate the judgement about his epistemic status inherent in my engagement with him].

[A few days later now, a weekday late afternoon, and he comes to me once more. I'm writing yet again. "How long will you take?" he asks. This time, I decide to show him what I'm writing. "Actually, I'm writing a story about you". His eyes widen. "Me? (Long pause) What about?" "Well about you, and philosophy thinktime, and the stories Daadi²⁴ and Naani tell you, and Jannah²⁵ and Mario and Luigi...."

He waves his hand frantically, his signal for me to 'stop' talking. "No, no, no, no!", he protests, "Let me tell you what happened". "Ok, but first, do you want to know what I wrote? I ask. Pause. He doesn't respond, and I wonder what he is thinking and experiencing. Is he bored? Is he processing what I've just said? I don't know, but I start reading out aloud anyway].

[Sumaya reading]:

It is never quite bedtime in our household; someone or the other always has something last minute to do...

[He interrupts me: "Mummy, don't you know that I like Mario and Luigi?". "Yes", I say, "That's why I wrote this story". Slowly and quite deliberately, he turns away from me. He avoids eye contact, yet there is a

²⁴ Daadi is cultural reference to the paternal grandmother, while Naani denotes the maternal grandmother.

²⁵ Jannah is the Arabic word for heaven.

glimmer in his eyes, and the corners of his mouth turn up ever so slightly. "So, I will want to be Bowser Junior in the story", he announces].




Figure 0.2. Bowser and his son Bowser Junior (Kay, 2023)



[Quite cheeky! Though this time I keep my amusement to myself. "Isn't that the one who uses bad language?" I ask, with deliberate scepticism (he once stumbled across an age restricted, You-Tube video of Bowser and his son Bowser Junior, which he took great delight in, and has since never forgotten!). He bursts into an uncontrollable fit of giggles. "Ja, Ja, Ja... he likes to say the 'F' word!". Bowser Junior (my son) has a wicked sense of humour, and it is often through humour that he is open to exploring new ideas. I am only too delighted to accede to the choice of name and character if it means encouraging him to philosophise with/in the world.

"Okaaay, fiiiine!", I say, feigning a half-hearted response. My response defies a house rule (no swearing), and in doing so, troubles the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Bowser Junior is intrigued by my response, as apparent by his wide-eyed look at me. What else will be challenged? "OK, READ now mum!", he orders].


Mario and Luigi are characters in the Nintendo Entertainment System video game *Super Mario Brothers*






The game is the latest version of the *Mario Brothers*, which was originally released in 1983. The game follows two brothers, Mario, and Luigi,  who travel through different stages of the Mushroom

Kingdom  in order to rescue the Princess Peach  who has been kidnapped by the villain Bowser



. The Princess Peach is the princess of the Mushroom Kingdom, and has a servant named Toad  . Bowser has

turned all the toadstools  in the kingdom into bricks  . His goal is to conquer the Mushroom Kingdom, kill Mario and marry Princess Peach. Naturally, Mario and friends always rescue the princess and save the

day  . The stages in the game, which become subsequently more challenging, require the player to

navigate dangerous terrain and Bowser's army of minions  in reaching the final destination (a flagpole)



The game consists of power-ups such as super mushrooms, fire flower, and the 'starman'.



A preview of the game can be accessed via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrzFaJrgX6g>.

Figure 0.3. A synopsis of the Super Mario Brothers videogame created with Bowser Junior

[Sumaya reading]:

From finishing a project ("oops, mum, it really did slip my mind!"), to chill time ("MOTHER! I need to unwind before I can sleep!"), to bouncing on the trampoline ("5 ... I mean 50 more jumps mummy!") to routine, ordered and organised ("is it 7:30pm yet? Must I go to bed? Mummy, is it 7:43 now? 17 minutes to bed? ... (temper tantrum brewing) WHAT!!! Only 7:52

now? THIS IS TAKING SOOO LONG!! Ok, its 8:00 pm now! Time for bed! I think so, I'm sooo tired! GOOD NIIIIHIIIGT!!").

[Bowser Junior: "Who did it?". "Did what?", I ask, wondering if he would identify each child from her or his respective quote. "Because you know why? It was taking so long time, and I needed to sleep," he says. I resist correcting his grammar. "Maybe you should have just gone to bed at 7:30?", I suggest. "But that's not the rule.... why do you always want to break the rules?", he asks me quizzically].

[Sumaya reading]:

As parents attempting to balance a busy household with hectic work schedules, timeous bedtime is an essential part of managing life, and perhaps ensuring some degree of our sanity! When the children were younger, we tried all sorts of popular strategies to regulate the bedtime routine –calm body-mind, no electronic devices prior to bedtime, warm baths, massages, hot drinks, visual schedules, prayers, snuggles and so forth.

[He starts to lose interest now. I quickly paraphrase the text for him]. "Do you remember the hot chocolates, warm baths and backrubs mum and dad gave you before bedtime?". He smiles, "and what did I do it when I was a baby?". "Did I used to snuggle in the cot?". "Did my baby brother also do it?" We go back in time to some of his favourite memories as a toddler. Our collaborative story-making is over for today].

[A day later, and I coax him to (re)turn the story: "Hey Bowser Junior, should we read the story again?" "Fine" he says, though quite disinterested].

Karin Murriss 2018/4/8 9:48 AM



Comment [7]: CAN YOU PERHAPS SAY SOMETHING POSITIVE about this? How children tend to be so accommodating and generous? And do it to please us?

Figure 0.4. Karin's comment (2) on Bowser Junior's apparent disinterest

I seem to bump into my own thinking, and my thoughts wander to descriptions which inevitably judge child, the patience, and generosity of child in accommodating our (adult) perspectives on learning.

[Sumaya reading]

We often re-turn to cultural tradition of storytelling, in which we have come to infuse philosophical thinking. The children call it thinkspot, thinktime, but most often, cheekily tag it as "Naani/Daadi says..." , which is translated as "my maternal/paternal grandmother says ...". The tag line refers to act of storytelling, in which (timeless) wisdom, in the form of folklore or parables, has passed down through generations of cultural and family traditions, most recently through my mother and mother-in-law to the children. The cheekiness comes from the children's response to the ideologies which sometimes appear antiquated to them.

["Lame!!", he says in a bored tone. "This is so boring!!!"]

A 'bumpy' moment: Did Bowser Junior's disinterest and apparent boredom with my original writing compromise his participation in the collaborative storying? Can child be simultaneously included and excluded in research?

"Oh yeah?" I say, feigning indignation. "How about all the stories Daadi and Naani told you ... like about Allah (God), and Jannah, and what it is to

be good". His eyes light up: "And Mario and Luigi?" he asks. "Where is the picture of them and me?"]



Figure 0.5. Bowser Junior and Luigi from the Super Mario Brothers

[Sumaya reading]

Storytelling embodies cultural and philosophical dilemmas such as morality, life lessons, choices, guidance on everyday issues in life and so forth. Heaven, hell, goodness, mysticism, God, community norms/values, evil, the supernatural, karma, life, death and after life, feature prominently in the storytelling. The storytelling-philosophical thinking is most often emergent, occurring individually, with half or the whole troop and is always strongly motivated by affect. I have found it to be a powerful contemplative tool and a way of putting the day's issues 'to bed'.

The 'bumpy' moment intensifies, for Bowser Junior runs off to play with his brother when I read this part of the story.

[I follow him outside, and continue to read]

Often, I position myself as enquirer alongside the children, prompting them to diffract the storytelling with their experiences. They stall, unpack, question, and sometimes even second-guess the stories in relation to significant events, which have occurred during the course of their everyday lives. Naturally, the conversations are dramatically different for each child. My teenage daughters unpack issues of justice, politics, friendships, and what it is to live ethically. The conversations with my sons touch on similar topics, though in an unprecedented and often unexpected manner. ~~This is because both my sons have been diagnosed with learning differences, which enable them to understand the world in a unique, if not unpredictable manner.~~

Another 'bumpy' moment: to include or to exclude text that potentially labels/diagnoses or categorises child? Or does the strikethrough include and exclude a thought that vacillates? Diffracted through the strikethrough are the many family discussions we have had about special abilities and differences as superpowers such as extra sensory perception, all of which are part of neurodiversity²⁶.

[Bowser Junior bounces on the trampoline. "Do you remember all the stories we told? I ask him. "Ja, ja, ja ... mummy, did I do philosophy at Brila?". "Yes" I reply. "Do you remember what you spoke about?". He comes to stop. "My memories!", he announces, quite pleased with himself. "Yes, and Nat said that you had some really good ideas!", I say. He giggles. "Ja, and mummy didn't you know that we were dancing in the church?²⁷. And

²⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

²⁷ Bowser Junior knew that the religious and cultural traditions of paternal grandmother would consider dancing in a place of worship a sign of disrespect.

what will Daadi say?”. The conversation turns to his memories of Brila²⁸, a Canadian bilingual charity that is committed to philosophical enquiries with young people through youth camps. Natalie Fletcher, Brila's director, is a family friend, and facilitated some of the enquiries with Bowser Junior. The year in which Bowser Junior attended camp, Brila took place with/in a church situated at Loyola Campus, Concordia University, Montréal, Quebec. He re-members the thinking space. He speaks of the children, the games, hiding in between the pews, the music and incidentally, a posthuman philosophy robot he made at the camp.

Why do I include this moment in the writing? Because it is the first time that he has articulated his experiences at Brila - which took place two years ago. His thoughts are entangled with a vivid recollection of cultural dissonance. His thoughts-in-conflict become apparent.

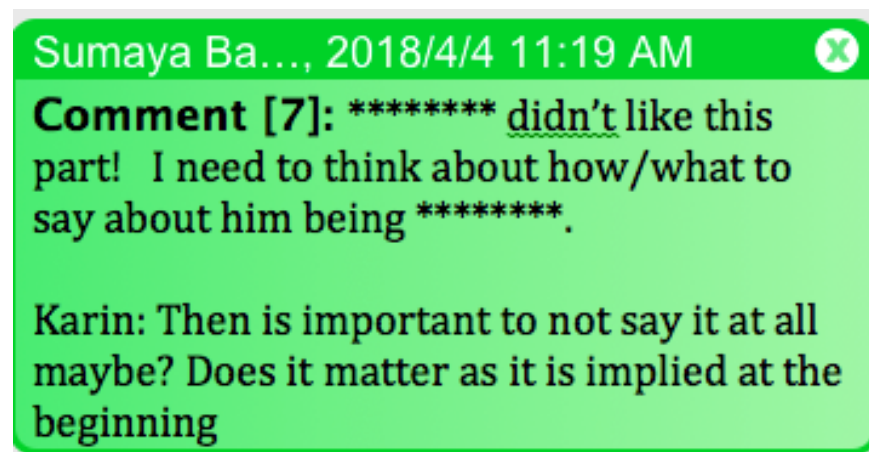


Figure 0.6. Supervision correspondence between Karin and Sumaya

A further 'child-research writing bump': My original writing has described Bowser Junior's thinking in detail, which I deemed necessary for the reader's benefit. However,

²⁸ See <https://www.brila.org> for more information.

he did not want this information to be included in the thesis²⁹. Once again, how can research make space for child to be simultaneously included and excluded?



Figure 0.7. A void in the writing

[Figure 0.7 articulates a void, where the original writing and description of Bowser Junior has been concealed but not erased. I think of Barad (2012) writing on nothingness. The orange block is not empty, it is filled with child, voice, power, resistance, and the ethics of deep, attentive listening to silences].

[Thursday after school, and I'm fixing a snack for the children. Bowser Junior comes to me. "Mummy What did I do in the story?". "Which story?" I ask deliberately. "The one in your book," he says. "For your homework Did you finish it? If you don't, will your teacher [Karin] give you a de-merit?"]

[I pick up the reading where we left off]

²⁹ In re-turning the writing when he was older, Bowser Junior consented to having information about himself included in the thesis.

This time we 'bump' into philosophical thinking: Bowser Junior doesn't quite like the original writing about him in relation to philosophical thinking. So, we (re)write it as follows:

[Sumaya reading]

Bowser Junior sometimes likes to do philosophy. But talking too much with so many people can be boring. Because he is a shy guy, and he does get a little bit shy. And all the talking locks his brain.

(Sumaya only - He speaks about 'autonomy', 'independence', 'gender', 'education', 'fairness', 'love', 'friendship', 'im/mortality', and 'ownership').

His ideas are really good, and he is a great thinker!

Here are some of the questions he asks and speaks about:

(From the original writing)

- Why do people like to be right and not left (wrong)?
- Can children be in charge of adults?
- How many children can I have? What will I do if I have daughters - I really don't like girls?
- How old do I have to be when I die?
- Do children grow into people?
- Do ghosts have hands? (What do they do with their hands?)

Figure 0.8. Re-writing Bowser Junior's thoughts on philosophical thinking

[He looks quite pleased with himself and his questions. "Ja, ja, cos I don't like girls!!! And I am no one's sister!!!". "You mean brother" I say. He doesn't like being corrected: "Stop it mum!" he says crossly. "Girls are so annoying! They make me so angry!!"]

I steer the conversation back to my writing, "Bowser Junior, do you remember, when you spoke about being born before Princess Peach³⁰?"

[Sumaya reading]

One evening, he speaks about age, birth order, and authority.

"I needed to be born before Princess Peach," he announces. "Because I'm bigger, stronger, and taller than her. So why did Allah make her be born before me? That's so wrong of Him!"

["Yep, yep!" Bowser Junior says, "I AM bigger than her".

He pauses, and then says, "Actually, I didn't need so many sisters! I think so, they should have all been brothers!"].

[Sumaya reading]

As usual, Bowser Junior had left me perplexed as to how to answer his question, and I bring this back to how to work with such questions when facilitating philosophical enquiries. For instance, concepts would need unpacking and questioning for clarification, making connections and so forth. As speech therapist I think about what might be required for abstract reasoning and conversational success. How could I support communication and manage unusual verbal behaviour such as perseveration³¹ or echolalia³²? As mother, I am aware of my child's anxiety, emotional well-being, and the challenges he faces in navigating in the world. I cannot enter one role only: for I am already more than one, a multiplicity of speech-therapist-facilitator-mother. So, instead, my diffractions situate me as listener, enabling me to be present in the moment with him, and perhaps to let go of my preconceived judgments pertaining to his thinking.

³⁰ Princess Peach is Bowser Junior's sister and older by 2 years.

³¹Please see the Glossary of terms.

³² Please see the Glossary of terms.

[His attention wanes. Bowser Junior swings his legs, pulls his face and giggles. "I wanna go play Mario now", he says. Suddenly, he sits up straight, "Where's my picture with Mario?", he asks].



Figure 0.9. Bowser Junior with Mario from the Super Mario Brothers

[I didn't read the excerpt below to him. I don't completely know what motivated my decision].

With a deep breath, I enter his world by offering a tentative explanation, knowingly playing with his fantasies and beliefs about pre and after life, with the hope that he will pick up the thread and extend thinking from this point. My diffractions produce an agential cut as a boundary making practice³³: a move where certain ideas, histories, and locations are

highlighted over others. It is a conscious setting up of social apparatus that enables thought patterns.

On reading the first version of this chapter, Karin draws my attention to the wording of and meaning implied in the text above. She asks me the following:

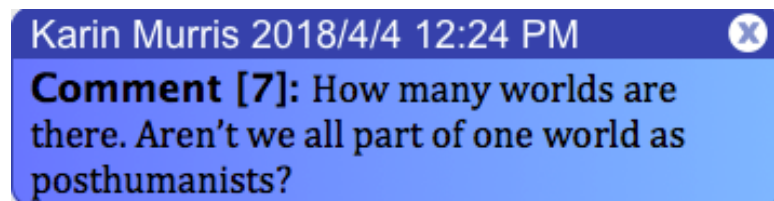


Figure 0.10. Karin Murriss supervision comment (3)

Karin is correct, Bowser Junior's world that I describe above is not a separate entity from the rest of 'the world'. The writing also reflects my power as adult, where I am the expert who determines what counts as knowledge, and the way thought should be accessed. But the original writing also bears reference to the timeframe of my thoughts and practice, as well as the trappings of dualism which I inadvertently rely/ied upon.

Karin's comment not only brings to the fore the difficulties of thinking outside what traditionally counts as knowledge, but also questions the ontology which underpins our knowledge and knowledge-making practices.

[My discussion with Bowser Junior continues, "Ja, but do you remember what I said to you Bowser Junior?" I ask].

Sumaya: "I think that maybe you just had such a good time in Jannah (heaven) that you wanted to stay there a little longer. So, when Allah said 'Bowser Junior, it's your turn to go to your mum, you said 'just a little longer please. Mario and I are still playing. Let Princess Peach go first". He thinks about this long and hard: "So then I just have to grow myself smaller and smaller and then back in your tummy and then back to Jannah and then I can be born before Princess Peach?"

More perplexities, this time intriguing for we start questioning growth as a forward, linear process. We discuss the reversal of time. However, at the end of the discussion, he asks, quite incredulously: “But you mean we can’t grow ourselves backwards?”³⁴ Oh that is so USELESS!”

[Bowser Junior is now very excited. “No mummy, let me tell you the real story!” he says. He proceeds to relate, in detail, the last two games of Super Mario’s brothers which he played. At some point, I purposefully interject: “...but what about growing backwards?”. He waves me down and says, “No, no, no! Stop interrupting!” Instead, he continues with his story, this time inserting himself in the narrative, along with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. His storying comes back to power, strength, authority, age, and birth order].

He remains insistent on his point of view – why is growth a forward trajectory only, and why is it so time-consuming? Guided by the theory of P4wC and posthumanism, I resisted the finality of answers, and furthermore, because I am likewise intrigued by the question itself. It also makes me ponder on how knowledge is produced, categorised, and even imposed on us.

Finally, Bowser Junior announces: “Better more, I think so that I want a mum and a dad and no sisters and a brother”, touching on the fantasy of being the biggest, eldest, and only child in the family.

[Bowser Junior interrupts “No! I do want to have a brother”. He looks at his younger brother, and quite deliberately says, “He is so cute!” “I AM

³⁴ I did not tell Bowser Junior that he couldn’t grow backwards! Instead, he perceived my philosophical engagement with him as a form of disagreement with his original ideas. With/in classical autism theory, Bowser Junior’s response might be considered a rigid thinking style as evident by difficulties in adjusting to change in (routine/rote) thinking patterns.

NOT CUTE!!!!!!” his brother yells. Delighted at the ruckus caused, Bowser Junior sprints away from his brother, shrieking with laughter].

Each one of my children has pondered what life would have been like as an only child, at some point in her or his life. Bowser Junior’s statement is so appropriate to his situated position as sibling three in a brood of four. This discussion spanned a good 2 weeks – eventually he compromised by saying “Fine!! I won’t grow myself backwards, but then can you please give Mario and Luigi some magic mushrooms so that they can be real brothers for me”. And so, another philosophical question was born – what is it to be real?

[It is just before bedtime, and it’s thinkspot again].

[Bowser Junior “Hey mummy, I think so, maybe it’s better if we don’t have some mushrooms”. “Bro, do you mean on your pizza?” his younger brother asks. “No dude!!!” Bowser Junior says. “The magic mushrooms that can grow Mario and Luigi big and strong and that can make him real”. “Why not?” I ask him.

“Because then we will grow big and get sooo old! And I don’t want to live forever”].

0.3. A feminist posthumanist approach to subjectivity

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how critical posthumanism and material feminist practices transform (my) subjectivity as m/otherscholar, and subsequently the manner in which research takes place in this study. The stories with Bowser Junior are stretched through and with/in time, including the here and now, compelling slow thinking in order to attend to the phenomena that might otherwise be considered in/consequential. To

understand what the writing does, we humans are required to forego representational³⁵ claims to knowing and being in the world. In what follows, I (as m/otherscholar) take cue from Manning (2016: ix) who writes that:

The best kind of encounter with thinking is the kind that deeply listens to what writing is trying to do, almost thinking beyond what the author is capable of thinking, then returning that thinking, almost beyond what the reader can think, to the author. In this gesture of encounter, no one is trying to convince anyone: thought is thinking collectively at its limit.

Listening deeply to the writing re-turns the three stories entangled with/in the complexities of (my) material-discursive encounters with Bowser Junior. At face value, the writing may be challenging to read, requiring an acrobatic zigzagging amongst ideas, text, and colour. It weaves in and out of times, locations, and perspectives. Punctured by histories and experiences, the writing foregrounds an intricately complex and layered thinking. Time is out of sync. Bowser Junior threads his perspectives through the story I wrote and brings in elements which are important to him. For instance, I wondered about the significance of Brila manifesting at this time. Could it be because he related being in the church to the rules his grandmother had established? If so, why did it take him two years to articulate this thought? For Barad (2017a, p. 68) “Different times bleed into each other”. The future and the past are not situated along discrete timelines but are folded into the present. Bowser Junior’s memories of Brila were not merely a re-collection of an event that took place in the past, what we often term memories, but a diffraction that disrupts thinking, and memories, as figments of the mind. “Memory is not merely a subjective capacity of the human mind; rather, “human” and “mind” are part of the landtimescape – spacetime-mattering – of the world” (Barad, 2018, p. 33). Thinking with Barad, re-turning the details of the writing highlights the fluidity and re-creation of thought in relation *with* the materials which impregnate thinking (Barad, 2010).

³⁵ Please see the Glossary of terms.

A further intriguing aspect which emerges from the writing was his fascination with the Super Mario Brothers game. The game brought forth the following agential cuts³⁶: the experience of storytelling practices, the imaginative conjuring of heaven, the importance of friends and his family, the material-discursive reality of Super Mario Brothers game, the blurring of fiction/reality, the significance and indeed the recreation of concept of authority, pictures of him taken with Mario and Luigi, the im/partiality of listening, the affect³⁷ of temper tantrums and meltdowns, the intensity of mis/articulated thought, the space and time of thought, the questioning of social-cultural conventions and the power of magic and mushrooms as well as a deep-seated fascination with the gaming characters.

The writing kept re-turning the computer game, drawing attention to the role of gaming in mediating posthuman subjectivities and agencies. Wilde's (2017) unpublished doctoral thesis explores how posthumanist subjectivities are made possible through digital gaming. She argues that the technological advancements in gaming have enabled new and complex virtual realities in which humans can play, work, socialise, learn, and so forth. In the data above, Bowser Junior's virtual reality was not limited to the game only. His relation with the game could also be accessed through images/photo's, the internet, discussions with myself, retelling the stories about the game to the extent that other characters (for example, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) became part of his virtual world. The mushrooms were figurations of life/death and growth. Initially, he theorised that Mario and Luigi could become 'real' if we fed them appropriately, but he consequently changed his mind and decided not to feed the mushrooms to anyone because he did not want to live forever. For Bowser Junior, the virtual became the real and the real became the virtual. The threading together of the two worlds are ontologically in/separable and reflect the complex entanglement of the self and the other (the game) (Wilde, 2017). The analysis here should not be confused with the literature which theorises the autistic mind as a 'different operating system', or more specifically, a human mind which operates as the (formidable) next step in the evolution of the human species. Indeed, given the algorithmic analogies of the autistic mind to the computer, it is not surprising that the biological constraints of autism are increasingly mediated by technology. However, as Barad (2007) cautions,

³⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

³⁷ Please see the Glossary of terms.

analogies tend to portray reductionist perspectives of how phenomena are produced, for the material conditions of possibility are never constant, or fixed. Therefore, it is impossible to transpose the findings of one scenario to another when the nature of the apparatus³⁸ is different.

Why does this analysis of posthumanist subjectivity matter and for whom?

From the perspective of the liberal human subject, subjectivity of dis/abled individuals, primarily those with intellectual dis/ability, is primarily positioned within the literature on intervention, or what it referred to as the “interventionist social sciences” (Roets & Braidotti, 2012, p. 164). Personhood, if not subjectivity, is entrenched with/in measurements, assessments, diagnosis, and long-term educational and social outcomes. Stepping into the ‘early interventionist’ persona, I was aware of how Bowser Junior and my subjectivity was constrained by the social communication-cognitive difficulties associated with autism. For example, he did not always adhere to social cues and conventions. He became agitated by any responses/comment/interaction that challenged his understanding of the world, reflecting a preference for routine or that with which he is familiar. His position on authority (determined based on physical size or strength) might raise questions about the boundaries of his thinking. His ongoing interest with the characters Luigi and Mario, along with a blissful oblivion as to whether his interlocutor understood his perspective, might be theorised as mindblindedness³⁹. Often, the social-communicative difficulties stalled his thoughts, re-affirming his status as developmentally ‘immature’. The following questions emerged: What is it to be human? What is it to be dis/abled human? What are lines along which the notion of dis/ability has been theorised?

In contrast to the aforementioned theorisation of subjectivity as ‘lack of’, Wolfe (2010) states that rethinking dis/ability outside liberal human subject, re-creates spaces for affirming the positive differences of dis/ability. To go back to the data, Bowser Junior participated in complex discussions, he drew on memories, he listened actively, arguing, questioning, and justifying his opinion where he could. Bowser Junior clarified and thought

³⁸ Please see the Glossary of terms.

³⁹ Mindblindedness is closely associated with theory of mind and refers to the inefficacy of attributing mental states (emotions, values, beliefs) to the self and others.

deeply about new information, found solutions, used persuasion, evaluated new opinions, and participated in dialogue. He *philosophised* about be(com)ing in the world and therefore disrupted the dis/ability binary. Bowser Junior's subjectivity has been theorised from a discursive perspective only, and he is situated in-between ability and disability on the plane of the human subject. But in both instances, Bowser Junior's subjectivity is marred by bodily boundaries, and discourses that render him in/capable. Consequently, Bowser Junior remains bound with/in a subjectivity and ontology that does not pay sufficient attention to his emergence with/in the world other than through a human-centric framing.

The writing style is a quantum leap⁴⁰ in the analysis of posthuman subjectivity, for it is attentive to complex material-discursive entanglements which produce subjectivity outside of dis/abled bodyminds and other human-centric ideologies. However, the human is not dismissed from subjectivity but rather re-configured. For instance, Mazzei (2013, p. 779) experiments with the idea of "writing myself" into knowledge-making practices to enact posthumanist subjectivity in research-writing practices. Not to be mistaken as an exercise in narrative discourse or auto-ethnography, the aim is to re-fold oneself with data so that it is not possible to differentiate individual identities. For a posthumanist, the researcher is not ontologically *the subject* who enters spaces in the world (*object*) in order to theorise and attribute meaning to observable representations (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Consequently, there is no writing *about* research, but instead always *with* research (Mazzei, 2013). 'Writing myself' into this chapter, brings forth (my) embodied experiences-affect-memories which position me as part of the phenomena that I seek to know. My attempt to analyse or re-configure subjectivity urges a re-turning of the writing. Each time that the writing has returned, (my) subjectivity has shifted in line with the supervision comments, everyday life and living encounters, Bowser Junior's re-additions to the story, and the complexities of accounting for (my) thoughts that vacillate between humanist and posthumanist theory. Yet, it is not that my subjectivity shifts in response to the writing, but rather that I am produced through the writing. The temporal dis/continuity⁴¹ of the writing style threads in

⁴⁰ Barad (2017b, p. 44) writes that quantum leaps do not signify movement in space and time such as from a here-now to a there-then. Rather it is the unfixing of here-now and there-then without being in given places and times.

⁴¹ Please see the Glossary of terms.

different versions of myself. However, the entangled story told in this chapter is not so much about me (Sumaya the human), but rather about the in/separability of ethics-knowing-being.

0.4. Becoming researcher as open-ended storytelling practices

This chapter has written a posthumanist story of m/otherscholar where the relations amongst human and more-than-human entanglements, interrupted narratives, and fractured timelines, as well as bits and bobs of matter bring phenomena into existence. While creativity and thinking lurked in unexpected spaces, these spaces were not discrete and pre-existing entanglements. Overflowing and disrupting boundaries, the stories re-turning in this chapter produce subjectivities that are not bound to identity and locations. Neither is subjectivity in/dependent of/on specified areas of interest such as research, educator, therapist, and even m/otherscholar.

Re-turning the stories has enabled me to become part of connections, experiences and learning encounters that I would have previously dis/regarded in the production of knowledge. The force of multiple temporalities generated insights into how autistic children learn when not constrained by timelines of developmentally appropriate interventions. A relational ontology has disrupted the dualist ontology-epistemology that has long underpinned my understanding of language, communication and cognition. Subsequently, I have come to question the ethics of my clinical, research, and pedagogical practices because I am uncomfortable in spaces which do not take seriously the agency of the more-than-human in teaching and learning. The material feminist politics affirm the worldliness of knowledge that occur outside/inside of mainstream narratives. As Murriss and Osgood (2022, p. 1) writes:

Teaching and learning take place not only in day-care centres, schools, colleges, or universities but also at home, on the beach, in museums, in the slaughterhouse, or in the therapy room. This broader notion of education includes so-called formal and informal educators such as lecturers, artists, therapists, parents, and grandparents, funders of education research, organisers of educational events, such as seminars

and conferences, as well as detached youth workers who work with people on the streets, and many more.

Barad (2007) writes that matter and meaning cannot be separated. Research, teaching, learning, and knowing are always caught up entanglements. As researcher, (e)merging histories, emotions, thoughts, and experiences are lively material practices of human and more-than-human engagement that have produced this study as well as my role as researcher. Teaching and learning are not restricted to educational and therapeutic settings.

This chapter proposes that being m/other/scholar is a material-discursive entanglement of human and more-than-human forces which remain attentive to the specific arguments in autism studies, ECE⁴² and ECI. The line of flight takes the form of the following question: how do we do research that is alive to worldliness and the materiality experienced in this chapter?

⁴² Please see the Glossary of terms.

It matters what thoughts think thoughts.
It matters what knowledges know knowledges.
It matters what relations relate relations.
It matters what worlds world worlds.
It matters what stories tell stories.
(Haraway, 2016, p. 35)

1

STORYLINES

Postqualitative storying practices

Chapter 0 discussed how posthumanism, notably material-discursive phenomena⁴³ re-configure(d) (my) subjectivity as m/otherscholar, and subsequently my understanding of (autistic) child as well as the research methods undertaken in the disciplines of ECE⁴⁴ and ECI. The chapter concluded with the following question: how do we engage in research that is attentive to the ongoing worldiness⁴⁵ and agency of the material-discursive? In response to this question, this chapter proposes postqualitative (PQ) storying⁴⁶ practices as the method of enquiry. Experimenting with research creativity, chapter one outlines an approach that draws on Ursula Le Guin's (1989) carrier bag theory of fiction and weaves in Karen Barad's (2007) agential realism, Salvador Dali's illustrations of Alice in Wonderland (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015), and Tim Ingold's (2016) wayfaring lines.

1.1. Storying the doctoral story

This study initially emerged at the intersection of autism⁴⁷, pedagogy, and speech-language therapy. Given the significance of dialogical pedagogy for scholastic proficiency (see for example, Conn et al., 2018; Nouri & Philgren, 2018), the aim of the study was to investigate the teaching and learning approach known as Philosophy for/with Children⁴⁸ (P4wC) and the dialogical pedagogy of the community of philosophical enquiry⁴⁹ (CPE) as a tool for scaffolding thinking skills and social communication for autistic children. The fieldwork was conceptualised as a(n) (qualitative) interdisciplinary experimentation of autistic pre- and

⁴³ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁴ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁵ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁷ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁸ Please see the Glossary of terms.

⁴⁹ Please see the Glossary of terms.

early adolescent learners' encounters with philosophical thinking, which seemed to offer innovative and refreshing opportunities to affirm autistic child without the constraints of developmentally in/appropriate skills.

However, the dialogical enquiries conducted with the children were challenging to facilitate, participate in, and document. Theorising a thinking pedagogy for children diagnosed autistic⁵⁰ based on 'stereotypical, rote learnt' thought patterns with 'limited imagination', was bound to generate intellectual tensions and challenges to fieldwork. For instance, developmental theorists and practitioners may consider it paradoxical, if not futile, to engage in complex thinking given overt language-cognitive-learning developmental delays. In contrast, for scholars in the fields of critical theory, feminism, and philosophy, the aims of this study might be ubiquitous in the broader intellectual debate on anthropocentrism, notably the ontological and epistemic standpoints that 'other' humans on the basis of race, gender, and dis/ableism (see for example, Bozalek & Fullagar, 2022; Braidotti, 2011). The CPE's in this study exacerbated such tensions, owing to the emergence of dis/obedient data that did not comply with the language-centric ideals of dialogical enquiry. Such an example is the children's thoughts, which often did not have semiotic underpinnings such as grammar, gestures or signs that could be discursively interpreted. Without discourse and meaning making, it proved difficult to 'capture' the data for qualitative analysis. In fact, human-centred research methods intensified the fractured (entangled) relations amongst data, thoughts, events, writing, humans and more-than-humans.

Yet the children's thoughts were pervasive; leaking in odd spaces, brewing in strange places, and emerging in odd times. Their thinking was convoluted, messy, and often 'untellable'. Consequently, transcripts of the data were difficult to capture. Owing to the travel hopping (Barad, 2018) of ideas and thoughts, it was difficult to capture 'logic' in an ordered and sequential manner. What emerged were research practices that appeared to be 'incommensurable' with the data gathered from CPEs owing to limitations in representation. So how was the study to proceed with data that could neither be transcribed nor analysed within linguistic-discursive frameworks? What was to become of

⁵⁰ Please refer to the entry on autism in the Glossary of terms.

the data that interfered with the dominant narratives underpinning teaching, learning and therapeutic interventions for and with autistic child? And how were the autistic children in this study heard and affirmed as knowing beings? From these questions, what emerged were the politics of situating autistic children as knowledge-makers, and how these knowledge-making practices matter in classroom and therapeutic spaces.

The matter(ing) of autistic knowledges profoundly disrupt the science of autism intervention, a genre of autism research which espouses a pathology/cure approach to diagnosis and remediation (see for example, Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2023; Milton, 2019). Autist led research contests the 'neuro-normative' ontological claims about autism and subsequently, the manner in which non-autists portray autism (see for example Milton et al., 2021; Orsini, 2022). The emerging trends in autism foregrounding neurodiversity⁵¹ have led to ethical questions about autism, including those pertaining to epistemic injustice⁵².

Brooding in the aforementioned disruptions to the (my) medical-social model of conceptualising dis/ability, this study re-turns the work of scholars in neurodiversity and critical autism studies⁵³ (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2023; Ryan & Milton, 2023; Woods et al., 2018; Yergeau, 2018). Consequently, the focus of this study shifted from questions such as 'what aspects of dialogical pedagogy are relevant for the social-communication skills of the autism child?' to deeper questions of 'how can dialogical pedagogy be put to work in order to make visible autistic children's thinking and knowledge-making practices?'. In exploring the aforementioned questions, what emerged were the ethics of whose stories come to matter and the conditions under which such stories matter.

Yergeau (2018) writes that any claim about autism essentially amounts to a storytelling exercise. Such stories may take the form of parents' descriptions and memories of their child's behaviour; medical and healthcare professionals' interpretation of autism according to diagnostic criteria (Anderson & Cushing, 2013; Runswick-Cole, 2016); politicians, autism

⁵¹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁵² Please see chapter 2 for further discussion.

⁵³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

advocates, and stakeholders' narratives of autism along lines of human equality, justice and rights for autistic people (Hens et al., 2018) and teachers as well as clinicians interested in pedagogies and therapeutic interventions that lead to improved quality of life for the child (Wood, 2023) . However, despite the activism of the neurodiversity movement, stories about autism are still embedded with/in discursive and linguistic interpretations of what the condition entails. This is even more apparent in the case of young autistic children whose stories are the least told and heard. This chapter enquires about the following:

- How can it be that the life stories of autistic individuals remain dominated by those who are not autistic?
- Whose stories become told?
- Under what conditions are these stories told?
- Whose/what/which realities are folded into stories?
- What 'truths' come to be sedimented into the world?

Haraway (2016, p. 35) reminds us that “[i]t matters what stories tell stories, it matters whose stories tell stories”. She (Haraway, 2016, 2018) explains that stories are composted writings that compose and decompose. Stories are sticky practices of making with kin such as human and more-than-human worlds. Cobbled creations that leak and flow, constantly in a state of flux and reorganisation. For Tsing (2015), stories tell of the precarity of living in a world where control has failed us. These stories interrupt tempos and geographies, creating more stories. There are neither time nor space constraints. In an interview with Juelskjær and Schwennesen (2012), Barad proposes that descriptive accounts (such as narratives, autobiographies, theory) are “not a telling of a past that is present, but the ongoing openness of the narrative to future retellings ... that is, it is a question of inheriting the future as well as the past” (p. 11).

Autistic stories might be said to fall outside of language, or rather linguistic representations of the world. Put differently, these stories do not necessarily comply with standard semiotic practices where signs and symbols communicate well-intended and unambiguous meaning to the listener/receiver.

Yergeau (2018, p.2) explains that autistic stories might be as follows:

Autistic stories might culminate in angry blog posts, video narratives, comics, memoirs, or extended middle fingers... Autistic stories might take shape as screaming in a supermarket, or as banging one's head against the hard edges of a radiator, or as jumping joyously in a mud puddle. Often, autistic stories aren't beheld as stories at all, but rather as symptoms as jaw-dropping as poop throwing. These stories, in all of their heterogeneity, promote radically different (non)meanings and affective responses.

Autistic stories are not mere autobiographies or histories that document (linear) lived experiences. Neither are such stories about the degree of language, empathy, humanness, understanding, nor self-knowledge they achieve (Yergeau, 2018). As Hacking (2009) writes, autistic stories offer flickering insights into worlds and existences that were silent, unknown and very much outside the neurotypical realm of experience and thought. These portrayals of autism draw attention to unanticipated worldly relations, and configurations that inadvertently deconstruct habitual ways in which experience has been captured by language. Subsequently, these stories unsettle 'taken-for-granted' thinking practices and knowledges through which 'neuro-normative' humans have come to understand the world (Hacking, 2009). As such, autistic stories require a different logic. As Yergeau (2018) states: "If we listen for these stories, we encounter them everywhere" (p.2). It became more important to heed Runswick-Cole (2016) who writes that, "autism is a story, but not *the* story" (p. 28). Autism is more than a diagnosis, a dilemma, a label, or an entity. It is a way of being that moves with and beyond theory, advocacy, therapy, institutions, power relations, education policies in the 21st century, disability, and child (Nadesan, 2005).

Listening out for autistic stories made visible more-than-human materials that would otherwise be discounted from storytelling. These materials included dis/connected thoughts, events, writing, data, literature, autism activism, supervision, conferences, m/otherhood practices, and research methods. Here, autism, child, pedagogy, language, education, thinking, and therapeutic interventions were storied in, and amongst time, histories, spaces, and matter. Such (storying) accountability to the strange phenomena that

were taking place in what was becoming a carrier bag⁵⁴ of unexpected relations. As Barad (2007, p. 185) writes: we don't learn about the world by observing from the outside, instead we know by *being* in the world, where the "becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter". Taking cue from Barad and acknowledging the (posthumanist) agency of the material, the concept of ethics was re-invented as more-than-human phenomena that emerged from the material and discursive partnerships in the carrier bag. Driven by a relation ontology, ethics becomes the storyteller in this study and marks the pivot from qualitative to postqualitative research methods. In what follows, this (ethical) move is delineated for clarity.

1.2. A(n) (ethical) re-storying of the study

So far, what should be apparent is that the storying practices that thread this study together have emerged in the middle of this doctoral journey. Here, ethics as storyteller is introduced.

In qualitative research, the purpose of ethics is to establish the criteria that protects the rights of the participants, and is heavily entwined with the principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence (see, for example, Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Such an approach to ethics⁵⁵ is fundamentally human-centric as the focus is on the human subject exercising intentionality and free choice. This process that assumes the inner/outer binary operates through linguistic discourses, and other semiotic systems, which foreground human identity, values, communities, and well-being.

Such anthropocentric perspectives on ethics are problematic for posthumanist scholars owing to the underlying ontological claims about human and more-than-human relations in the world (see for example Juelskjær et al., 2021; Taylor, 2019). Postqualitative research

⁵⁴ Please see 1.4.4. of this chapter.

⁵⁵ Most research operates within the parameters of normative ethics, which seeks to address questions of morality by establishing a framework with guidelines, or principles, that inform moral behaviour (Mauthner, 2018). Normative ethics comprises virtue ethics, utilitarianism and deontological ethics, all of which embed human-centredness that positions the human as privileged over the non/more-than-human. This model is critiqued for the value-laden assumptions about the human that prevail, and also for the increasing level of bureaucracy and autocratic regulations that are being enforced with/in research (Mauthner, 2018).

does not limit ethics to the politics of individual and social justice for the ‘rational human subject’ because posthuman subjectivity eschews the principles of anthropocentrism. And as such, postqualitative researchers do not consider ethics to be the extra ‘layer’ that is superimposed on research method and practice. Rather, ethics, or to be ethical, requires an attentiveness and re-configuration of knowledge in relation to the ongoing changes in the world (Barad, 2007). Key to posthumanist ethics are matters of power relations and political agency (Braidotti, 2015). As will be discussed throughout this study, agential realist research practices study *knowing in being* (Barad, 2007, p. 185). The in/separability of the ontological and epistemological is also an ethical matter, which is fundamental to Barad’s agential realism. Ethics and accountability are entangled worlding of the world. So, ethics as storyteller does not imply that the concept has become humanised. Rather ethics as posthumanist storyteller resists subjective or objective knowledge practices, choosing to attend to the agency of the human and the more-than-human through the reworking of metaphysics, causality, and agency.

In order to understand ethics as posthumanist storyteller we need to listen with “fingery eyes” (Haraway, 2016, p.31) to what emerges, disappears and is re-configured through the human and more-than-human entanglements⁵⁶.

1.3. Putting ethics as storyteller to work

In keeping with the guidelines for research clearance with human subjects in the qualitative paradigm, figure 1.1 below was submitted to the University of Cape Town Doctoral Degrees Board to ensure that the study complied with the criteria set out by the university’s research ethics committee and outlines the process of obtaining the children’s permission to take part in this study. Figure 1.1 sets forth the (ethical) prerequisites of the study in ‘child-friendly’ language to facilitate the children’s understanding of what is required of them. For instance, at the time it seemed appropriate to refer to the thesis as a ‘book’ considering that the philosophical enquiries were initially referred as the ‘reading friends’.

⁵⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

Sumaya Babamia
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (child)

Information letter to read out to the children

Date:

Dear children

My name is Sumaya. I am part of the Philosophy club. I am going to come to your school one morning in the week to read the stories to you and then we will talk about the story. I am really interested in your ideas and questions about the story and how we can think about the story together.

Sometimes we will draw or write about what we think about the stories to understand our ideas better.

Our philosophy club will make some rules together so that we can all have a turn to share our ideas and to listen to each other.

The club is important to me because I want to write a book about it for my school in Cape Town. My school is called the University of Cape Town.

I would like to put your ideas and questions and drawings or pictures in my book so that other people like teachers and therapists can learn more about how children think. It will help them to think about stories and ideas with other children. I would also like to take some videos and photographs of you for my book. And I will write down what is happening in the group and what you are saying.

But you don't have to have your ideas, questions, writing or drawings in the book if you don't want to. And you can choose to be part of the group or leave the philosophy club if you want to. You can decide.

Figure 1.1. Research information letter created for the children in this study.

It was especially important that the children had a clear understanding of the study as many struggled with comprehension, reading and writing difficulties. What emerges is the permission needed from the university to conduct the study, the intellectual and linguistic accommodations necessary to impart information to the children, the time-lag between

submitting documents to the ethics committee and engaging with the children, and also the power of figure 1.1 in determining whether or not this study would have gone ahead. But what else does figure 1.1. do?

Positioned in the spacetime matter of this chapter, figure 1.1. draws attention to the absence of (contextual) information such as the description of participants, research setting, data collection, analysis, and findings. This 'lack' of information is somewhat disorientating as it dis/locates the start and end points of research protocol. In response to (k)not(ted) knowing, questions might arise that pertain to the epistemic status of the participants. Who are the children? How were they 'selected' for the study? What are their ages and developmental profile? What of demographical information such as gender, race, socio-economic status? Where was the study conducted? How was the study conducted?

Furthermore, locating figure 1.1. early in this study disrupts our orientation to the structure of the thesis as well as the sequential manner in which research writing is supposed to be presented. For instance, in the 'normal' course of the thesis structure, the ethics of data collection would follow on from the literature review, or at least a brief overview (introduction) to the study. To not describe children as research participants 'calls into account' the (human-centred) ethics of doing research for young children and the lack of adherence to ethical protocol (without good reason) which might seem to be the antithesis of ethical practices. However, re-thinking child as material and always in relation with human and more-than-human beings breaks away from prescriptive (qualitative) research methods⁵⁷. It could be said that figure 1.1 is quite untimely, calling into question the interpretation of time. Temporality as we know it, is anchored in the classical (or Newtonian) concept of time as progressive, linear, and discrete (Barad, 2007; 2017a). Past. Present. Future. Hours. Minutes. Seconds. Milliseconds. Late. Early. Before. During. After. In other words, the Newtonian concept of time is one of continuity or homogeneity. Time punctuates the chaos of our everyday lives and allows us to make sense of our realities. It is hardly surprising that researching the world takes on a timely approach to exploring patterns of existence, where independent and dependent variables as well as consequences

⁵⁷ Please see chapters 3, 4, and 5 for further discussion.

and recommendations come to matter (Boje & Henderson, 2014). It would seem that time is indeed a keeper of human histories and knowledges. But not all perspectives of time concede to the aforementioned 'container' metaphor (see, for example, Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Quantum physics troubles the notion of continuous, discrete and autonomous time. Barad (2007; 2010; 2018), writes that time is woven through politics, technology and science, and as such exhibits patterns of dis/continuity⁵⁸, in the form of temporal reversals that are out of joint. But the issue here is not about the binary logic of time as dis/continuous. Instead, the quantum interpretation of time acknowledges the dynamism of the spaces in between dis/continuity to acknowledge that concepts can never be separated out.

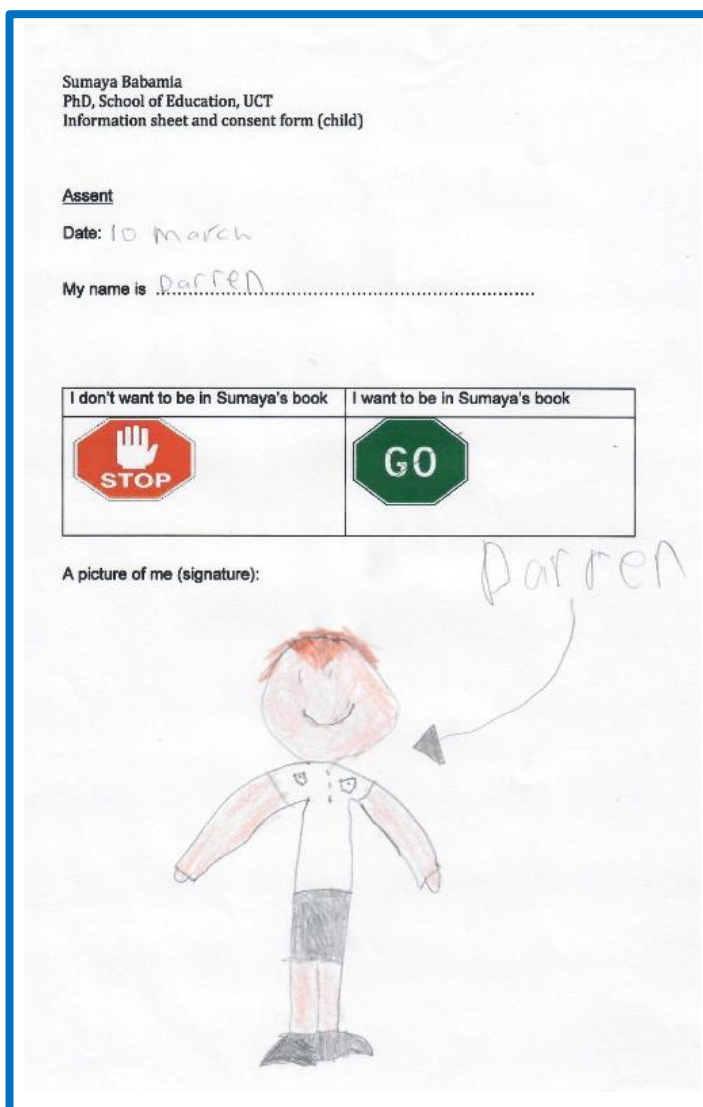


Figure 1.2. Foxy Fnap 1234 assent

There is neither discontinuity nor continuity, but rather an ongoing relationality between the 'two' – always more than two at the same time - which are constantly intra-acting⁵⁹ to create im/possibilities (Barad, 2018). Figure 1.1 and the rest of the images in this chapter are instances of temporal dis/continuity that disrupt sequential pathways of knowledge production. The images are not multi-modal encounters that validate or enrich the text, but rather unexpected research partners that generate odd unanticipated stories. 'Ethics-as-storyteller' is intricately woven together with quantum notions of spacetime matter.

⁵⁸ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁵⁹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

What emerges are storytelling practices that are alive to the ethics of being and becoming with the world, where doing research is an ongoing, iterative re-configuration with/in the world. A posthumanist approach to ethics is about storying the unexpected partnerships generated by attending to the strange, the peculiar, and the unaccounted data-research phenomena that manifested during data co-creation. So, what are the research methods and practices generated by ethics as posthumanist storyteller?

1.4. Storying as posthumanist research creation

Guided by a relational ontology⁶⁰, and the capaciousness of matter as generative, agential, and lively, PQ researchers in ECE are increasingly re-configuring research practices in a manner that accounts for the liveliness of human and more-than-human relations (see for example Diaz-Diaz & Semeneć, 2020). PQR draws on the ontological shifts proposed by posthumanist theorists and attends to the complex human and more-than-human knowledge creations that defy 'capture' through representational structures such as discourse, language, semiotics and text. So how do ethics story stories that do not succumb to neoliberal research practices?

Ursula Le Guin (1989, pp.37-38) writes that the fallacy of storytelling is that most stories (and narratives) are structured according to the following lines:



- protagonists (problem statements?)
- antagonists (literature review?)
- problems (research questions) and
- corresponding actions (method?)
- solutions (findings?)
- grand finales (conclusions?)

which endeavour towards imagined, safe worlds (evidence-based practices?) that depict the significance (trustworthiness?) of research practices that contribute towards dominant discourses (long-standing, human-centred epistemological projection of knowledge?).

⁶⁰ See the Glossary of terms and chapter 3 for further discussion.

Sumaya Babamia
 PCKSUM001
 PhD, School of Education, UCT
 Information sheet and consent form (child)

Assent
 Date: 3 September
 My name is Devan

I don't want to be in Sumaya's book	I want to be in Sumaya's book
	

A picture of me (signature):




Figure 1.3. Avatar assent form

But narratives are not innocent (Haraway, 2004). For writing stories according to plotly elements inevitably draws in the politics of power and privilege that re-inscribe discrete epistemological and ontological categories in the world. For example, 'reaching' grand finales and imagined safe worlds would require packaging data into relatively neat questions which could be opened up/explored with proficient techniques of analysis. What became of the 'bastard' data that could not, did not, would not conform? Would these unruly critters linger at the outskirts of human

thought(e)scapes, occasionally surfacing in research writing as the limitations of the study and/or suggestions for future research?

In acknowledgement of the above and an effort towards socially just pedagogies, it seems only fitting that the empirical work in this study becomes a posthumanist storytelling that foregrounds the material-discursive, surreal realities, and silent worlds that re-fold the in/separable autism-child-education-intervention entanglements. This is put to work by listening for missing narratives. These are stories that are not always told in language or discursive frameworks, for these articulations demand a different logic. This logic is one of attunement, of making with, attending to in/significant details, re-turning to what the participants wanted or did not want to say. The stories are about silences, not knowing and working through issues of epistemic humility. As researcher, I endeavour to situate myself as outside/with/in the border of such stories (Erevelles, 2014). Such a situated position ensures that (my) knowledge of autistic stories is always partial and subject to re-configurations thereby be(com)ing attentive to the dangers of projecting autistic ideas and

experiences through my interpretation of the world. The writing that follows explores the outside/with/in situated position of this study by weaving together Dali's illustrations of *Alice in Wonderland*; Karen Barad's agential realism, Tim Ingold's wayfaring lines, and Ursula Le Guin's carrier bag theory of fiction.

1.4.1. Salvador Dali and Alice in Wonderland

In 1969 Maecenas Press-Random House printed 2500 limited edition books of a Salvador Dali illustrated *Alice in Wonderland* where each chapter is paired with one of twelve heliogravures. Signed by Dali⁶¹, each book is highly sought after as a collector's item. Apart from these books, Dali's work relating to *Alice in Wonderland* has rarely been featured. However, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Princeton University Press made the Dali-Carroll edition (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015) publicly available. In addition, the book features an introduction by Mark Burstein (then President of the Lewis Carroll Society North America), who discusses the connection between Dali and Carroll, as well as a foreword by mathematician Thomas Branchoff regarding the mathematical inclinations evident in Dali's work.

Dali's twelve heliogravures⁶² (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015) are heavily entangled in this thesis, having captivated my attention in the midst of 'gathering' philosophical enquiries and research writing for this study. Carroll's writing has been theorised at length with/in various public and intellectual discourses. For instance, Alice has been taken up in feminist and postcolonial studies (Shi, 2016), child studies (Sparrman, 2020), comparative education (Silova, 2019), autism (Limburg, 2017), and mental illness as in the *Alice in Wonderland Syndrome* (Blom, 2016; Todd, 1955) to name but a few. Alice has also provoked philosophical discussions in relation to sense and nonsense in relation to the Cartesian mind-body problem (Deleuze, 1969/1990). Of significance to this study is that Carroll's work has been the backdrop for research in child and childhood studies. For example, Ren (2015) explores the political dimensions of adult/child power struggles in the story. In fact, the prevalence of 'nonsense' language, animal pedagogy and preposterous imaginaries in the

⁶¹ See appendix B for an image of the original signed copy of the book

⁶² See appendix B for all twelve heliogravures.

book were used to 'scare' children into conformist behaviour (Feuerstein, 2019). Recently, posthumanist scholars have taken up the human and more-than-human entanglements of the story in researching childhood, education and children's literature (see Jacques, 2015; Nordstrom et al., 2018).

However, a particularly striking off-shoot of Carroll's work is the conception of Alice in relation to dis/ability in childhood. British psychiatrist John Todd was credited for the *Alice in Wonderland Syndrome*, a condition first brought to light in 1955. Hardly surprising, the diagnosis of Alice in Wonderland Syndrome was based on patients' ambiguous and perverse representation of reality as exhibited by Alice. Todd (1955) considered the syndrome to be a thought disorder that was closely connected to epilepsy and migraines⁶³. Incidentally, the condition was also attributed to Carroll who is believed to have suffered from migraines. The symptoms and diagnosis included any of the following:

- Any sign of (cognitive-linguistic) mental incoherence.
- Illusions of body image in terms of proportion, position in space and time, as well as ability (levitation) – referred to as hypo/hyperschematicism.
- Somatopsychic duality – referring to oneself as more than one person.
- Derealisation – flitting in and out of conscious changes to body, emotion and the environment.
- Identity crises as related to distortions of body image.

Alice in Wonderland syndrome has become prominent in the 21st century, despite the vast overlap of pre-existing neurological conditions. This is largely since neuroimaging studies have correlated affected areas of the brain to symptoms (Blom, 2016; Farooq & Fine, 2017; O'Toole & Modestino, 2017). It seemed to me strange, if not disappointing that the provocations brought forth by Alice could be 'tamed' to re-instate an ableist understanding of children. Together with Burnstein (2015, p viii) I wondered if "...what some call madness could be perceived by others as wisdom".

⁶³ Todd (1955) stated that these behaviours were not limited to migraine and epilepsy alone. He attributed cerebral lesions, neurotoxicity, delirium, intoxication, and schizophrenia as possible causes.

What is unique about the 150th edition of *Alice in Wonderland* is the fortuitous pairing of Dali's artwork with Carroll's storytelling given the similarities that exist between surrealist artwork and Carroll's audacious, creative and revolutionary literary work. Burnstein (2015) writes that Dali's and Carroll's work respectively are comparable access points to the unconscious, imaginary and irrational aspects of reality. The unbound, and open-endedness of their work creates many opportunities to re-think the story differently. If not for the publisher's explicit pairing of heliogravures with each chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*, there would be much ambivalence in deciding which image goes with what chapter. The ambiguity of the illustrations re-creates opportunities to connect with other chapters. For example, the white rabbit in figure CB I could just have easily worked with the last chapter (Alice's evidence).

But there is a further compelling reason that explains the 'kinship' between Dali-Carroll's work and this thesis. Jacques (2015) and Murriss (2016) write that posthumanist children's literature disrupts anthropomorphism. The artwork (Dali) and the storytelling (Carroll) are part of the transindividual agency along this writing journey. By re-turning data-writing, the study seeks to make non/sense of fantasy through reality, diffracting⁶⁴ through concepts by attuning to multiple temporalities and spaces. The surrealism of Dali's work, together with Alice and her companions, and Mark Burnstein's (2015) commentary and reference to other works are folded into the worldliness of this study as evident from (my) 2019/2020-year planner, and *Wonderland Games: The Queen's Guards Giant Playing Cards* that have entertained my family on many evenings during loadshedding⁶⁵. It is also entangled with the chapter-lines and feminist story-telling practices, folding posthumanist research practices into autism, child and education. As outlined elsewhere⁶⁶, posthumanism troubles the binary metaphysics that underpin (qualitative) research practices, and scholars in the field write that committing to an ethics of response-able practices demands research-writing that attends the unexpected relations and worldly re-configurations.

⁶⁴ Please see the Glossary of terms and also 1.4.2. in this chapter.

⁶⁵ Loadshedding refers to the systematic power cuts and rolling blackouts that have emerged in response to the national electricity crisis in South Africa. The cause of loadshedding is attributed to substandard upkeep and maintenance of the coal power plants which generate most of the country's energy needs.

⁶⁶ See 1.4.3. in this chapter and chapter 3 for further information.



Figure 1.4. Moleskin 18-month diary 2019/2020. Limited edition blue hardcover 13x21cm, 208 pages



Figure 1.5. Wonderland Games: The Queen's Guard Giant Playing Cards



Figure 1.6. Description of the cards

In this thesis, Dali's illustrations become carrier bags⁶⁷ that re-turn the human and more-than-human material-discursive intra-actions. The Dali carrier bag produces stories in the form of chapters. It should be noted that each carrier bag is not a 'new' bag of stories but a

⁶⁷ Please see 1.4.4. of this chapter.

re-turning of measurement (processes and apparatuses) for purposes of attuning to the specificity of entanglements. Barad (2007, p. 67) writes that measurements are literal instances where matter and meaning meet, becoming crucial to the construction of knowledge. Re-turning measurements highlight the specificity of material-discursive configurations which mark out patterns of differences. Diffracting the apparatus of measurements through the carrier bag illustrates three phenomena that emerge from the enquiries: the data as ongoing and open to re-configuration with each intra-action, that spacetime-mattering does not pre-exist each intra-action, and the performativity of matter-meaning in knowledge-making practices with autistic child.

1.4.2. Karen Barad and agential realism

Karen Barad's theory of agential realism is the heart and soul of this thesis and is discussed in greater detail in carrier bag II of this study. As Barad (2007, p. 26) explains:

I propose "agential realism" as an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human *and* non-human, material *and* discursive, and natural *and* cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices, thereby moving such considerations beyond the well-worn debates that pit constructivism against realism, agency against structure, and idealism against materialism. Indeed, the new philosophical framework that I propose entails a rethinking of fundamental concepts that support such binary thinking including notions of matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time.

Agential realism is a transdisciplinary, philosophically rich engagement with science studies, feminism, queer, postcolonial, quantum physics, post-Marxism, and poststructuralism (Barad, 2007, p. 27). Of importance is the dynamism of matter and the deconstruction of binaries between nature-culture, material-discursive, human-more-than-human, agency-structure. The ethico-ontoepistemic tenets of agential realism entail a radical shift in concepts such as agency, subjectivity, causality, power, identity, embodiment, space and time (Barad, 2007, p. 27). Agential realism foregrounds the dynamism, agency and

generative capacities of matter in the ongoing constitution of the world where ethics, ontology and epistemology are inextricably fused through each other.

A key aspect of agential realism is the diffractive methodology. Barad (2007) explains that in classical or Newtonian⁶⁸ physics, diffraction is a physical phenomenon that refers to the interference patterns created by the superpositioning of waves when encountering obstacles. For example, when superpositioned, wave amplitudes combine to form troughs, crests or cancel each other out. From a quantum physics perspective, diffractive methodology entails “reading and thinking insights from scientific and social theories through each other” (Barad, 2007, p. 92). Diffractive readings foster transdisciplinary engagements by threading insights through each other, while remaining attentive to specialised arguments within particular disciplines. Diffraction troubles the anthropocentric notion of humans as the only knowing subject and bearer of truth, and instead proposes a relational ontology where the world is constantly in a state of co-creation with human and more-than-human participants.

Storytelling is about the materiality of things, and conditions under which these come to matter. A hairnet or bit of rolled bark become ‘agents’ of meaning-making through these relations. In fact, Barad (2007, p.3) comments that: “Matter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder”. So, while storying practices attend to relations amongst unexpected partners, agential realism provokes a spacetime-mattering of storying itself. If matter and meaning truly *cannot* be separated out, then stories become ethical practices of knowing-being with the world. Intrigued by quantum physics rendition of storytelling, this chapter thinks with quantum storytelling practices (Boje & Henderson, 2014; Boje & Tourani, 2018). Drawing on Barad’s theory of Agential Realism, Boje and colleagues (Boje & Henderson, 2014; Boje & Tourani, 2018) theorise quantum storytelling as agential practices that heed the dynamism of matter, temporal dis/continuity, and the materiality of space. For Boje and Henderson (2014, p. 3), storytelling is not just an act of spacetime-matter, but *spacingtimingmattering*, which illustrates an ongoing performativity, and re-configuration

⁶⁸ Classical, or Newtonian physics is premised on time, space, and matter as discrete entities which are governed by external forces/laws. Please see chapter 3 for further information.

of being with/in the world. These stories attend to interference patterns, and the phenomena that emerge from these patterns. Thus, quantum storytelling becomes a diffractive reading of storytelling practices through Barad's theory of agential realism.

Threading agential realism through storytelling practices highlights the broader material-discursive forces, and human-more-than-human participants which are tightly entangled in this study and opens up storying spaces which might have otherwise been theorised as empty. In quantum physics, the void is a space of emptiness, nothingness, absent yet simultaneously contain infinity and matter (Barad, 2012). Perhaps the void is also a place and state where things of lesser importance are held in a holding pattern—matter and moments which cannot be interpreted through linguistic and discursive measures. Things which might be labelled insignificant, inferior, trivial, minor, frivolous, petty, inconsequential, become markers of trails and paths of being and becoming in the world. This is the point where quantum storying practices diffract with Ingold's wayfaring lines.

1.4.3. Tim Ingold and the wayfaring line

In his book *Lines: A Brief History* (2016), Ingold asks the question "What do walking, weaving, observing, singing, storytelling, drawing and writing have in common?" (Ingold, 2016, p.1). His answer? Lines, and the processes involved in making lines. Now what is the significance of lines and line-making? Lines are markings of human-world interconnectedness and take many forms such as pathways, trails, and routes. Often lines are ancient, not only in form but in traditions and knowledge-making practices as handed down through generations of humans, and are pervasive in the here-now. Lines are also heavily political, having led to dominant/subjugated ontological and epistemological constructions of the world. Quite compelling are the power dynamics intrinsic to the political which have determined which lives matter, which places matter, and which knowledges matter. Ingold (2016) distinguishes two types of lines: the straight line and the wayfaring line. The straight line is as the name suggests: linear, solid, rigid, un-bendable (but not un-broken) with fixed connections between two or more points. Such life-lines are a caveat of Western anthropology and metaphysics, foregrounding the dominance of particular histories, cultures, and knowledges of human existence within specified

temporalities (Ingold, 2016). An example of such lines are colonial ideologies of how life should be lived, and the subsequent occupation of non-colonised places and spaces.

The wayfaring line is agential. It is wilful and prioritises relational encounters with the material. From parchments to manuscripts, gestures, drawings, and print. Etched into air, sand, water, paper, skin, and rocks, these lines connect, disrupt, forge anew, disperse, and most importantly, are always on the move. Inherent to the moving line are twists, turns, disappearances, proliferations and transgressions of places, boundaries, spaces and times.

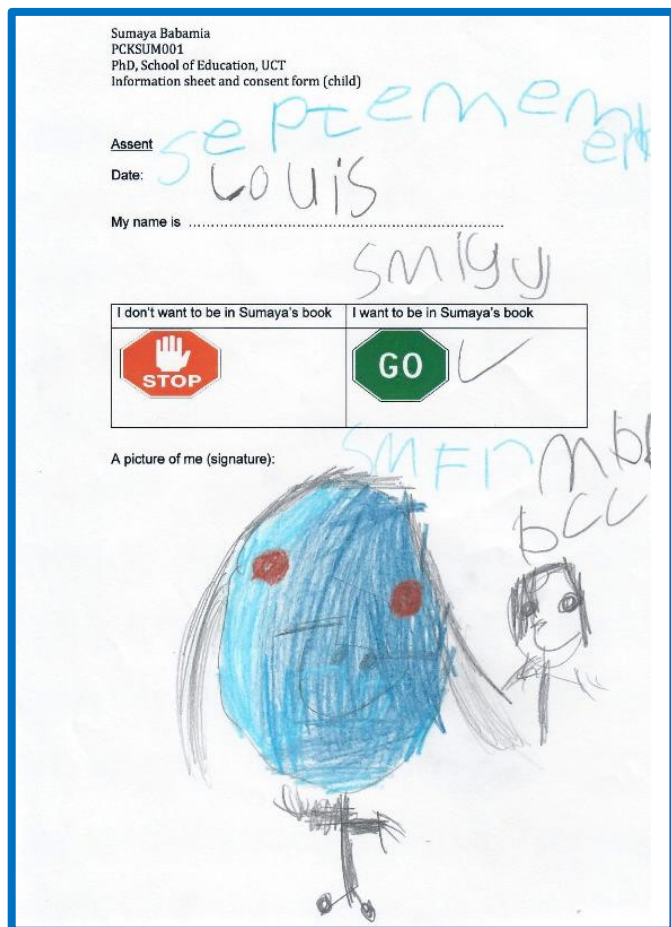


Figure 1.7. Thomas the Engine assent form

So, what are the implications for research writing? Ingold (2016, p. 3) explains that writing, in its original function as a practice of inscription, imposes a kind of linearisation on the human (mind) which is uncommon in wayfaring societies. For instance, writing presupposes literacy as logic depicted by, and translated into, alphabet, letters, grammar, semiotics, representations. From a critical posthumanist perspective, the linearisation of the human mind underscores Cartesian representationalism, a metaphysics of ontological and epistemological separability, commonly foregrounded in much of Western philosophy. This onto-epistemic distinction sets forth the premise that the world can only be known through linguistic-mental symbolisms/re-presentations of the world. Consequently, research writing becomes an act of perpetuating Cartesian metaphysics. While Ingold's writing does not necessarily endorse posthumanism, he asserts that linear writing practices sanction worldviews embedded in Western metaphysics. He draws attention to thinking, or logical

lines that move towards capitalist, colonised, and industrial gains. For instance, he theorises the assembly line in manufacturing processes as a linear movement towards predetermined destinations. Such lines operate on principles of start to finish, raw material to finished product, simple to complex, and falsity to truth-seeking. Ingold (2016) refers to this line as a pseudo-multiplicity which consists of many dots, giving the impression of movement, yet movement which is always underscored by homogeneity, order, and stasis. Braidotti (2018) warns that thinking (and writing) practices that do not proliferate, and challenge existing discourses maintain circular knowledges and knowledge-making practices which feed into the advanced cognitive capitalist machine.

Given the posthumanist nature of this study, Ingold (2016) and Braidotti's (2018) work invite literacy practices that read and write the world as an ongoing practice of 'worlding the world'. Each chapter is conceptualised as a line that 'goes out for a walk'. This line moves freely in its own geo-political space and time. It leaves marks, it is felt and experienced. It conscientises, draws attention and makes itself known, though it is neither contained nor segmented. It is a wayfarer and storyteller, traversing different terrains, not with the aim of achieving goals, reaching destinations, or attaining outcomes (Ingold, 2016). The writing that takes place in each chapter deliberates as it falters, hesitates, stumbles, and pauses to think. And it purposefully acknowledges these 'thinking' moves to illustrate the wayfaring practice of writing and knowing. For Haraway (2016), scholarship and politics is like a game of string figures, always open to new patterns, dropped threads, failures, re-workings, consequences and always the beauty of making together. Consequently, each chapter in this study becomes a wayfarer, a string figure knowing as it knots, moves, and thinks with other-than-kin, leaving deep markings in the writing and knowing practices.

1.4.4. Ursula Le Guin and the carrier bag theory of fiction

All stories have protagonists. For Tsing (2015), the matsutake mushroom guides her writing journey. Haraway (2016) writes of multi-species encounters and string figures and Le Guin (1989) writes of the carrier bag theory of fiction. Le Guin (1989) explains that the

power and privilege inherent to narratives⁶⁹ brings forth epistemological and ontological concerns regarding the propositions of realities.

It would appear that stories (save for specific locations of humans and more-than-humans within time, history and spaces, such as Indigenous storytelling practices) privilege human exceptionalism and existence. Human-orientated [anthropocentric] storytelling is premised on the Aristotelian logic of (discrete) time, causality and consequences (Le Guin, 1989, p. 37). Le Guin (1989, p. 37) quotes Aristotle on this: "...the essential element of drama and epic is "the arrangement of incidents"". Take for example the episodic nature of narratives, which are structured according to demarcated times such as middle, beginning and end. Incidentally, this also presupposes distinct categories of temporalities such as past, present and future. These timelines structure causality as a series of outcomes which progress in a linear manner along the logic of ordered, spatio-temporal sequencing (Le Guin, 1989, p. 38). But what of movement and flow in the narrative? This is where the 'metaphysical hero', or language, comes to the rescue. Taking the form of connectors, language links causal elements, time, order and outcomes, and thus provides the framework which embeds stories of reality (Le Guin, 1989, p. 39). Thus, the structure of the narrative is embedded within a long-standing history of action/conflict, and heroic genres of particular lives-realities, which unfold along linear, progressive timelines towards utopian worlds (Haraway, 2004; 2016).

Now Le Guin's (1989) work should not be misconstrued as dismissive towards narratives or anthropocentric stories of reality. In fact, she states that narratives portray active encounters between humans and environment (Le Guin, 1989). These stories embed rationality and reason with/in the present moment so that the past can be connected to the future. BUT Le Guin states: "I'm not telling that story. We've heard it, we've heard all about it" (1989, p. 167). There is a distinct weariness and impatience in Le Guin's writing. Classical narratives as described above have been told too many times, to the point that there is nothing 'new' to look forward to anymore. But why the frustration? Re-turning Le Guin's concerns regarding the epistemological and ontological depictions of reality, traditional

⁶⁹ This is not to discount the postmodern and poststructuralist literature which also disrupts the conventions of classical narratives.

narratives are not only anthropocentric but also embed patriarchal ways of knowing and being in the world. Tracing storytelling back to the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras, Le Guin (1989) forewarns of the pervasive role of the (male) protagonists in stories. “Heroes are powerful”, she writes (Le Guin, 1989, p. 166). Their stories are domineering and over time become established as the prototype against which all stories are measured. As such, narratives have the propensity for the exclusion of m/othering/discrimination of lives that do not ‘fit’ the established storytelling protocol. She provides the following description:

“It is hard to tell a really gripping tale of how I wrested a wild-oat seed from its husk, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another and then I scratched my gnatbites, and Ool said something funny, and we went to the creek and got a drink and watched newts for a while, and then I found another patch of oats. . . . No, it does not compare, it cannot compete with how I thrust my spear deep into the titanic hairy flank while Oob impaled on one huge sweeping tusk, writhed screaming, and blood spouted everywhere in crimson torrents and Boob was crushed to jelly when mammoth fell on him as I shot my unerring arrow straight through eye to brain. (Le Guin, 1989, pp 165-166).



Narratives foreground particular kinds of human lives that come to matter. Other lives, such as skilled makers, songs of singers, gatherers of food, lives of children, encounters with animals, ancestral connections, earthly elements, and so forth, are compressed into heroic narratives (Le Guin, 1989). Haraway (2004; 2016) elaborates on Le Guin’s work by stating that narratives foreground human exceptionalism at the expense of matter, and more often than not, more-than-humans are portrayed with limited agency and powers for transformation. Narratives are not innocent, for it is a practice that excludes the stories of others, portraying non-innocent recordings of reality. Thus, heroic narratives offer but one way of knowing and being in the world, and the subsequent knowledges that are valued. As alternatives to narratives, Le Guin (1989) and Haraway (2016) suggest storytelling practices that are accountable to the untold stories of the world, where the invisible realities of everyday encounters matter. Le Guin (1989) proposes the Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (child)

Assent

Date:

My name is Jordan

I don't want to be in Sumaya's book	I want to be in Sumaya's book
	

A picture of me (signature):




Figure 1.8. Hulk assent form

which approaches stories as containers or bags. Drawing influence from Elizabeth Fisher's⁷⁰, Le Guin states that containers or bags have the capacity to hold and store unexpected things like meaning, words, wild-oats seeds, leaves, nets and so forth. Haraway (2004, 2016) proposes Bag Lady storytelling practices, where storytelling is like a frayed, porous bag of unexpected 'things' that generate unanticipated, ongoing relations. Bags, like spaces, are not mere containers. Bags are generative places that produce stories. Thus, bags-stories-spaces do not only collect but they also enact and create stories. Stories are about gathering bits and pieces of information, recuperating complex histories, cobbling together disparate

entities/events, using and re-using stories, and perhaps saving some for a 'rainy day'. These storytelling practices require a logic of attentiveness in accordance with the ongoing creation of knowledge (Haraway, 2016). Feminist storytelling practices do not endeavour to dismiss narratives, but rather reconfigure what counts as human ability. Le Guin states that storytelling practices are about "trying to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually do and feel, how people relate to everything else in this vast sack, this belly of the universe, this womb of things to be and tomb of things that were, this unending story" (Le Guin, 1989, p. 170). Re-configurings invoke (my) memoried worldly entanglements in this thesis. As an African Muslim woman of Indian descent - storying is part and parcel of (my)

⁷⁰ Fisher (1979) proposes containers are better suited as life-sustaining tools as opposed to arrows, clubs, and spears.

be(com)ing the world. With/in my socio-historic background, storytelling is a tradition that embeds the knowledges, identities, and relations that inform culture, social, spiritual values (see chapter 0). But the more-than-me is also caught up in this thesis. Machine, texts, experiences, references, language, art, thinking, dis/ability, supervision, interventions, communication, researcher, affect and emotions, writings, discussions, workshops and conferences have intra-acted and always produced something new before moving off in different and the same directions. The writing and researching that takes place here is not only about (Sumaya) the human, woman of colour, m/other, speech-language therapist, researcher, dis/ability activist, P4wC practitioner, and posthumanist. Listening to human and more-than-human encounters are *matter*ing patterns of be(com)ing with/in the world.

1.5. Storying as research method

Posthumanism is not about discarding or negating the human but rather re-configuring the human within locations of dis/placed subjectivity and unpredictable worldly conditions. Under these conditions, ethics in posthumanism is not about emancipating the human from the uncertainties of the posthuman condition but rather attending to imaginative and creative possibilities that account for human-more-than-human relations (Mauthner, 2018).

Stories that gather, store, save for later, re-use, improvise and re-invent are performative encounters of knowing-being in the world. Put differently, these stories are doings that map and re-locate boundaries of thought. As such, storytelling is a method of material feminist research practice (Adsit-Morris, 2017, p. 46). Material feminist researchers disrupt the human-centric ontologies and epistemologies which underscore knowledge by drawing attention to the agential nature of matter⁷¹. Foregrounding the dynamism of matter in the becoming of the world challenges human subjectivity, and the manner in which (human) knowledge is constructed. To this extent, researching with matter is about invention and creation (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). It works with logic that attends to differences, in/coherent partnerships, and un-anticipated relationalities, which is what storytelling is all about.

⁷¹ The dynamism of matter is core to Barad's agential realism and is highlighted throughout this thesis.

Storying as research method in this thesis works through interference patterns with/in the data that re-configure human (researcher and autistic child), thinking and contemporary pedagogical interventions. The stories offered in this study articulate imaginaries of children's encounters with/in the world. Yet, the stories are attentive to the difficulties of moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, the anxiety of not knowing, getting stuck, being fearful, and being overloaded by the experience of chaotic encounters with strange knowledges. Story practices are sentient to the use, beauty, and creativity of the indiscernible: materials, which are by and large, unrecognized with/in patriarchal narratives (Le Guin, 1989). In this way, storylines are propositions for thinking practices, which re-invent connections, foreground the significance of displaced beings and disregarded humans (Haraway, 2018).

Storying practices situate this thesis as a bag that stores many disparate entities. The bag itself is not a static space, one that is to be filled with things. Rather, it is entangled with the events and beings in this study, and it creates the opportunity for relational conversations amongst unexpected partners. The thesis as a bag is about stories that story stories, and illustrate the temporal dis/order which governs research as creation. In this way the study connects back to the concept of the void as not empty but holding both nothingness and eternity in endless possibility.

1.6. Be(com)ing phenomena⁷²

This chapter has explored postqualitative research creation through storying practices. Drawing on Barad (2007), Dali (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015), Ingold (2016), and Le Guin (1989), this study proposes storying as a practice of ethical awareness to the ongoing worldliness of the world. Fractured timelines, and unexpected more-than-human partners 'leak' into spaces that might have previously been dis/regarded. These spaces become carrier bags that hold matter such as:

⁷² Please see the Glossary of terms.

...the histories of children with intellectual, learning and social-communication difficulties and the subsequent barriers to education that they have had to endure. The educational crisis, race and accessibility to education in South Africa⁷³ children, and the heightened educational disadvantages for children with intellectual disabilities. Teaching and learning practices that operate within the precincts of an adapted/accommodated 'normative' curriculum. The liminal time, spaces and opportunities for philosophical, and or critical thinking in education for disabled children. The bodies and minds of children which have been marked by measurements and performances which deem them to be in/eligible for mainstream public, private, special education or remedial schooling. The participants' thoughts on philosophical concepts such as life, love, friendship, religion, sexuality, death, memories, identity, race. The definition of autism as a childhood mental health disorder characterized by impaired cognition, rote-learned behavioural patterns, stereotypical imagination, as well as social and communicative inaptness. The intradisciplinary collaboration of the speech-language therapist (SLT) and the educator within school settings. Philosophy, "the finest instrument yet devised for the perfection of the thinking process" (Lipman, et al., 1980, p. xv). Dialogical competency, ability and philosophical progress. Thinking in unexpected ways and places – odd spaces, through incoherent/disjointed, limited and tangential language as well as through bodies, silences and matter.

The phenomena which emerge through the material-discursive⁷⁴ intra-actions⁷⁵ above create a dissonance with/in (my) autism education-intervention. This dis-ease is re-turned in chapter 2 and explored with/in Murriss's proposition of onto-epistemic injustice⁷⁶.

⁷³ Please see chapter 5 of this study.

⁷⁴ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁷⁵ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁷⁶ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.



2 (RE)SEARCHING (FOR) AUTISTIC CHILD Ontoepistemic injustice

As yet, this study has explored autism from a posthumanist re-configuration of subjectivity (see chapter 0) and storying

practices that attend to (autistic) knowledges that would otherwise fall outside of typical autism-education-intervention⁷⁷ (see chapter 1). The focus in this chapter is the identity prejudices against autistic child in autism-education-intervention settings, and how these injustices might be mitigated through the concept of ontoepistemic injustice⁷⁸ (Murriss, 2016) and autist-posthumanist-inspired approaches⁷⁹ to research. This chapter proposes a posthumanist performative approach to philosophical enquiries (P4wC⁸⁰) with autistic children.

The chapter begins by seeking out what is commonly taken-for-granted in our work with young children, which is the attention to children's knowledges and knowledge-making practices. Murriss (2016) writes that justice entails working towards ontoepistemic equality in teaching and learning practices where children's knowledges are valued in relation to adult practices of what counts as 'worthwhile' knowledge. To achieve such equality, it is necessary for adults to re-attune to the manner in which children are heard by 'listening without organs'. Murriss (2016) writes that listening without organs involves "listening-as-experimentation and is always emergent – listening out for the effects of *difference*, what makes us as educators think and feel *differently*" (p. 144). Such listening is transformative

⁷⁷ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

⁷⁸ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁷⁹ Mainstream autism research refers to such approaches as the phenomenology of autism. This study experiments with 'neutral' terminology that potentially makes space for more-than-human counterparts.

⁸⁰ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

for it interrupts the usual linguistic transmission of knowledge (which favours evaluation and interpretation of knowledge) in order to seek out the effects of differences and experimentations with/in⁸¹ the world.

‘Listening without organs’ in this chapter begins with an unravelling of my conscience which has long been calloused (sedimented) by hegemonic discourses on child, autism-education-intervention. Callouses tend to stay with us (very much like habitual thought practices). They offer a protective function by safeguarding the delicate, underlying skin on bodily extremities. Like callouses, dominant discourses may be construed as ‘protecting, nurturing and enhancing’ the theorypractice of the professions. However, just as it is necessary to remove the callous to stimulate growth of the underlying skin, it is necessary to trouble dominant theoretical perspectives which underpin teaching and learning practices with children. Let us take a look at how (my) conscience was *uncalloused* with/in and through this study.

2.1. Un/doing a calloused conscience

Like many researchers and practitioners in the fields of early childhood studies, ECE⁸² and ECI, I will always be grateful for the privilege of coming to know children's theorising with/in the world. Witnessing a child's bodymind in dialogue with the material (human and more-than-human) has been amongst the most profound moments in my life. As I write/type, my bodymind re-members philosophical enquiries and speech-language therapy sessions brimming with ideas, contemplative pauses, and fidgety bodies as children play with/in theories of the world. As Barad and Gandorfer (2021) write, thinking and learning are ongoing, material-discursive phenomena that do not pre-exist intra-actions⁸³ and are always in relation with/in the world. Language, speech, and other semiotic systems are neither ontologically and epistemologically prior nor superior to the material insofar as meaning-making is concerned. As this thesis argues, the posthumanist relational ontology⁸⁴ disrupts

⁸¹ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

⁸² Please refer to the Writing conventions.

⁸³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

⁸⁴ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

and subsequently re-configures 'ab/normal'⁸⁵ communication, language and learning as worthwhile knowledge creations.

So, it is ironic that despite witnessing children's relational thinking through intra-actions with/in the world, I have theorised child by way of observing, documenting, and engaging the developmental (language-thinking-being) interface⁸⁶. My understanding of (dis/abled) children has habitually taken place through the lens of measurements, performances, skills, and capabilities. These measures have guided the decisions which adults (doctors, parents, teachers, and therapists) made on behalf of the child, such as the goals of individualised educational programmes/plans (IEPs), choice of schooling, interdisciplinary timelines of intervention, family support as well as child's long-term integration with/in the broader economic, political and social contexts (see Anderson & Cushing, 2013). Despite the well-intended efforts towards enhancing the quality of life for the dis/abled child, my experiences above have left me with a sense of dis-ease. Tainted with what seemed to be a(n) (unremorseful) betrayal to an instinct about how children *are* in the world, I wondered if the uncertainty I experienced related to an *adult(eros)* approach to knowing and being in the world. Could it be that despite a deep appreciation for children's knowledges, my role as 'adult' practitioner perpetuated ontoepistemic injustices? What was this affective⁸⁷ response I encountered that generated a strong sense of ambivalence with/in my professional engagement with autistic children? How was I to resolve this dilemma?

2.2. (Un)(re)callousing practice in ECE and ECI

I would later realise that the affect and ambivalence (I) experienced would be a re-turning⁸⁸ and undoing of further callouses. As Barad (2014) explains, re-turning is not about going back in the past but turning situations and knowledges over (like an earthworm tunnelling

⁸⁵ Please see the entry on autism in the Glossary of terms. As per the DSM V (APA, 2013), communication in autism may be diagnosed by aberrant silences, gestures, eye gaze, echolalia, social vigilance or disregard, hypo and hyper sensory responses, physical outbursts, writing, dis/engagement, solitary play, and many other forms of non-linguistic engagement with the world.

⁸⁶ Language-thinking interface (and not intra-face) situates these concepts with/in a metaphysics of individualism.

⁸⁷ Please refer to the entry on affect in the Glossary of terms.

⁸⁸ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

through the soil and turning it over again) in order to discover new connections, knowledges, and meaning-making practices. The callouses of my conscience were not meant to be erased but re-configured. Journeying along Ingold's wayfaring line (see chapter 1), this study met up with unexpected partners which diffracted through each other to re-create (re)new(ed) knowledge-making patterns. In what follows are four unexpected moments encountered along thesis-line which have profoundly shifted (my) thinking and practice with young autistic (neurodiverse) children.

2.2.1. Disruptive moment 1: De-centring human knowledge and knowledge-making practices

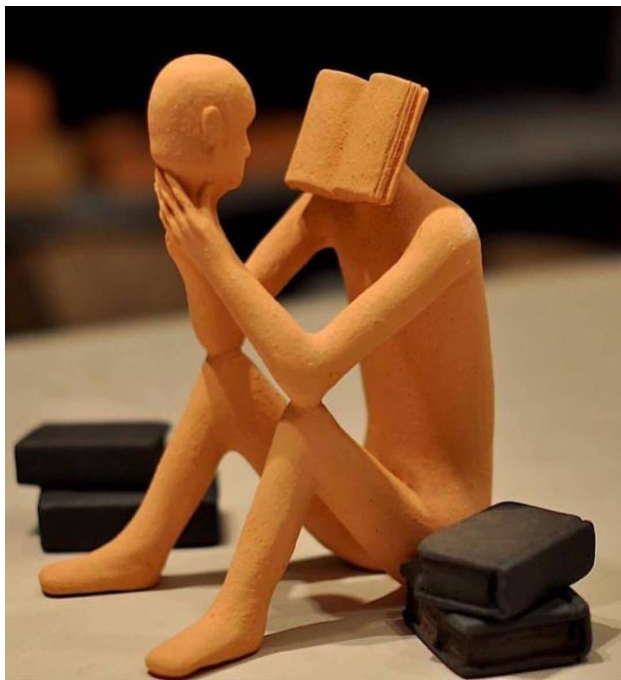


Figure 2.1. Human and more-than-human entanglement (Jones, 2017)

Encountering figure 2.1. at an early stage in the doctoral journey, I was struck by the literal exchange of the head and book. I would later come to realise that figure 2.1. is a pictograph that explains 'reading oneself'. However, at the time I stayed with the literal depiction and the materiality. I asked the following questions:

- To what extent does introspection/reading into oneself foster learning and the creation of knowledge?

- Can learning and thinking be dis/embodied?
- Does this image depict a humanised book/booked human? Or both? What does this mean?
- Who/what is doing the learning?
- Can books 'read' human minds?
- Can learning occur outside of the mind?
- What are the power relations at play in education?
- Is the book empty? Or is the mind empty? Does it matter?
- How do we learn with matter?
- To what extent can education accommodate different ways of learning?
- How can posthumanist practices in ECE and ECI work for autistic children without erasing different ways of being?

The image troubled my understanding of the human bodymind as the primary site of learning as well as the dominant frameworks which have guided my work with young children, in particular theories of intellectual maturation which determines child's capabilities to engage and live with/in the world. I also wondered about the 'dominance' of representational theory/practice such as embodied cognition and the 'embrained' body insofar as knowledge-making practices are concerned. To what extent did reflection and introspection, which have always been regarded as worthy tools of validating research findings, privilege human-centred ontology and epistemology? Without dismissing the value of literacy skills, I wondered to what extent humans were cognisant of the agency of books and how the material matters in everyday life.

2.2.2. Disruptive moment 2: A(n) (in)significant rationale for intervention

Quite simply, speech and language disorders in childhood constitute a major problem for society, in terms of both the human misery that they cause, and the economic costs inevitably incurred when a subset of the population cannot participate fully as members of the community

By inserting this quote into this study, I do not intend to prejudice the pioneering work of the aforementioned researchers. Instead, I endeavour towards a modest indication of my uneasiness with the reference to children with speech-language difficulties as causing “human misery” and “a subset of the population who cannot function fully as members of the community”. The quote underscores the epistemological premise which ‘otherises’⁸⁹ communicatively dis/abled children. What is more striking is that the aforementioned scholarship exists with/in a larger repertoire of research which frames autism-education-intervention. This led me to think about the ontological assumptions about child in our professional and research practices.

The quote also reflects the danger of situating theory/practice with/in the broader sphere of neoliberalism and capitalism. For example, Anderson and Cushing (2013) as well as Nadesan (2010) have warned of the risks of embedding autistic child with/in the context of education-intervention in the 21st century. Nadesan (2010) draws attention to ‘governmentality’, which refer to commodified approaches to interventions as well as thinking practices that produce child as a subject of political-institutional regulation. Is Burman (2017) correct in stating that interventions for young children are based on the fallacy of “catch them when they are young”? Do the child/hoods of dis/abled children amount to little more than programmes designed to ‘humanize’ their level of skills and performance before they reach adulthood (Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014)? I wondered what became of autistic children who remained to be causes of ‘human misery’.

2.2.3. Disruptive moment 3: A critique of sameness through a call to (re)evaluate research and clinical practices with/in autism research

A research presentation by final year speech-language therapy and audiology students at the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2016 elicited the following comments:

⁸⁹ Stated differently, *being* dis/abled renders these children as ‘not human enough’.

Student 1 – comment about engaging in autism research

“Parents did not want to speak to us. It was incredibly difficult to find participants. In fact, when I did the interviews, one parent said: “I’m just gonna tell you the same thing that I told the previous lady... for parents and children with autism, there is frustration that too much time is lost and a sense of going nowhere very slowly”.

Student 2 – some thoughts

“In this case I think that we should actually stop doing research in autism, unless it’s something really dynamic, creative and original. We can’t keep up the same old rhetoric when we research autism. It’s not fair to parents and the children”.

I was intrigued by the growing frustration of final year speech-language therapy (SLT) students engaging in autism research. Their thoughts troubled research with/in the field of autism and called for alternative ways of engaging therapeutically with autistic child and their families. This moment draws attention to the paradox of research that is done *to/for* vulnerable populations, instead of research that is done *by/with* the participants. Indeed, it is only recently that the autism literature is foregrounding the significance of autistic voices and narratives in research, and more so the importance of engaging in research that focuses on the everyday lived realities of being autistic (see for example, Pellicano, et al, 2018). The comment from the students disrupts our understanding of research ethics, which by and large focuses on the philosophy of ‘do not harm’ (see chapter 1). How might we do research that authenticates the experience of being autistic?

2.2.4. Disruptive moment 4: ‘Does it work?’

Colleagues and parents ask me:

“Does ‘it’ work?”

“This philosophy ‘thing’ you talk about. Can the (autistic) children in your study think? Can they do philosophy?”.

This moment relayed long-standing assumptions of child, knowledge, teaching and learning. For example, the ‘hype’ about evidence-based practices through empirical research support has produced binaries such as progress/regress, in/valid, un/measurable, and so forth. Anderson and Cushing (2013) write about how ‘gold standard’ interventions are wrapped up in a normative cultural logic of how autistic children and their families should live. There is money to be made from education-interventions that deliver ‘results’ and promise ‘progress’. There is money to be made from the training required of interventions that ‘work’. The autism-education-intervention has (unwittingly) created a booming ideological and economic business model (see for example Broderick, 2022). And so, the questions about whether or not P4wC ‘works’ foregrounded two aspects of autism-education-intervention that were sought after: the strong desire to ‘humanise’ autistic child as (human) thinker⁹⁰ and a need for progress⁹¹ to make up for the ‘lack’.

In all four disruptions, the autistic child’s thoughts, ideas, feedback, affect, suggestions and experiences with/in the world were in/visible and unaccounted for. It would appear that autistic children were situated with/in frameworks that storied their lives from the perspectives of non-autistic individuals. For example, while disruptive moment 2.2.1 (book-reading-human) troubles learning as human bodymind embodiment, it also draws attention to traditional teaching and learning approaches which underscore the significance of human mindbody in education. As will be discussed in this chapter, these practices not only determine the knowing subject and the construction of knowledge, but also establish autism-education-intervention as a process of ‘be(com)ing’ human. The quote in disruptive moment 2.2.2 draws attention to child as a ‘burden’ with/in a capitalist-orientated society. Put differently, the research underscores the importance of humanising dis/abled children who are generally deemed to be ‘lacking’. This notion of dis/abled child as ‘lacking’ emanates from the literature on developmental psychology (see chapter 8 for further discussion). In disruptive moment 2.2.3., what emerges is the pervasiveness of *subject-fatigue* in research practices (Pedersen & Pini, 2017). For postqualitative researchers, subject-fatigue calls out the rhetoric of the ‘I’ in research method and practices in education. However, in the example above, I wonder the extent to which subject-fatigue

⁹⁰ Please refer to chapters 3 and 6 for discussion on the posthumanist deconstruction of the prototype human.

⁹¹ See chapter 7 for further discussion.

has overflowed into participants' engagement with research. The event in disruptive moment 2.2.4 highlights the complexities of situating autistic child as a bearer of knowledge. The event draws out the dis/able binary, criteria for thinking, thinking as a product of teaching and learning approaches, and *who* counts as a 'capable' thinker. What is also called into question are the (humanising) aims of pedagogy and schooling as well as the ongoing educational, medical, political, and social discourses surrounding autistic child.

Murris (2016) writes that "children are denied on three accounts – ethically for being wrongfully excluded, epistemically for being wrongfully mistrusted, and ontologically for being wrongfully positioned as lesser beings" (p. 130). Thinking with Murris, I wondered about the aforementioned injustices embedded in education and rehabilitation practices with autistic child. Drawing on (my) posthumanist subjectivity as m/otherscholar (see chapter 0), it was increasingly difficult to engage with/in autism-education-interventions that worked to make young neurodiverse children 'talk' in developmentally appropriate ways. It was troubling to work with/in ECE and ECI programmes that placed lesser emphasis on child's be(com)ing with/in the world. It was disheartening, if not questionable, to operate with/in educational and rehabilitation systems that sought to ensure neurodiverse children meet the benchmark and other criteria for 'school readiness' at the expense of other forms of learning. Most importantly, it was not possible to sideline the cacophony of colour, sounds and sights that permeate the silences of children with communication difficulties. And so, this study embarked on a re-search for autistic child. The re-search is about re-configuring child (and subsequent research and theorypractice) by listening without organs, seeing with "fingery eyes" (Haraway, 2016, p. 31) and acknowledging the 'intellectual worthiness' of in/congruent thoughts, scribbles, and talk.

2.3. (Re)searching (for) autistic child

So, what do we know about autism, autistic child, and autism-education-interventions?

Given an official (Western) history of more 75 years, autism, more commonly known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is not only the most widely-researched childhood mental health dis/ability, but it is also the most disputed and controversial form of human existence

worldwide (Baron-Cohen, 2017; Feinstein, 2010; Murray, 2012; Silberman, 2015; Yergeau, 2018). These tensions arise from an array of scholarly contributions from heterogeneous disciplines, which offer different perspectives on autism (Fletcher-Watson & Happé, 2019; Waltz, 2023). Incidentally, the disputes pertain to the differences between the human/autistic mind and raise the following questions: is autism about a dis/ordered mind? Or a mind that is different? Neurodiverse? Neurologically dis/wired? A different operating system? A foreboding of human evolution? Or is all of this just 'neuro-nonsense'? (Burman, 2017, p. x). Burman's quirky neologism is not intended to dismiss the epistemological debates about humans or dis/abled humans. Rather, it a call to interrogate the dominance of certain human ideologies at the expense of others (Braidotti, 2013; Nayar, 2014; Wolfe, 2010). In a global epoch theorised as (post) anthropocentric and posthumanist, there is an urgency to attend to the political and ethical implications of globalisation, human biological engineering, advanced capitalism and technological mediation (Braidotti, 2018). With/in these situated positions, scholars in early childhood and autism studies foreground the significance of addressing the epistemology and ontological underpinnings of knowledge. For example, to what extent do the discourses on human mental abilities matter in world that blurs the distinction between human and more-than-human counterparts? And more importantly, how do our research practices enact response-ability⁹², if not an ethics of care, to life in times of trouble? Here, the re-search for autistic child encounters three lines of enquiry: the situated position of autism-education-intervention; social and epistemic injustice in the autism literature, and the mattering of ontoepistemic injustice for autistic child.

2.3.1. Situating autism-education-intervention

Haraway (1988) explains that situated knowledges reject the idea of objective and universal claims to knowing by proposing that all knowledge is influenced by the social, cultural, and material contexts in which it is produced. Position of autism-education-intervention as situated knowledge attempts to sidestep issues in the literature that relate to outcomes,

⁹² Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

comparisons, progress, and so forth. Rather, the aim is to address deeper issues of epistemology and ontology that generate complex power relations and dynamics.

Let us begin by briefly re-examining the majority position on autism-education-intervention⁹³. In *The Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*, Lestrud (2021, pp. 1611-1612) writes the following about education for autistic children:

The role of education for all children is to provide the experiences needed to learn skills that will lead to “personal independence and social responsibility” (National Research Council [NRC], p. 40). Educational interventions provide students with the support needed to acquire the skills being taught by the educational system and should address functional skills, academic, cognitive, behavioral, and social skills that directly affect the child’s ability to access education. For students with autism spectrum disorders, the interventions often address some of the core deficits in areas of communication, social skills, and behavioral differences. The interventions should be aimed at skills that need to be acquired or that need to be performed more often to lead to successful results.

This entry tells us that contemporary education for autistic children aims to establish (biological) independence and social responsibility. It would appear that *being* autistic is about be(com)ing human. This story of autism knowledge is not new and can be traced back to early theory/practice for autistic children. For example, Charlop, et al., (2021) write that autistic children have historically been excluded from mainstream education on account of social communication, intellectual and behavioural differences. In fact, given these differences, efforts towards rehabilitation, or ‘humanising’ the child by way of reducing aberrant behaviours, was considered more important than education. As Jordan (2019, p. 114) states:

autism was often considered as a medical problem, requiring therapy, often directed at ‘mending’ the attachment difficulties that were seen as being at the heart of

⁹³ Please see chapter 5 for discussion on autism-education-intervention in South Africa.

autism. It was assumed that the emotional connections needed to be ‘repaired’ before children could be expected to benefit from schooling.

Feinstein (2019) states that under circumstances of ‘inhumaness’, education for the autistic child was considered to be an ill-afforded luxury for persons who had limited learning prospects. However, the ‘pioneering autism research’ by Leo Kanner and Hans Asperger in the 1940’s resulted in increased attention to educating autistic children, which gained even more traction in latter part of the last century in developed countries (such as the USA and the UK). Since then, there has been a proliferation of education-intervention approaches. The research in autism has proceeded at such a rapid rate that concern has been raised regarding the efficacy of pedagogies and interventions. For this reason, the autism-education-intervention is governed by the notion of best practice. Roberts and Simpson (2019) summarise best practices as: taking account of the diversity (heterogeneity) of autism; implementing learning approaches and strategies that are evidence-based or empirically supported; drawing up individualized educational programmes (IEPs) for autistic child, teaching specific skills related to social communication, cognitive and behavioural challenges; implementing child —and family—centred interventions, incorporating environmental modifications and an interdisciplinary approach to clinical practice. Yet, despite efforts to ‘streamline’ education for autistic children, most researchers agree that the theorypractice is marred by issues of accessibility and quality of education (see for example, Charlop et al., 2021; Jordan, 2019). Exacerbating factors include the increase in the number of autistic children attending schools, the tension between the support services provided by the schools (especially mainstream schools) and the level of support the autistic child requires, and the lack of consensus regarding best practice.

Contemporary autism research increasingly foregrounds a neurodiversity⁹⁴ approach where autism individuals are at the forefront of research (den Houting, 2019; Freeman Loftis, 2023; Milton & Green, 2024; Pellicano et al., 2018). This move indicates a shift away from a

⁹⁴ Please see the Glossary of terms. The neurodiversity movement has generated increased advocacy and awareness as well as greater scholarly contributions from autistic individuals. Of note is the emergence of Critical Autism Studies⁹⁴, and journals such as *Ought: The Journal of Autistic Culture* (<https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ought/>).

medical paradigm where autism was pathologized⁹⁵ and storied from the perspective of non-autists to a phenomenological approach which emphasizes the experience and being autistic (Milton, 2019; den Houting, 2019; Pellicano et al., 2018). The phenomenological approach is motivated by issues of social and epistemic injustice for autistic individuals.

2.3.2. Epistemic injustices

Epistemic injustice is a concept theorised by Miranda Fricker (2007, 2013, 2017) and refers to the harm done to a person as an epistemic agent in the capacity of a knower and provider of information. Fricker has consistently distinguished between two types of epistemic injustice: hermeneutical and testimonial injustice.

Testimonial injustice refers to the deflated credibility attributed to a speaker on account of a listener's prejudice and occurs when the speaker is misjudged and perceived as epistemically inferior on account of prejudices in the hearer's judgement when listening to a testimony. An example of testimonial injustice would be discrediting the knowledge of autistic individuals on account of the diagnostic criteria associated with autism (Jackson-Perry, 2024).

Hermeneutical injustice is more subtle and therefore difficult to detect. Fricker (2007) explains it as "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (p. 155). Quite simply, hermeneutical injustice occurs when an individual cannot share her life/social experiences with a collective group because the group lacks the social concepts necessary to interpret the individual's perspective. An example might be that autistic people are not trusted insofar as making sense of their own social experiences (Chapman & Carel, 2022).

Credibility is embedded with/in testimony. Fricker (2007, p. 327) considers testimony to be acts of communication, such as oral, written or sign language, in which a speaker asserts

⁹⁵ See the Glossary entry on autism.

their beliefs, ideas, experiences to a larger audience. The different modes of communication permit a variety of speech acts such as comments, opinions, questions, suggestions and responses which project the speaker's knowledge. It would appear that credibility is determined by the extent to which speaker's utterances convey knowledge. The notion of credibility is determined by the hearer's assessment and valuation of the testimony. The hearer's reaction to the speaker – the prejudiced judgement displayed to the speaker – is one that calls into account the credibility of the judgement for often it is unreflective and spontaneous. Fricker (2016, p. 3) describes the hearer's judgement as a "matter of ingrained habit". Epistemic worth, value and validation are embedded in assumptions, prejudices that underscore the hearer's perspective. For instance, the audience which receives the autistic speaker's testimony matters insofar as the speaker is considered to be credible.

So, what drives testimonial injustice? What causes the distortion in the hearer's judgement of the speaker's credibility? Fricker (2007, 2013, 2017) states that the basic mechanism which underlies testimonial injustices are prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudices are "judgements, which may have a positive or a negative valence, and which display some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to some affective investment on the part of the subject" (Fricker, 2007, p. 35). As a form of prejudice, stereotypes are "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes" (Fricker, 2007, p. 30). Stereotypes impact on the hearer's judgement of the speaker's credibility. As Fricker (2007, p. 32) states, stereotypes produce a "social generalization about the epistemic trustworthiness — the competence and sincerity — of people of the speaker's social type".

While Fricker has applied the concept of identity prejudices to race, gender, and class⁹⁶, the concept has only recently been taken up in autism research (Chapman & Carel, 2022; Jackson-Perry, 2024) and in education with young children (Baumtrog, 2018, Kotzee, 2017, Murriss, 2013). Yet, there has been an increasing argument that children are historically

⁹⁶ It might be helpful to note that Fricker's focus on gender, racial and class injustices emanate from her early work in feminist epistemology. She states that the etiology of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices reflects the intersection of Marx's notion of class and social politics as well as Foucault's work on power and truth. See her work (Fricker, 2017) for further information.

marginalised on account of age and are therefore also subjected to identity prejudices (Burroughs & Tollefsen, 2016, Kotzee, 2017, Lone & Burroughs, 2016; Murriss, 2013). But how does age bring about epistemic injustice?

2.3.3. The mattering of ontoepistemic injustices for autistic child

Let us re-turn how ontoepistemic injustice works. At the core of ontoepistemic injustice are the educational injustices levelled against children's claims to knowledge (Murriss, 2016, 2017, 2018). Most often these injustices manifest as structural, institutional, gender, or racism against young children. However, Murriss (2016) argues that the most pervasive injustices manifest in the form of (adult) discourses about children's thinking. These discourses emerge from the nature/culture binary which have sedimented psychological and sociological constructs of child and childhood along timeliness of vulnerability, innocence, and developmental maturation⁹⁷. Consequently, children are foregrounded with/in stereotypes of what child should 'be, know, and do' within allocated spaces in time. Murriss (2016) states that stereotyping child has had profound negative implications on how children are viewed as knowledge bearers. More often than not, children are not listened to or taken seriously because they are situated as too young, immature, 'adult-in-the-making', innocent, and fragile (Murriss, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). She argues that the discourses which frame child and childhood constitute ontological and epistemic harm against young children's authority as knowledge producers. Murriss's arguments about child as thinking being are compelling for they call into account the ethical and political dimensions of teaching and learning practices. Her work challenges (adult) teachers, therapists, parents, facilitators who work with young children to re-configure their knowledge and practices pertaining to the nature of education itself (Murriss, 2016). But what is the purpose of highlighting ontoepistemic injustice?

The aim of drawing attention to ontoepistemic injustice is to decolonise educational practices. Murriss (2016, 2018) writes that de/colonising pedagogies only become possible when adults are aware of how taken-for-granted notions of child/hood constitute ageist

⁹⁷ See chapter 8 for further discussion.

prejudices against children in education. She suggests that re-orienting educational practices requires an ontological shift from substance to relational, where the intra-active entanglements of human and more-than-human are re-worked into teaching and learning practices. The complexity of ontoepistemic injustice, as well as the relevance of the concept for autistic children, begs the question of what this would look like?

While Murriss has problematised age as a category of exclusion, it would seem the literature on (onto)epistemic injustices against child has paid insufficient attention to the ab/normal status afforded to dis/abled child. Notwithstanding that education tends to devalue most, if not all children, regardless of ability, as knowing subjects (Murriss, 2016), the dis/abled child is at greater risk for such prejudice on the basis of a narrow understanding of the cognitive, communicative, and/or intellectual capacities for learning.

Dis/ability is a complicated affair, for even with/in the borderlands of human 'otherness', the privilege of ability is very much alive. These troubled sentiments are echoed in the writings of Erevelles (2018), who states that the issue of social justice becomes a somewhat contentious point when disability enters the discussion. Despite the comforting presence of its 'marginalised sisters' gender and race studies, disability tends to be ostracised beyond the limits of humanism. Indeed, it is one thing to be of marginalised race, gender, or sexuality, but it is quite another to be 'unworkable' body-mind, and perhaps one that needs fixing. Disability embodies the actual conditions of cognitive, physiological, biological, and psychological differences that set it apart from other marginalised groupings.

Compellingly, Erevelles (2018, p. 67) writes that:

marginalized groups, who, while, asserting their values in an un/just world, implicitly and/or explicitly negate disability, by claiming that "we may be black/brown, poor, queer, undocumented, indigenous, migrant, or female, but we are not pathological, not stupid, not crazy, not incapable ... in other words, we are not disabled".

Erevelles (2018) uncovers a deeply embedded biological essentialism that discriminates with/in the category of 'other', re-turning human-centricism. Undoing anthropocentrism requires an undoing of the ontology which guides (human) knowledge-making practices. Taking ontology seriously are posthumanist scholars in ECE who deconstruct human-centred teaching and learning through diverse disciplinary perspectives such as feminism, philosophy, critical theory, quantum *philosophyphysics*, philosophy of education and childhood studies. What emerges is a rich transdisciplinary engagement amongst different disciplines that 'unfixes' dualist notions of knowledge production. One of the ways in which decolonising child/hood discourses takes place is through a posthumanist approach to P4wC and the CPE (Murriss, 2016). In her doctoral research, Reynolds (2021) puts forth compelling arguments on how a posthumanist approach to P4wC⁹⁸ and the CPE enquiry opens up productive spaces for re-configuring child outside of dominant discourses in education. Reynolds writes that P4C cannot be separated out from entanglements with the more-than-human. In classrooms, the chairs, table, space, writing material, histories, land, and humans matter in how child emerges. For Murriss (2016), a posthumanist orientation to philosophical enquiries legitimises the multiple material-discursive ways in which children co-construct knowledge. The relational ontology is deeply entangled with ethics and response-ability for shared knowledges. Staying with Murriss (2016) and Reynolds (2021), let us explore P4wC and the CPE.

2.4. Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) and the community of philosophical enquiry (CPE): A brief exploration

This exploration of P4wC foregrounds the human-centric approach that is adopted in nearly all the literature except for the posthumanist work of Giorza (2018); Murriss (see Murriss, 2016) and Reynolds (2021). The aim here is not to provide a comprehensive account of the approach and pedagogy of the CPE but to highlight key ideas that are relevant for this study.

Pioneered by philosopher and educator Matthew Lipman, in conjunction with his colleague Ann Margaret Sharp, P4wC is an internationally-acclaimed approach to teaching and

⁹⁸ Please see the Writing conventions.

learning that aims to cultivate higher order thinking⁹⁹ through dialogical enquiry (Gregory & Laverty, 2018; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012; Lipman, 1976, 1991, 2003, 2008). In what follows, P4wC is discussed in terms of the pertinent aspects that relate to this study.

2.4.1. History of P4C¹⁰⁰

P4C emerged in the late 1960's in the US alongside proponents of critical thinking in schools. The critical thinking movement arose out of concerns regarding the lack of reasoning skills inherent to teaching practices at the time, and unambitious learning outcomes of said practices. At the time, Lipman (1976) argued that the mainstream schooling curriculum, particularly the educational model, did not sufficiently account for the dynamism of children's thinking. For Lipman, the nature of thinking with/in schools was reduced to sedentary, habitual, and unreflective practices about passive, rote-learned processes of acquiring knowledge. In his memoir, Lipman (2008) refers to his encounters with college students, who, in their formative years of tertiary education, displayed inadequate critical reasoning skills in response to intellectual discourses. He theorized that if children were not exposed to the skills of philosophical thinking early in life, these would be difficult to cultivate later in life. In response to the unreflective thinking practices inculcated by mainstream education, Lipman (1991, 2003) proposed a reflective model of educational practice that fostered critical, caring, creative and collaborative thinking that not only refined rationality and judgement, but also nurtured practices necessary for democratic citizenship. This model of thinking was implemented through the induction of a philosophical curriculum in primary and secondary schools.

2.4.2. Theoretical foundations

The Lipman-Sharp tradition is grounded in social constructivist learning theories (Lev Vygotsky) and Western philosophy (Charles Peirce Sanders, and John Dewey). Drawing on

⁹⁹ Lipman (1991, 2003) considered higher-order thinking to be practices of reasonableness, thoughtfulness, evaluation, judgement, as well as listening and understanding. He theorised that nurturing these skills fostered critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking.

¹⁰⁰ The Lipman-Sharp model is referred to as P4C and not P4wC. Please see the Glossary of terms for further discussion.

Dewey, Lipman argues that education has failed by focusing on outcomes instead of the process of learning. Education did not focus on the problems and how to solve them. Lipman proposed that education should be modelled on scientific enquiry where the focus is on the process, problem solving rather than outcomes. The phrase 'community of enquiry' draws on pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and his ideas of communities who explore particular scientific queries (Gregory, 2022). In addition to Peirce, Lipman and Sharp devised the phrase the term community of enquiry through principles of Socratic dialogue; John Dewey's theory of epistemology, logic and politics; Justus Bucher's notion of human judgement and discussion as a method of 'query'; as well as the writings of George Herbert Mead, and Lev Vygotsky (See Gregory, 2022; Gregory & Laverty, 2018). The Lipman-Sharp model of classroom community of philosophical enquiry was novel for its time and was subsequently taken up in other pedagogical approaches (Gregory, 2022).

2.4.3. The reflective model of education

Lipman (1991, 2003) proposed P4C as a reflective model of thinking, which aims to re-configure philosophy into an educational programme that encourages children to discover and create meanings for themselves. This model differed from traditional models in that education was theorised as a practice of fostering thinking and not a practice of knowledge transmission (adult knowers to child as un/knowers). The model also sought to undo the authoritative role of the teacher and scenarios' where teaching content/subject matter occurred in isolation from other subjects. Instead of focusing on learning outcomes (typical of traditional educational models of the time), Lipman foregrounded the importance of learning with/in liveliness of experiences in the world. A further aspect of the reflective is rationality as the organising principle¹⁰¹.

For Lipman (2003), the reflective model proposes that education take the form of facilitated enquiries which seek to deepen thinking by honing thinking skills such as reasoning and

¹⁰¹ Lipman (2003) considered rationality to be reasonableness, which he explains is rationality tempered by judgement.

judgements¹⁰². Children are encouraged to think of the world through their experiences, particularly what they consider mysterious, ambiguous and unequivocal. The child is considered to be as much a knower as the teacher.

The aim is to encourage children to develop and strengthen thinking skills by enabling and facilitating philosophical judgements such as reasoning and decision making based on their experiences in the world.

2.4.4. The community of philosophical enquiry (CPE)

Lipman introduced the CPE as the dialogical pedagogy of P4C. Drawing on Peirce and Socratic dialogue, Lipman introduced the term 'community of enquiry' to specify a common space which was by and large dedicated to pursuing philosophical goals. Kennedy and Kennedy (2012) describe the CPE as "an intentional speech community in the form of a relatively stable and regularly attending group of people who meet in order to dialogue with each other about philosophical concepts" (p. 97). The nature of the group itself is important for promoting listening skills, collaborative, and caring thinking (Lipman, 2003). Lipman (1991) also conceptualised the enquiry space as one of self-corrected practice. Thus, a core feature of the enquiry entailed the members to listen to each other in order to build upon ideas, challenge each other by way of reasoning/providing reasons for arguments, drawing inferences and identifying assumptions within the context of dialogue (Lipman, 1991).

The hallmark of the discourse is dialogical argumentation, which for Lipman, is the heart of philosophical enquiry. Of significance is that dialogue is clearly demarcated from conversation. Influenced by Martin Buber's distinction between conversation and dialogue, Lipman (1991) defined conversation as "a friendly chat and lover's talk" (p.18), whereas dialogue is characterised by the participant's awareness of the "mind of others in their present and particular being". By this Lipman suggested that dialogue was active, intentional and worked towards the establishment of mutual thinking relationships with other members. The dialogue centres around a democratically chosen topic which is

¹⁰² Judgements are settlements or agreements of what were previously obscure relationships. They entail comparing and contrasting, investigating and backing up claims with evidence.

developed through the artful facilitation of questioning which provokes the deconstruction and reconstruction of concepts in order to gain new insights into topics while simultaneously refining skills such as reasonableness and judgment (Lipman, 1991, 2003; Splitter & Sharp, 1995). In this way the goal of philosophical enquiry is to enable the individual to progress towards a deeper understanding and critical reflection of the complex issues encountered during everyday life.

The CPE is characterized by an overt sense of democracy, turn-taking, careful listening and respectful engagement with ideas and opinions. Despite the CPE being facilitated by trained P4wC enquirers, all members of the CPE are encouraged to share in the group dynamics and cohesiveness, discussions, evaluations, and contributions, to the philosophical progress of the CPE (Haynes, 2007). In this way the P4C pedagogy actively promotes voice, power and citizenship of the child through the democratic nature of the community of enquiry, facilitation styles and the role of dialogue (Haynes, 2007).

Specifically, the CPE by nature entails self-critical practice and harnessing the curiosity, exploration, experimental and social aspects of human learning (Haynes, 2007). The enquiry is also process-orientated and follows the direction of the argument. More importantly, the discussion is dialogical and not conversational. The CPE is also non-adversarial, reflecting shared cognition with the aim of cultivating literacy and philosophical imagination.

So far, the child is assumed to present with the mental abilities to process information and problem solve, engage with the world and demonstrate social skills necessary to take part in interactions with others (Haynes, 2007). There is also the expectation of the child having the capacity for reasoning and judgement as well as being able to use language to articulate thoughts, ideas and experience. Children are also assumed to have the ability for abstract thinking, for example, imagination, philosophical reasoning, curiosity about the world.

2.5. Why P4wC and autism?

P4wC offers a counternarrative to psychological and sociological perspectives of child. It is unique and radical in how it brings child and philosophy together in education. The CPE is a *doing*, an active and dynamic 'organism' (Murriss, 2016) – a radical democratic pedagogy

that disrupts how children are positioned and how education works, offering a more philosophical way for adults and children to think together (Gregory & Laverty, 2018). Lipman claims that children are naturally inquisitive and curious about the world in which they are situated (see Matthews, 1994). The curiosity children display is inherently philosophical. Yet, this ‘wonder of ponder,’ is unaccounted for by the dominant theories of child development, in particular Piagetian stage-like theories of child’s mind (Matthews, 1994). Lipman and Sharp introduced children to academic philosophy (albeit transformed through a specially written curriculum for children) by building on the philosophical questions children already ask and extending the breadth and depth of their thinking through adult and peer-mediated facilitation. In this way children’s thinking is scaffolded for decision making, reasoning, and thinking about the world (Gregory & Laverty, 2018). More importantly, philosophical enquiry with young children enables the child to express her perspectives, ideas, questions, and problem-solving abilities about the world, herself and others.

Neurodiverse children, like all other children, display philosophical prowess, thinking, and curiosity about the world. For example, there have been studies documenting philosophical inquiries with hearing-impaired children (Geisser, 1993), children regarded as ‘at risk’ (Lone, 1997), learners with special educational needs (Bowen, 1999), literacy for disadvantaged children (Douglas, 2003), literate thinking for children identified as poor readers (Jenkins & Lyle, 2010), individuals with traumatic brain injury (Gardelli et al., 2023), children with behavioural and social communication challenges (Cassidy et al., 2018) and children with barriers to learning (Green, 2017). These studies have opened up the possibility for interventions that work around barriers to learning without compromising the individual’s status as a thinker.

2.6. Situating the thesis and re-search questions

Decolonising¹⁰³ education for autistic children lies at the heart of this study. Decolonisation is typically understood as enacting change to educational policies, pedagogy, and teacher

¹⁰³ Decolonisation seeks to enhance learning through improvising curricular content, motivating for new (evidence-based) approaches, methods, and strategies to teaching practices.

training. But this is not the nature of change sought in this study. Broached from the perspective of *critical posthumanism*, decolonisation calls into question the epistemic and ontological foundations of human-centred knowledge practices that guide routine approaches to teaching and learning (see for example, Murriss, 2016). For posthumanist scholars, decolonisation steps away from the structural aspects of education, and questions the assumptions that foreground the human knowing subject. Decolonisation is about engaging in pedagogies that open spaces for thinking outside the rhetoric of adult/child, dis/able, nature/culture and so forth, that 'fix' the construction of knowledge and the perpetuation of the same patterns of knowing-being-doing in the world.

This thesis suggests a posthumanist transdisciplinary approach to autism-education-intervention by attending to the urgent need to re-configure education-intervention for autistic child in relation to ontoepistemic injustices and the call for autistic-led research practices. The research threads the work of posthumanist scholars in ECE (see for example, Lenz Taguchi, 2016; Murriss, 2016; Murriss & Osgood, 2022; Taylor, 2019) with Lipman's P4C and the P4wC movement in general. Of significance is the posthumanist scholarship of Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2013) that disrupts anthropocentrism and representationalism by theorising the agency of the more-than-human and a relational ontology. The study also draws on the work of scholars in the field of Disabled Childhood studies (Curran et al., 2018), particularly the work of scholars who write about dis/ability and posthumanism (Goodley et al., 2022). The study is guided by the following re-search questions:

1. How might the community of philosophical enquiry be put to work with autistic children given their communication and learning differences?
2. How can subjectivity for autistic children be re-configured outside of humanist narratives of mastery, skill and performance?

It should be noted that these questions are not 'fixed' in this chapter or this thesis. Intra-acting with unexpected materials along the wayfaring lines in this study (i.e. the different chapters), the questions foreground the practice of matterphorics. Barad and Gandorfer (2021) write that "matterphorics is an aesthetic of thought that is attentive to modes of thought that acknowledge the inseparability of matter and meaning. These modes of

thought are linked to issues of (in)justice(s)”(p. 14). The inextricability of matter and meaning are found with/in a relational ontology where *mattermeaning* is re-configured as lively and agentic. Matterphorics is about the ethics of matter-meaning in how the world comes into being. Implicit to matterphorics is the “commitment to theorising the world as being part of the world and expressing thought differently – in a way that *matters*” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021).

There are four matterphoric moves offered in this study. The first is theorising autistic child from the perspective of philosophy of childhood instead of developmental, social and cognitive learning theories. The second is the philosophical orientation to dialogic education¹⁰⁴. The third is a posthumanist approach to P4wC, and the fourth move is entangling autistic child, philosophical and dialogical pedagogy and posthumanism.

2.7. Storying the thesis

As discussed in chapter 1, this study comprises four storybags, or carrier bags. Each story bag has three chapters which have emerged through unanticipated human and more-than-human partnerships. Each carrier bag explores different aspects of the study and explains how the chapters with/in contribute to the collective ‘making with’ in the story bag.

Carrier bag I, titled Down the Rabbit Hole, explores the transformative power of re-configuring autism through posthumanism. Here, chapter 0 explored the re-turning of (my) subjectivity and knowledge as mom-researcher-therapist. Chapter 1 proposes posthumanist storying as a writing style and method of engaging with the phenomena that emerged through data collection. Chapter 2 argues for political, educational and therapeutic implications of thinking autism through the lens of ontoepistemic injustice.

Carrier bag II is concerned with research method, or rather the challenges and nuances that come into being when ‘undoing’ the rigour of method. The three chapters in this story bag draw on posthumanism and PQR to experiment with creative ways of doing theorypractice

¹⁰⁴ Dialogic education rests on the foundation of social constructivist and oral education strategies.

while simultaneously holding 'old traditions'. Chapter 3 poses a series of questions which I have asked along the PQR journey, and alongside, the manner in which (my) understanding of the theorypractice has unfolded. Chapter 4 theorises the CPE as a philosophical wanderer of spacetimeattering and explores how the participants emerge as phenomena with/in the political and educational landscapes. Chapter 5 is concerned with data and theorises how postqualitative research re-configures data as agential.

Carrier bag III records the intra-action of P4wC and posthumanism with the children in this study. Chapter 6 disrupts the notion of dialogue in enquiries and suggest a re-configuration of dialogue through the more-than-human. Chapter 7 troubles the notion of progress by drawing attention to what is produced outside of unilinear trajectories of growth and skill development. Chapter 8 is about re-configuring the autistic child outside of developmental boundaries.

Carrier bag IV keeps the stories going by staying with the in/conclusion of this study.

Chapter 9 re-minds us of the wayfaring thesis journey and how these matter for posthuman practices in autism-education-intervention.

Diffraction Thinking Time 1

Missing narratives of autistic females

Thinking time 1 is a 'holding' spacetime matter¹⁰⁵ where intra-actions¹⁰⁶ of unexpected partnerships from carrier bags I and II occur. Weaving what has been storied (ontoepistemic injustice and autism) with what will be storied (postqualitative research methods) bleeds into the here-now. Child, justice, storytelling, research, spacetime mattering, diffraction, philosophical enquiries, more-than-humans, and humans intra-act to bring into be(com)ing the absence of autistic females in this study. The 'lack' of female participants was a stark reminder of the underrepresentation of autistic girls in education, workplaces, and other such contexts. Over the time during which the enquiries took place, there were no autistic girl students. Subsequent visits to the schools revealed a marginal presence of autistic female children in comparison to the males. Now, without discounting geopolitical and economic factors such as limited resources, access to education, location and so forth, there is a greater injustice at play. This is the systematic exclusion of the autistic girl child as per the dominant literature pertaining to autism.

The absence, or erasure, of particular bodies (such as gender, race, sexual orientation) raise questions about the politics of the autism diagnosis. It is widely accepted that autism has always been more prevalent in boys than girls, with an estimated ratio of four boys diagnosed to one girl and it is only recently that researchers are paying closer attention to the gender differences in autism (see Carpenter et al., 2019, for more detail). Previously, the differences were attributed to the female protective effect (FPE), which theorises that females demonstrate greater resilience to the factors that cause autism and 'mask' the symptoms of autism by way of genetic mutations (Carpenter et al., 2019). The FPE implicated biological, genetic, and neuronal factors as the source of differences. In comparison to boys, autistic girls and women were diagnosed on the basis of extreme atypical behaviours which were most likely associated with intellectual difficulties. For those without learning difficulties, the diagnosis was often missed or established at a later stage in life.

¹⁰⁵ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹⁰⁶ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

However, regardless of whether female autistic bodies are missed or misdiagnosed, what is apparent is the violence of being excluded from support, care, and other services related to well-being (see for example Carpenter et al., 2019). Similarly, the limited presence of black autists in the literature raises concerns about the double discrimination of ableism and racism (see for example, Malone et al., 2022). As an African female scholar, it is deeply unsettling to re-call a scoping review study pertaining to the intersectionality of race and dis/ability which indicates that over a 77-year period, only three studies foregrounded black autistic females, and even then, intersectionality was not addressed (Lovelace et al., 2022). It is worth noting that the intersectionality of autism, transgender and nonbinary identities has suffered comparable transgressions in the literature (see for example, Gratton et al., 2023).

As a gesture of response-ability to all excluded human and more-than-human autistic bodies, diffractive thinking time 1 seeks to materialise the posthumanist hauntology¹⁰⁷ of bodies and ghostliness of those who are absent/present as we continue into carrier bag II. This is done by rendering capable in the ‘thick-now’, the writings of two autistic females.

Voiceless

Voiceless is a reflective writing piece that expresses the social communicative frustration of an autistic adolescent in relation to her ongoing struggle to be ‘heard’ throughout her schooling. This piece was written shortly after the writer experienced an emotional, physical and behavioural meltdown during a (high school) maths lesson. She said, “It is the first time in ten years I allowed my frustration to show”. Voiceless is re-printed here at the request of the author.

I do not have a voice. I am at a constant battle with the way they want me to be, a perfectly well-oiled machine that can obey every command, but I am not programmed to function according to their desire. I have always felt like a shattered

¹⁰⁷ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

piece of glass, irreparable, and malfunctioning. My contrasting thoughts have suppressed when they try to fix me, to make me into one of their perfect creations, but I am not perfect.

I am experiencing a relentless battle with my mind to find my voice. My ideas are screaming insistently and repetitively, but continuously I am overlooked because I do not have the words to articulate myself like how they want me to. My mind is not a computer than can be reprogrammed to their conventional standard. My voice is starting to diminish gradually, I am losing the battle, and soon be conquered. They are trying to alter me, to make me like everyone else because a variation of average is not accepted.

They are trying to change the way I function, but they have been unsuccessful. I have learned to put on a façade of being descriptive and innovative, like everyone else. I cannot do this like everyone else, I have tried, but it has been a constant struggle my whole life. The crescendo of my thoughts can be deafening, but I need to silence them because they cannot realize that I am not one of them.

They do not understand me. they act as if they know what it is like to be me but are never silenced. They do not understand because if they did, they would not criticize others like me daily. I do not want them to acknowledge me; if they did, they would pity me. I do not want their pity or their silent judgment. I want them to accept me and to understand what it feels like to not express yourself with words because you do not have it. I want them to know what it feels like to be dismissed because of who you are and the pain you go through every day to act like one of them to not be true to yourself. They are incapable of understanding.

It is frustrating to endure this surreal form of formalism, knowing that there is nothing that I can ever do to fix it. They are unable to change the way they think, or view people like me; we remain considered as outcasts, an aberration to society. If they are enlightened with the truth about me, I will be sent back to the factory, discarded like a wasted product, and never thought of again.

There is nothing wrong with me. They look down on me because I function differently compared to them. I have not been gifted to process words and emotions the way they do; we see the world differently. My differences make me insignificant.

They do not see me as an equal because I am abnormal. All of my triumphs are celebrated with ignorance and disregard, and my failures are met with applause.

I do not have the words to write this, I am struggling, but there is nothing I can do. No one else can help me. They do not fully understand, and the concept of change is not welcome. I do not want to change who I am; I want to be heard. I want my voice back. I do not want to live in fear of being me. I want to be accepted by them. When my voice starts coming back to me, they sweep in swiftly and shut me down before I can cause harm.

The Alice Case

The Autistic Alice (2017) is a collection of poems by Joanne Limburg. As a child living-growing with undiagnosed autism (previously Asperger's), Joanne often identified with Alice. In this collection she draws on *Alice in Wonderland* to express her experiences as a young girl and woman growing up with autism.

“The problem with Alice,’ the Caterpillar says, ‘is her rigidity of thought.’

‘Yes,’ says Humpty Dumpty, ‘and her lack of empathy.’

‘Indeed,’ says the Caterpillar, ‘her mind-blindness.’

‘Yes,’ says Humpty Dumpty, ‘her inability to read faces.’

‘Indeed’, says the Caterpillar, ‘or tone of voice.’

‘And then,’ says Humpty Dumpty, ‘there’s the flatness of her affect.’

'Alongside,' says the Caterpillar, 'the strangeness of her prosody.'

'...as well as' says Humpty Dumpty, 'her adherence to routine.'

'Not forgetting,' says the Caterpillar, 'her repetitive behaviours.'

'Or her failure,' says Humpty Dumpty 'to understand a joke.'

'Or her lack,' says the Caterpillar, 'of any feel for metaphor.'

'Or her inability,' says Humpty Dumpty, 'to hold a proper conversation...'

'Excuse me,' says Alice. 'May I say something?'

'Of course,' says the Caterpillar – 'you may say something –'

'Yes,' says Humpty Dumpty, 'and we'll tell you why it's wrong.'

The writing pieces, authored by an autistic teenage girl and woman respectively, draw attention to absence/presence of 'othered' autists¹⁰⁸. There are two powerful aspects to the absence/presence that emerges from the writing.

Drawing on Braidotti (2018) the poems above might be considered cartographies of missing people. A posthumanist cartography is "a politically informed map of one's historical and social locations, enabling the analysis of situated formations of power and resistance" (Braidotti, 2011, p. 271). By missing people, Braidotti (2018) refers to real life subjects whose knowledges have never been included in political discourses. Making visible the

¹⁰⁸ 'Othered' autists refers to those who face discriminations in addition to autism.

voice/thoughts of gendered autistic females draws attention to the ontoepistemic injustices with/in the autism literature in itself.

A second point of interest is that the absence of autistic females in this study (as iterated above) haunt this study with ghostly absences/presences. However, the inclusion of the poems here should not be mistaken as form of justice that seeks to 'right' an injustice (i.e. include what has been excluded). Rather the writings thread the more-than-human material (gendered, racial, and sexual) through this study without succumbing to research methods that might question the physical absence/presence of female bodies in this study. What becomes visible is that manner in which the poems, entangled with the carrier bags I and II, disrupt linear spacetime. The ghostly residue of the poems open up spaces to re-configure research practices, pedagogy-therapy practices, and autistic child.

Carrier Bag II

Doing Postqualitative Research Through Slow Scholarship

A mad tea-party

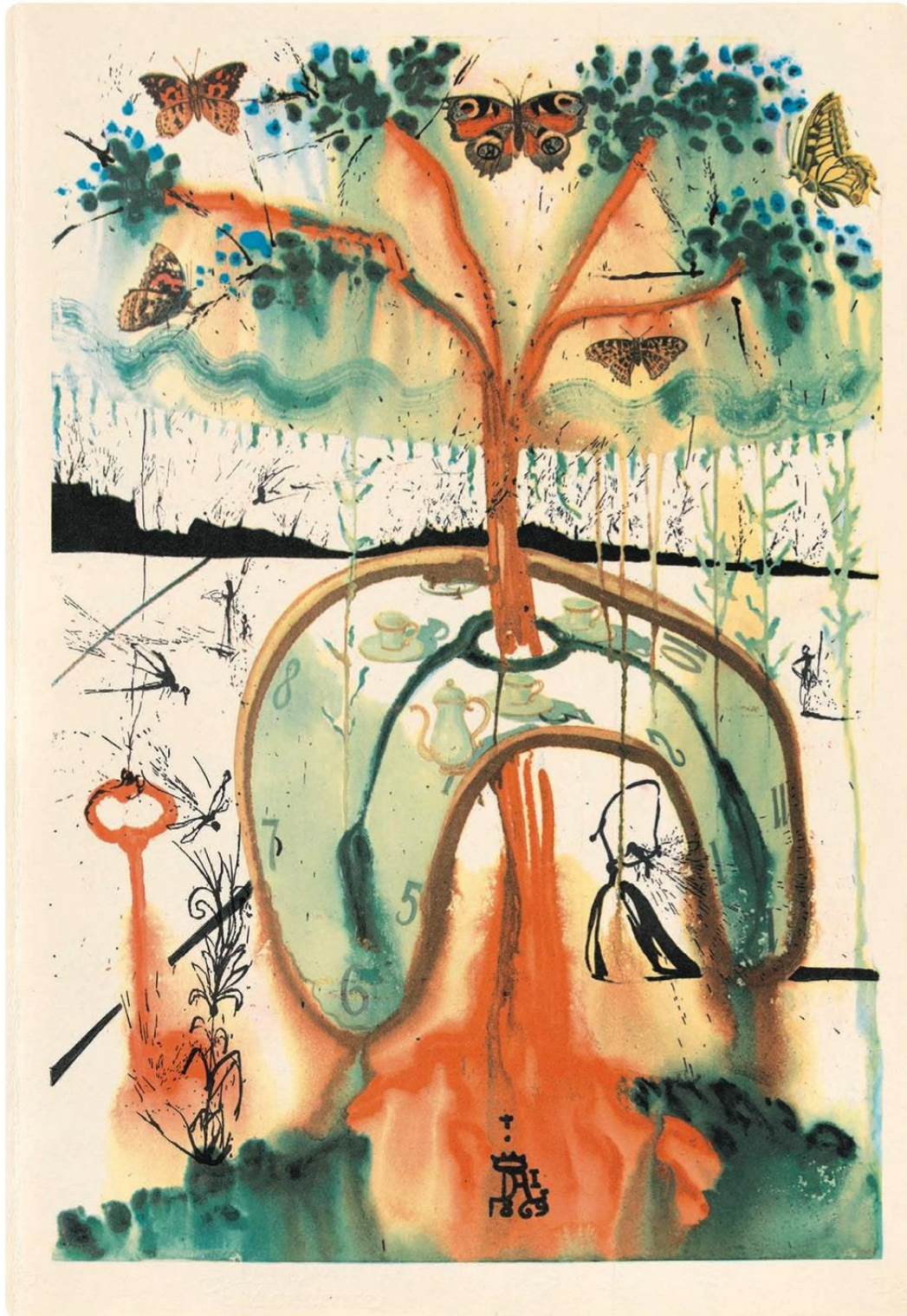


Figure CB II. A Mad Tea-Party (Carroll & Dalí, 1969/2015)

Carrier bag II marks the research method undertaken in this study. From the lines of enquiry in carrier bag I, the method is guided by the following questions: How might the community of philosophical enquiry be put to work with children who present with significant challenges to enquiry-based learning? How can autistic children be re-considered outside of humanist narratives of mastery, skill and performance?

Carrier bag II emerges through Dali's heliogravure (see figure CB II) preceding *A Mad Tea-Party*, the seventh chapter in Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015). Dali's illustration of the chapter differs from the events in Carroll's writing. For instance, in *A Mad Tea-Party*, Carroll narrates Alice's first encounter with the March Hare, the Hatter and the Dormouse. The chapter begins with Alice arriving at the home of the March Hare to discover a tea-party taking place. Here she finds the March Hare and Hatter seated at a corner of a large table. The dormouse, who is asleep, sits in between them and is used as an elbow cushion. Alice receives an inhospitable reception from the March Hare and Mad Hatter, which angers her greatly. Nevertheless, she is included in a puzzling conversation that includes riddles with no answers, rhetorical questions about time, the Dormouse as storyteller, and confounding answers to enquiries that she makes. Eventually, the rudeness of her hosts becomes too much to bear, and she leaves what she calls "the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!" (Carroll & Dalli, 1969/2015, p. 62).

In figure CB II, I was struck by Dali's portrayal of the tree, notably the grandeur and the care with which it has been detailed. Closer examination of the tree shows that it is entangled with the drippy watch, a large key, and depictions of actual European butterflies which have been carefully observed and detailed. The tree-watch entanglement also operates as a tea-table. That the watch is set for 6 o'clock picks up on the discussions on time, particularly the part of the story that explains why tea-time always takes place at 6pm every day. Commenting on Dali's illustration, Hiltz (2011) states that the distortions of common objects (such the tree and the clock) disrupt the human-centred conformities which govern our (human) interpretation of how the world works. For instance, by situating the clock in relation to the tree, Dali disrupts our understanding of time as linear, ordered and progressive. In order to understand time, we must consider the objects with which it is entangled, and manner in which these entanglements take place. Furthermore, Hiltz (2011)

points out that Dali uses the key as a ‘time warp’ to indicate the presence of the humanimals in the chapter. I thought it poignant for research practices that Hiltz (2011) writes: “Time becomes something that can make its own decisions” (p.3) as it challenges the austerity of human research method and design that ill affords attention to the agency of the more-than-human. What are the implications of time making its own decisions during the course of doing research? For whom and what do such decisions come to matter?

Figure CB II re-turns the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of the rhizome, which disrupts the arborescent model of knowledge¹⁰⁹. Through the tree, Dali makes visible the agency of the material, and the generative spaces inbetween text-art for (re)new(ed) connections in thought, provoking a trans-ruption (transformative disruption) in the construction of knowledges. The attention to time foregrounds the practice of slow scholarship, which entails “practices and desires that cultivate other ways of knowing-moving-sensing that attunes to difference through affective relations that evoke curiosity, wonder, and responsiveness” (Fullagar & Bozelek, 2022, p. 120). Engaging in slow scholarship, carrier bag II threads the trans-ruptive knowledge creation of the data through postqualitative research with the aim of slowing down the thinking and doing in order to explore the importance of moving away from human-centric research practices.

The stories in this carrier bag enact the posthumanist concept of theorising and thinking as practices of inseparable being with/in the world (Barad, 2007) and attend to subsequent ontological incommensurability with qualitative research designs. Thinking with Dali’s illustration, carrier bag II experiments with the idea that ontoepistemic injustices are not only instituted against autistic child but also the instruments and measurements that create the image of child. The chapters trouble the human-centric research practices that render data, space, time, histories and location as inert and lacking, and propose research methods that take account of the more-than-human. There are three chapters in this carrier bag. The first chapter articulates the relevance of posthumanism and postqualitative research

¹⁰⁹ In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) Deleuze and Guattari propose the *rhizome* as an image of thought as an alternative to the arborescent model of thought. The arborescent model theorises knowledge as hierarchical and dualist with single entry/exit points. The rhizome resists the organizational structure of knowledge by attending to multiplicities.

methods for this study through a slow style of questioning that I have asked along this doctoral journey. The chapter reveals the challenges and struggles I have experienced in shifting from qualitative to postqualitative research methodology. The second chapter disrupts the notion of data as inert and passive. What follows is an exploration of how data is positioned in postqualitative research. The chapter experiments with a postqualitative re-turning of data to show the differences that emerge when data is theorised as agential. The third chapter in this carrier bag critically engages with data as the spacetime-mattering and traces the differences that emerge when tracing the entanglements of the human and more-than-human in research practices.



3

KNOTTED LINES

Engaging in slow research practices

Chapter 3 is the first of three pieces of writing in carrier bag II that attend to the phenomena that emerged in this study when qualitative research (QR) method was disrupted.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the posthumanist and postqualitative research (PQR) method that weaves this study together. Inspired by Fullagar and Bozalek (2022), the chapter engages in slow scholarship and explores the ‘knots (questions and responses) encountered in journeying the line from QR to PQR. The stimulus that generated the questions is a diffractive journal piece that emerged during the gathering of the data.

3.1. The colour with/in¹¹⁰ boundaries

Carrier bag II, and indeed this chapter, arises from my experimentation with PQR. Given my research training in the medical and social sciences, which were heavily influenced by the psychological approach to doing research with human subjects, it was challenging to engage in PQR practices that eschewed the language and (stringent) processes involved in doing research such as the theoretical framework, research design, sampling, empirical data, and data analysis. As Murriss (2021) explains, the ontology of PQR raises questions about (human) agency, causality, data, objectivity, reflexivity, and subjectivity, all of which have profound implications for how research is re-conceptualised. My sentiments, and difficulties, with PQR appear to align with St Pierre (2019) who states that the historically strong influence of psychological research methods across multiple disciplines, including education, is amongst the reasons why it is difficult to escape human-centric research

¹¹⁰ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

training. Doing PQR requires the researcher to ‘untrain’ the methodologies which privilege human perspectives of the world, and one way of undoing methodological dogma is to read widely in order to think and do theory differently (St Pierre, 2019).

Another way of disrupting hegemonic research practices is through Barad’s (2007) posthumanist performative approach which foregrounds the significance of moving from language and descriptions of reality to practices of actions and doings. Compellingly, the performative approach makes visible the different modes and forms¹¹¹ of thinking that manifested during the course of data gathering. Moreover, what emerged were the ‘hidden’ spaces generated by unexpected human and more-than-human partnerships. Such relations prompted the (my) journal entry below.

*...thinking about thought that falls outside of THOUGHT ...
at face value their thoughts (the participants) can be neither
categorised nor explained. Wandering like lost critters, lurking in slivers
of shadow and light, without belonging, yet seeking to be known, even if
through stale methods of knowledge production.*

What is this state of no belonging, a homelessness of thought?

*It is the indeterminate spaces of potentialities.
At the fuzzy, grey, and impossible edges/ boundaries of epistemological
frameworks of dis/ability, language, autism, and philosophy. Once
immersed in this space, we see that it is not grey nor fuzzy, shadow
nor light, but rather a state of constant colour, movement and vibrancy.
A place of productivity and change, defying - without denying - what we
have traditionally known, by re-making, and re-inventing theorypractice.*

*It is with/in the colour of (ontoepistemological) boundaries, that critters
of thought come to life.*

Figure 3.1. A diffractive journal entry

¹¹¹ See the doctoral storying in chapter 1.

Figure 3.1. marks the study's ontological shift towards posthumanism and PQR. The journal entry disrupts the anthropocentrism of thought and consequently how thought is framed with/in discourses on ECE¹¹² and ECI. For example, the idea of 'thought that falls outside of thought' challenges the cognitive parameters that underscore the criteria for what counts as thought(s). 'Slivers of thought' draw attention to the complex workings of human and more-than-human counterparts. 'Homeless thoughts' disrupt metaphysical categories of belonging, and the conceptual boundaries that characterise knowledge-making practices.

Figure 3.1. became a (philosophical) prompt that generated the following questions about the relations amongst language, thought, research method, and the ethics of recuperating homeless thoughts. The following questions emerged:

- How does thought fall outside of thought?
- Are thoughts alive?
- Do thoughts breathe?
- How does research method vitalise the liveliness of thoughts?
- What are the ethics of living/dying thoughts?
- Whose/what thoughts matter?

Taking the journaling piece seriously calls into question the ethics of how 'the' world is researched. Barad (2019) writes: "might it not be a violation, perhaps even a greater violation, to not allow for the possibility that some acts of exclusion might be enacted in the pursuit of justice-to-come rather than injustice?" (p. 535). Thinking with figure 3.1., the aim of the writing in this chapter is to make visible the (my) challenges and curiosity about posthumanism and PRQ which would otherwise have been left out of the study's discussion about method. By attending to what would have been 'othered', the chapter foregrounds the specificity of the research pattern which emerged and also the complexity (I, as researcher) encountered in untraining methodology.

¹¹² Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

3.2. What is posthumanism?

Posthumanism is considered to be a philosophical orientation that calls into question the tradition in Western metaphysics that has long underpinned theories of being/reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Nayar, 2014; Wolfe, 2010). Posthumanist scholars challenge the autocracy of Western thought that represents knowledge of the world as a product of human experience, sense, logic and interpretation. Critical posthumanists query practices that measure and observe the world without considering its materiality, as well as the metaphysics of human-centredness that dominates our worldview (Barad, 2007; Hodgins, 2019). The key issues that scholars problematise are philosophical dualisms or binaries: the pervasiveness of the human knowing subject as the axiomatic centre upon which all of reality is based, and the dominance of (human) language in (discursive) representations of reality (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007; Coole & Frost, 2010; Gullion, 2018). Of significance is that the posthumanist resistance to human-centred practices does not aim to replace one philosophical paradigm with another. As Braidotti (2013) points out, posthumanism is neither a theory nor theoretical framework but rather a conceptual and navigational tool for re-conceptualising thought and re-configuring the relation amongst humans and more-than-humans.

As will be discussed shortly, key to posthumanism is the notion of a relational ontology¹¹³. Such an ontology, also referred to as the ontological turn, has been widely taken up in disciplines such as anthropology (Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017; Pickering, 2017), sociology (Gullion, 2018; Pascale, 2011), Indigenous studies (Anzaldúa, 1987; Le Grange, 2018; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015), education (Hodgins, 2019; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Murriss, 2016; Taylor, 2019), material feminism (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010) and Disability Studies (DeShong, 2012; Feely, 2016; Goodley et al., 2022). With/in education, posthumanism is theorised as critical posthumanism and also referred to as critical material feminism, new empiricism, feminist new materialism, and the postqualitative turn (van der Tuin & Dolphijn 2012). Key to the posthumanist scholarship is

¹¹³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

the undoing of Cartesian dualisms, representationalism, and Newtonian ontology, all of which have embedded theory and practices with/in an individualised ontology of the world – a world with things existing first and only then brought into relation. Let us take a closer look at how ontology is theorised in posthumanism.

3.3. How is ontology re-configured in posthumanism?

In Western metaphysics, ontology is concerned with taxonomy (categories of existence) as well as criteria for how entities in the world exist. Inherent to ontology are historical and political commitments to the type and nature of knowledges that are validated, if not regarded as truths (Pascale, 2011). For instance, that Western metaphysics is premised on the knowing subject as rational, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and male, has specified the ontological and epistemological conditions against which knowledge bearers, and practices, are measured (Braidotti, 2013, 2018). Such an ontological and epistemic arrangement has created categories of (human) exclusion and discrimination against those who do not fit the criteria of the prototype human (see for example Braidotti, 2013, 2018).

Ontological categories have led to a hierarchy of existence where earthly inhabitants are measured and plotted according to (human) rationality, language and consciousness. In short, the ontological and epistemic injustices of Western metaphysics extend beyond the human subject, regardless of issues pertaining to identity, geopolitical and economic conditions (Braidotti, 2018). What emerges are knowledge-making practices that are embedded in a fixed, unchanging and static ontology where the world comprises discrete units and entities, which can only be accessed through language and pre-existing concepts (Barad, 2007). It would appear that classical ontology has not only prescribed – and sedimented – knowledge of the world and the construction of reality, but constantly re-inscribes the rational, conscious, human subject as the centre of all knowledge.

Posthumanism rejects the classical ontology by thinking with a (re)new(ed) relational ontology. Such an ontology rejects the metaphysics of individualism, or the notion that the world is composed of things with unique sets of properties. For Barad (2007), the world does not exist in autonomous, independent and individual states, but rather emerges as

phenomena¹¹⁴ which come into existence through entangled human and more-than-human relations. A relational ontology foregrounds the seamless articulation of human and more-than-human forces that produce new, creative and imaginative phenomena. Decentring the human knowing subject, a relational ontology proposes a monist, non-hierarchical ontoepistemology (knowing in being) which not only dissolves binaries but also situates human and more-than-human entities on the same plane (Barad, 2007, 2010, 2012). A relational ontology is performative, for it shifts research practices away from descriptions of lived experiences and the subsequent essentialist, fixed perceptions of realities. However, the ontology does not only disrupt realities that are constructed on the basis of representations, language and meaning making, but also “reconfigures the world by enacting differential patterns which mark new boundaries, properties and meanings” (Barad, 2007, p. 139). What this means is that the relational ontology is a ‘doing of the world’, which Barad (2007) explains as an iterative practice of ongoing meaning-making through the intra-action¹¹⁵ of material-discursive relata in the world. The notion of ongoing is a central aspect of a relational ontology that foregrounds an openness to change and the fluid movements that characterise reality. In this way, a relational ontology proffers an ethical response-ability¹¹⁶ to human and more-than-human relations.

What is relevant to research practices is that the relational ontology has profound implications for who is positioned as knowers, what counts as knowledge and how the world is conceptualised (Hodgins, 2019; St Pierre et al., 2016; Taylor, 2019). Let us take a closer look at how such research practices come into being by considering how the knower and knowledge-making practices are re-configured in posthumanism. We begin with the human.

3.4. What is problematic about the human of humanism?

Murris (2016, p. 46) explains that “posthumanism is a response to what has gone on ‘before’ in the history of Western metaphysics and epistemology”. The ‘before’ refers to the

¹¹⁴ Please see the Glossary of terms.

¹¹⁵ Please see the Glossary of terms.

¹¹⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

fundamental problem with humanism, or rather, the nature, function and limitations of the human subject (Braidotti, 2013). Humanism¹¹⁷ refers to a worldview that is committed to the perspectives, beliefs and interests of the human knowing subject.

Copson (2015, p. 6) describes humanism as:

...a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethic based on human and other natural values in the spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality.

Humanist ideologies has been pervasive in the recent intellectual history of the Euro-Western world. For instance, humanist principles have framed how reality is theorised (natural and social worlds), how humans understand the self in comparison to other beings on earth (non-human matter such as animals and objects), the construction of morality and even the constituents of 'a good life' (Copson, 2015). Such ideologies are noted to be in stark contrast to many indigenous and non-Western perspectives (See Tuck & Yang, 2018).

The human subject is a vision of the Enlightenment era that situates the knowing subject on the basis of reasoning and rationality (Braidotti, 2013). This conceptualisation of the human knowing subject has resulted in the rise of (human-centred) theories pertaining to knowledge and existence in the world. Amongst more popular theories is the work of Rene Descartes in philosophy, and Sir Isaac Newton in physics. These theorists postulated that the nature of existence in the world, and indeed the knowledge that follows suit, are based on principles of logic, reason and rationality. In other words, the nature of existence could only be known and verified through processes of hypothesis, proof and conclusion. Inductive and deductive reasoning were core to knowing and being in the world. With/in the aforementioned theoretical paradigms, it would appear that the criteria for logic and reason

¹¹⁷ Humanism has been separated out in two streams, namely an intellectual/atheist stream and a religious stream that foregrounds the significance of divinity.

were species-specific capabilities, reserved for humans only. The implications of such thinking has been profound. As Spallanzani (2019, p. 26) writes of Cartesian philosophy:

Philosophy is no longer a question of the principles of ontology but is a question mankind poses in his search for truth and happiness. Ideas are the result of experience, values are derived from the fabric of social relations, and the sciences are no more than a network created from the abstractions of the human intellect.

Closely related to the theories of the human subject is dualism, an ontological perspective that theorises the dual existence of humankind (Grene & Grene, 1974). For instance, many human-geopolitical conditions are embedded in dualist assumptions that separate out male/female, nature/culture, mind/body, rational/emotional, discursive/material, subject/object, theory/practice, language/reality, adult/child and able/disable.

In their close readings of classical Western philosophers, Grene and Grene (1974) regard dualism as an ancient philosophical problem that can be traced back to the Greek philosophers Aristotle and especially Plato. However, the modern notion of dualism is attributed to Descartes¹¹⁸, and is also known as Cartesian dualism (Grene, 1974; Hacking, 2009). Descartes' infamous *cogito ergo sum* ('I think therefore I am'), is considered to be the pinnacle moment which marked the separation of the mind from the body as different independently-existing substances. According to Grene and Grene (1974), Descartes postulated that the existence of physical phenomena in the world could only be explained by criteria which distinguished entities from each other. The hallmark of Descartes' philosophy was that the nature of existence had to be an outcome of logic, reason and rationality, which could only be achieved by the conscious human mind (Spallanzani, 2019). Phenomena as experienced by entities apart from the mind did not bear the same level of credibility. As it is not possible to ascertain logic through the body, knowledge became a construct of the human mind. The implication of Cartesian dualism is the critical separation

¹¹⁸ Of interest is that the posthumanist perspective is but one interpretation of Descartes work. The reader is referred to the work of Antoine-Mahut and Roux (2019), who argue that the current perspective of Descartes is but a standard account of his theory and has insufficiently considered the events and unpublished writings that underpin his work.

between the knowing subject and what can be known. Thus, knowledge or worldviews are ontologically 'inner', as opposed to the world which is 'outer'. Dualism has had far-reaching consequences on the ontology of life itself (Braidotti, 2013). The schism has created clear lines which not only separate out existence but also construct criteria upon which entities can be classified into particular hierarchical categories of existence. However, perhaps most notable of all is the pervasiveness of dualism in our everyday lives. St Pierre (2000, p. 478) elaborates on the ubiquitous nature of humanism as follows:

Humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures.

To this extent, many people are unknowingly dualist, with the story of what she refers to as 'deep' dualism "written in our bones" (Murriss, 2016, p. 73). Pascale (2011) iterates that the pervasiveness of dualism is so powerful that in some instances research is insufficiently accountable to the historical and political commitments of the knowledges that are produced within such metaphysical parameters.

3.5. Why does posthumanism contest language and representationalism?

Representationalism is a philosophy that privileges mental, abstract descriptions and constructions of reality (Barad, 2007, Kuntz, 2019). Situating the researcher outside of the world, or at distance from the research phenomena, representationalism furthers the creation of binaries such as known/knower, description/reality. Representationalism inhibits relationality, for it operates with/in a metaphysics of discreteness where the world is divided into discrete, autonomous, and pre-existing entities (Barad, 2007, Kuntz, 2019).

Barad (2003, 2007) argues that the epistemic power afforded to language and the philosophy of representation had negated other ways of knowing and being in the world. They articulate the power and problem of language as follows (Barad, 2003, p. 801):

Language has been granted too much power What compels the belief that we have a direct access to cultural representations and their content that we lack toward the things represented? How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter? Why are language and culture granted their own agency and historicity while matter is figured as passive and immutable, or at best inherits a potential for change derivatively from language and culture? How does one even go about inquiring after the material conditions that have led us to such a brute reversal of naturalist beliefs when materiality itself is always already figured within a linguistic domain as its condition of possibility?

Barad (2003, 2007) argues that language has structured the world according to words, thoughts, concepts and mental representations (which include signs and semiotics), and in this way falls back into the trap of binary thinking. Notwithstanding the importance of the discursive, Barad's concern is political. They argue that language furthers the epistemological and ontological divisions in the world, and therefore promotes particular ideologies (i.e., Newtonian ontology) of how the world can be known and experienced. Barad's point on language is profoundly important for this study. As the thesis explains in subsequent chapters, autistic children are (un)wittingly cast in/outside the category of fully 'human' on the basis of their linguistic and mental abilities to theorise the world. Put differently, autistic children are prejudiced epistemologically and ontologically on the basis of their lack of fully 'human' abilities in understanding the world. Of course, this is the same for all children, but autistic children are doubly disadvantaged. Education, plus associated interventions, operate on the basis of measuring achievement through language and thinking. This exacerbates the epistemological/ontological divide, subsequently calling into account the ethics of responding to autism as a 'different' way of knowing and being in the world. Thinking with Barad, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is not possible to theorise education, nor issues of justice for autistic child in isolation from the political, epistemological, ontological and ethical implications of promulgating language as the only, or most important way in which learning takes place. In this context, the concept 'language' does not only refer to the physical act of voice and articulation of thoughts, comprehension, body language, tone and pitch of voice, and so forth. These communicative indicators form part of what Searle (1969) referred to as speech acts, and assume human intentionality,

subjectivity, agency as well as social-cultural regulations as key in the construction of knowledge, despite his emphasis on performativity. Thus, while language use and communication are important parameters for human engagement, it embeds knowledge with/in human-centred projects. What becomes re-instated are pedagogical and therapeutic interventions that work towards ‘humanising’ the dis/abled (autistic) child. But as will be argued in chapter 4, autistic child is entangled with/in a web of intricately layered connections whereby the material and the linguistic cannot be separated out.

3.6. What is the relevance of posthumanism in education and therapeutic spaces?

Literature in childhood studies demonstrates how posthumanism invites creative and refreshing possibilities for transforming literacy, pedagogy and education (Burman, 2017; Hodgins, 2019; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Murriss, 2016; Taylor, 2019). However, the paradigm shifts which posthumanism brings about have generated a degree of scepticism, if not distrust, about the philosophical ideas that underpin the research (Murriss & Osgood, 2022).

Yet nowhere is the distrust more evident than in education practices for autistic children (Paynter et al., 2019; Travers et al., 2016). Owing to the fact that there is an increase in autism cases worldwide (see for example Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.), as well as the heterogenous, diverse nature of autism, there are multiple ‘fad’ therapies and pedagogical practices that are considered to be ineffective, if not harmful (see for example Foxx & Mulick, 2017). In fact, over 50 interventions, and roughly 1300 online programmes promising a cure for autism have been dismissed on account of irregularities pertaining to evidence-based practices (Foxx & Mulick, 2017)). In order to maintain safe measures, education and intervention for autistic children require the heavy backing of empirically-based research. Pivotal to such scholarship is the research method and criteria that underpin best practice. Given that posthumanism eschews human-centric research design and method, this chapter takes seriously Murriss and Osgood’s (2022) suggestion to slow down and re-turn the philosophical potential of posthumanism in order to grasp the complexity and richness of a paradigm that deserves recognition for the important possibilities it brings to be(com)ing child. Posthumanism offers opportunities to affirm (the) autistic child beyond the regiments of developmental narratives, as well as (human-centric)

educational and rehabilitative strategies that are faithful to existences bound by particular bodies.

3.7. What is the link between posthumanism and PQR?

The posthumanist philosophical orientation has generated substantial interest and contributions towards research practices. The term PQR emerged from scholarship of St Pierre (2000) and marked a theoretical approach to research method that contested the capitalist, data-churning exercises that were increasingly associated with qualitative methodologies at the time. PQR now ubiquitously refers to an emerging, methodological engagement with the scholarship in posthumanism (see for example Lather, 2013; MacLure, 2013; St Pierre, 2019; Taylor, 2019). The PQR scholarship puts posthumanism to work by critically engaging, or rather disrupting the human-centred ontology/epistemology arrangement which underpins current trends in qualitative research, data and knowledge production. Postqualitative scholars argue that human-orientated research practices signify the (ontological) sovereignty and control of (hu)man over all other forms of life and matter in existence, and subsequently privilege (hu)man as the all-knowing subject and knowledge producers (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Lather, 2013; St Pierre, 2019; Snaza & Weaver, 2015; Taylor, 2019).

Foregrounding a relational ontology, PQR attends to the role of more-than-humans in the co-constitution of everyday social, research and scientific realities (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2018; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Lather, 2016; St Pierre, 2019; Taylor, 2019). By refusing the ontological supremacy of human experience and existence in the production of knowledge, PQR opens up spaces for non-human experience as a site for knowledge production. Attending to the human and more-than-human relations draws in bodies and entities that were considered to be 'not human enough' or 'in-human'. These marginalised or 'othered' bodies include ethnic and racialised bodies, women, children, animals, slaves, dis/abled, nature, technology, machines and so forth (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010). Thinking in such spaces provokes a radical deconstruction of binaries such as human/non-human, male/female, nature/culture and animate/inanimate, while simultaneously repudiating language and representationalism as

the dominant (epistemological) medium through which knowledge and reality are constructed (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Lather, 2013; Taylor, 2019).

3.8. How is PQR situated in relation to qualitative research (QR)?

PQR is located with/in the broad and diverse qualitative research paradigm and is considered the fourth significant shift in the complex history of QR (Denzin & Lincoln, 2015; St Pierre, 2019). Like QR, PQR is concerned with issues of justice, though the concern is for humans and more-than-humans (Denzin & Giardina, 2015).

The PQR point of departure from QR is marked by a resistance to the metaphysics which privilege human voice, lives and realities, as well as tools such as reflection and reflexivity which not only reproduce existing methods and methodology, but also perpetuate representational ideals (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; St Pierre, 2019; Taylor, 2019). In particular, postqualitative scholars state that a fundamental shortcoming of QR is the inadequacy of contemporary methods and methodologies to account for the philosophical, geopolitical and economic complexities produced through human-more-than-human relations of this current era (Barad, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; St Pierre, 2019; Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Put differently, the epistemological and ontological arrangement of QR cannot easily accommodate phenomena that exceed language, representation and (linguistic) meaning-making.

However, it must be stated that PQR does not dismiss the valour of qualitative research. Nor does the PQR theorypractice re-instate a fresh set of (prescriptive) research methods, tools, procedures, solutions or codes that displaces or replaces current epistemological research frameworks (Lenz Taguchi, 2012). The 'post' in postqualitative should neither be misconstrued as an evolutionary move with/in the qualitative paradigm, nor as an improved theorypractice that comes 'after' QR. As St Pierre (2011) explains, the term PQR operates as little more than an overarching reference to the empirical work inspired by posthumanism and new materialism, amongst others. Furthermore, St Pierre and Lather (2013), as well as Taylor (2016) caution that a linear, time-orientated interpretation of the term 'post' creates an illusion of tracing a straight line from humanism to posthumanism, which would not only

imply an endpoint to the thinking but also re-instate positivist or postpositivist claims to knowledge. Not only would such thinking detract from the PQR impetus towards inventive and creative research practices, but it would also conflict with the complexities of the posthuman condition (Taylor, 2016). Instead, the 'post' is about moving beyond current scripts and research conventions by being 'alive' to the movements and shifts across the qualitative terrain which offer new ways of collecting, analysing and conceptualizing empirical data (St Pierre, 2019).

3.9. How is PQR theorised and practised?

As discussed at the onset of this chapter, PQR requires a methodological undoing of ourselves as researchers, particularly our training and practices in QR methods. As researcher, I have attempted the methodological untraining through a "plunge and dive" approach (Taylor, 2019, p. 2) into the literature and the philosophical enquiries entangled in this study. What follows below are key findings which have re-turned the method along this doctoral journey.

Given that PQR foregrounds a relational ontology, the human and more-than-human, as well as the troubling of language and representationalism, it is neither possible to contextualise nor contain the theorypractice with/in a definition or textual outline (St Pierre, 2019). PQR embeds realities that exceed (linguistic) meaning, culture, and discourse. In fact, to offer definitions of any sort tantamounts to essentialism and creates the assumption that PQR is a pre-existing 'thing', something that is stable/fixed, identifiable, and represented (St Pierre, 2019, p. 4).

PQR deliberately resists the notion of method, methodology, data collection and analysis, arguing that such epistemological tools locate relata, concepts or entities with speci(e)fied ontologically discrete categories (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; St. Pierre, 2019; Taylor, 2019). In fact, PQR methodologies are 'without method' in that method is unstructured and unbound (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). MacLure (2013) writes that method perpetuates sedentary thought and constructions of reality. Method shuts down thought, and consigns ideas to what is known, subsequently perpetuating a dogmatic image of thought (St Pierre, 2019).

A further point on method is that PQR disrupts neat, formalized research structures, processes and protocols that risk re-instating methods or methodologies of any kind. The scholarship neither furthers claims nor truths about 'tried and tested' practices. There are no methods of data collection nor evidence-based practices which, as iterated earlier, are considered to be the cornerstone of pedagogy and intervention for autistic children. PQR actively decentres human authority by disrupting the binary between researcher/researched. By dissolving the binary, PQR situates the researcher-researched as implicitly re-configured and entangled with/in phenomena that emerge from the doing of the research itself (Barad, 2007, 2010; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). As mentioned elsewhere, Barad (2007, p. 247) points out, "we are part of the nature that we seek to understand". Re-configuring the deeply entangled relations that Barad writes is a call to interrogate the power of (human) voice, reflection and reflexivity as objective interpretations of the world.

Engaging in PQR requires 'methodological risk', or an openness to the indeterminacy of research, where uncertainty, unsettling and disruptions prevail alongside a willingness to respond to and enable others (St Pierre, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Taylor & Hughes, 2016). It requires preparation by way of immersion into the literature in order to put concepts to work (Lenz-Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017). The researcher should not get caught in the mechanics of the literature such as the different ways of doing PQR. For instance, the ontological commitment which underpins PQR is not about 'adding' words such as rhizome, assemblage, intra-action and so forth to the research (St Pierre, 2019). It is also not about imbricating qualitative and postqualitative for the ontological-epistemological arrangements are 'incommensurable.' Working with/in the ontological turn is an activation of concepts that bear no finite definitions nor interpretations. It is about generating new ways of doing and experimenting with knowledge creation with-in relational ontology.

3.10. How is research enacted without the 'rigour' of method?

Recent literature in the field indicates that there are multiple ways in which PQR as materialist, non-hierarchical organization and unfolding of the world has been described. The scholarship itself has produced neologisms that gesture towards the complexities of the

research paradigm. For example, MacLure (2013) writes that the words assemblage, entanglement, mangle, manifold and actor network are used as discursive terms to signify some the phenomena which emerge from PQR. Further discursive terms include posthumanist research practices (Taylor & Hughes, 2016), diffraction (Barad, 2007), non-representational research methods (Vannini, 2015); Deleuzian methods (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013); methodology against interpretivism (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013), disruptive methodology (Brown, 2014) and methodologies without method (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Ultimately, all the approaches to research are about the re-imagining of life with matter instead of life as anthropocentric, invoking a significant number of shifts in how research is conceptualized and carried out. Of significance is how the conceptual work of PQR is put to work. Indeed, while the implementation of concepts and conceptual practices is the hallmark of PQR, putting the theory into practice is admittedly challenging. However, while PQR does not subscribe to method, the methodology creates (re)new(ed) spaces for different ways of doing research. The approaches are suggestions for how the world might be theorised differently. As Koro-Ljungberg (2016) points out, postqualitative methodology is that of a journey without clear starting or ending points. Methodology is a messy, uncertain and multilinear journey that is travelled differently by each scholar, as marked by the specificities of entanglements, material-discursive networks and phenomena that emerge. Given the complexities and ongoing (becoming) relationality amongst human-more-than-human data, no two journeys are ever the same. The method never ends but rather pauses, hesitates, and fumbles as new moments of thought unravel and make new connections. Method is about beginning at any time, anywhere and working with the sense of uncertainty and not knowing. Taylor (2016) states that postqualitative research is about existing and working through the complexities of the unknown, or the indeterminacy of research. The world is not in a fixed state of being. This requires that research asks questions and more questions instead of searching for absolute answers.

Methods linger in 'empty spaces' or voids and tempt ethico-ontoepistemic practices that disrupt and blur boundaries. For instance, in their work on voice in postqualitative research, Jackson and Mazzei (2013) encourage researchers to look out for voice that occurs on the edges of thought, that is always impartial and not easily visible. The silence of voice is not

empty but rather filled with an excess of meaning that only comes forth through a relational ontology or attending to the human-more-than-human networks.

Doing PQR requires us to recognise the implications of undoing method as well as the interdependencies and entanglements of the research and research apparatus. We should embrace approaches that work with the vitalism, liveliness of the material through the political, philosophical, ontology, epistemology, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of thinking human and more-than-human life together.

3.11. How does posthumanism and PQR work in this study?

This chapter has asked questions about the theorypractice of posthumanism and PQR through the philosophical prompt (diffractive journal entry) in figure 3.1. This prompt arose during the philosophical enquiries conducted with the children in this study and opened up a discussion about the ethics of making visible thinking that would otherwise be excluded from traditional research practices. What emerged through the discussion was a knowledge-making line that unravelled methodological training through a relational ontology, disrupting of language and representationalism as well as philosophical dualisms. Drawing on posthumanism and PQR, the chapter asks how this discussion matters in a study about philosophical enquiries and autism.

Key to this study is how autism (autistic child) is positioned in the posthumanist literature. As will be discussed in chapter 8, posthuman child is not a pre-existing entity but emerges through intra-active material-discursive practices. This is neither to deny nor to resist the specificities of autistic child but to re-think intervention and pedagogy in relation to the child-autism entanglement. Such a thinking move is quite provocative and needs careful (and caring) scholarly moves, particularly as the autistic/disabled child is historically fixed in dis/ableist discourses (see for example DeShong, 2012). An ableist logic has been made possible because of the 'deep dualisms' that have brought into existence dis/abled binary. Abrahams (2015) points out that Western ontology has been divisive insofar as specified treatments apply to the treatment of pathology. Notwithstanding that different impairments necessitate different treatments, he warns that the implications of separating

mind-body illnesses have created schisms in theory and practice, which are proving to be difficult to overcome (Abrahams, 2015).

Of significance is that recent theoretical shifts in autism studies should not be mistaken for posthumanist practices. For instance, the increasing presence of neurodiversity in the autism research foregrounds social and epistemic injustice (Pluquaillec, 2022) and not posthumanism as the metaphysics are embedded in Cartesian dualism and Western humanist philosophies. To this end, researching educational possibilities for dis/abled and autistic child remain caught up in autobiographies/narratives of non-autists (Goodley et al., 2022; Hacking, 2009; Sarrett, 2011), the ethics surrounding autism research (Hens, 2021), deconstructing issues of pathology and vulnerability (Jones & Liddiard, 2018), and the mechanisation of interventions (Kasari & Smith, 2013). By implication, ontology remains fixed with/in the notion of human diagnosis and eugenics.

In contrast, a posthumanist ontology disrupts essentialist perspectives of autism whether of the medical model or neurodiversity paradigm. The relational ontology attends to the material conditions of being differently in the world by not discounting the materiality of being autistic (Feely, 2016). Indeed, the posthumanist scholars in autism and childhood dis/ability studies are mindful of the fact that for many parents, teachers, researchers and autism advocates, the eugenics and origins of autistic ontology are very much part of the material-discursive practices of being with/in the world and as such cannot be disregarded too quickly (Frigerio et al., 2018).

A posthumanist perspective disrupts the concept and language of quality in the lives of autistic children. As Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) write, the notion of quality cannot contain the emergence of multiple ontologies and subjectivities. This is particularly true of autism, and the increasing tendency to theorise ab/normal behaviours as figurations of emergence and more-than-human relations with the world (Manning, 2014; Yeargeau, 2018). Dahlberg and colleagues (2007) call for innovative and creative research practices that extend, or re-configure, the notion of quality in early childhood education.

It is important that an ontological or posthumanist approach to theorising autism, education and child is not misconstrued as a dismissal of aforementioned human-centred research practices. Rather the theoretical move suggested here is an interrogation of the current literature in a manner that looks beyond the mechanics of human mastery and skill and discursive dominant realities. The ontological approach is a provocation to shift our thinking and re-orientate ourselves to different ways of being in the world. The transdisciplinary nature of posthumanism invokes insights from numerous disciplines which re-configure education as an enactment of learning, knowing and doing beyond bodily boundaries. Shildrick (2015) explains that pedagogical possibilities should not be limited by bodily boundaries and DeShong (2012) writes that a posthumanist approach to dis/ability disrupts the language and the binaries that portray the separability of human ability/disability.

A(n) (in)finite thought is that given that both posthumanist and Disability Studies scholars share a common interest in bodies, it is perhaps somewhat ironic that the two disciplines do not exhibit greater engagement. It would seem that both the female body and the dis/abled body were (and often continue to be) discriminated against (see for example Garland-Thomson, 2005). As Braidotti (2013) points out, female, racialised, sexualised and pathologised bodies have long been marginalised on the basis of various 'human' shortcomings. Murriss (2022) also adds the small body (child) to this list of marginalised bodies. Alaimo and Hekman (2008) write that a significant aspect of material feminist theory is a re-turn to the body (in all of its fleshiness) without re-instating biological essentialism and gender discrimination. The body/biological (nature) and the discursive (culture) are inseparable. Corporeality is thus not a given but a phenomenon that emerges through intra-actions. Bodies become and are always becoming iteratively.

Thinking beyond bodily limitations is not a case of body and environment, like some sort of suturing exercise of nature and culture. Rather it is about thinking nature and culture, human and non-human together, and without creating divisions amongst the phenomena. The subsequent chapters in this study aim to re-configure the ontology of autism, particularly in the context of early childhood education/intervention, by re-imagining radical discourses that thrive on unthinkable ableist discourses and produce few answers in the course of embracing furiously im/possible questions.



4

LINES OF SPACETIMEMATTERING **The community of enquiry as philosophical wanderer**

Knotted Lines (chapter 3 of this study) showed how thinking with a diffractive journal entry (which emerged through (my) engagement with the humans and more-than-humans in this study) prompted

questions about posthumanist and postqualitative research (PQR) theory/practice. The purpose of the dialogical writing style was to ‘untrain’ methodological rigour inherent in qualitative research (QR) and to seek creative ways of thinking research method. What emerged was an interrogation of the metaphysics that underscores human-centric approaches to research methodology as well as a navigation of the field of PQR, particularly the significance of a relational ontology¹¹⁹, human and more-than-human intra-actions¹²⁰, as well as the agential¹²¹ role of matter¹²² in the ongoing re-configuration of the world.

Chapter four materialises from the aforementioned discussion and seeks to put PQR into practice by attending to the humans and more-than-human participants entangled in the philosophical enquiries. The question that guides the writing is: how should PQR writing foreground human and more-than-human participants without privileging human-centricism? Once again (as discussed in chapter 3), the discord between (my) training in QR and the un/restrained approach to method in PQR left me conflicted as to how to proceed. Here, it should be pointed out that while PQR offers fresh and creative opportunities to research with/in¹²³ the world it is not without criticism. For instance, Aagaard (2022) cautions that the potential to hyperfocus on the significance of relational ontologies,

¹¹⁹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹²⁰ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹²¹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹²² Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹²³ Please see the Writing conventions.

agencies of the more-than-human, and the emphasis on thinking with theory may compromise the philosophical-methodological dogma that PQR resists. Rather than disrupting binaries, what may be at play is an erasure of one at the expense of the other. As an example, decentring the human might foreclose valuable ways in which researcher and participants contribute towards phenomena. Or the porosity of research writing and the messiness that is invited could well lead to phenomena that are opaque at best or unintelligible with/in daily reality. In response to the question above, I found some comfort from Lester (2021) who suggests approaching PQR by “turning research traditions with care and consideration of what lives in the *before*” (p. 221). The writing that follows puts Lester’s (2021) suggestion to work by disrupting the CPE¹²⁴ as a metaphorical container (space) which holds the participants in fixed places and times. The chapter experiments with the CPE as a spacetime-mattering which is agential and response-able for (un)(re)foldings of learning events. In order to put to work the CPE as a spacetime-mattering, let us re-turn¹²⁵ the CPE as theorised in the Lipman–Sharp approach to philosophical enquiry¹²⁶.

4.1. The CPE and un-doing the container metaphor

As discussed in chapter 2, the CPE is the dialogical pedagogy of P4wC¹²⁷ and is widely understood as a group (community) of individuals who come together with the common purpose of engaging in dialogue around a shared topic or question (see for example Sharp, 1987, as cited in Gregory & Laverty, 2018). Though Lipman initially introduced the term ‘community of enquiry’, he credited Sharp with re-structuring the CPE from a philosophical notion into an educational model of practice (Gregory & Laverty, 2018). Sharp (1987, as cited in Gregory and Laverty, 2018) wrote the following:

In a community of inquiry, there are many cognitive behaviours that can be observed: giving and asking for good reasons, making good distinctions and connections, making valid inferences, hypothesizing, generalizing, giving

¹²⁴ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹²⁵ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹²⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.

¹²⁷ Please see the Writing conventions.

counterexamples, discovering assumptions, using and recognizing criteria, asking good questions, inferring consequences, recognizing logical fallacies, calling for relevance, defining concepts, seeking clarification, voicing good analogies, being sensitive to contexts, offering alternative points of view, building logically on contributions of others and voicing fine discriminations.

In addition, CPE is saturated with emotions, aesthetics, political, physical, religious, democratic, and moral components, consequently furthering conditions for social justice (Sharp, 1987, as cited in Gregory and Lavery, 2018, p.43). Sharp (1996, as cited in Gregory & Lavery, 2018) describes the CPE as being alive, growing, and mutating as per the dialogical enquiry. It is always in the process of developing, refining and building itself. This includes the nature and structure of enquires,¹²⁸ the role of facilitation, and the notion of dialogical progress (Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

As a speech-language therapist, I was struck by the transformative power of the CPE insofar as learning and educational spaces are concerned as such phenomena are less known with/in individual and group therapy scenarios. The CPE offers a pedagogical framework that creates a space designated for philosophical thought, which as proposed and practised by the P4wC movement resists the notion of thinking, communication, and social interaction as learning outcomes (see chapter 2). The notion of young children participating in the CPE disrupts the ageism inherent in 'normative' expectations regarding who is capable of abstract thought (Matthews, 1994). Furthermore, Smith (2012, p.62) writes that the enquiries are dynamic "spaces of possibilities that are textured and multi-layered, holding human-generated ideas, persuasions, emotions, thoughts, disruptions, facilitation moves, and power relations". In addition, the CPE also holds tangible materials that operate as 'thinking props' such as pictures, pens, beans/objects for voting, furniture, and so forth (Reynolds, 2021). These spaces generate "a free play of ideas" (Smith, 2012, p. 63) that contest the notion of performances and test results. In the presence of such a myriad affective¹²⁹ and material

¹²⁸ Please see chapter 7 for further discussion.

¹²⁹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

relations, the CPE appears to reverberate with an electrifying tension of knowledge-making-doing-learning practices that disrupt 'normative' teacher-student/therapist-child didactics. Notwithstanding the revolutionary educational contribution of the CPE, what is taken for granted (owing to representationalism and Cartesian dualisms) is the neutrality and objectivity of the space itself as well as the assumption that space is the backdrop that 'holds' or contains humans, thoughts, nature, dialogue, ideas and so forth as things that exist *with/in* bounded spaces. This alludes to the CPE as a container. The container metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) positions the CPE *in* specified parameters of space, time, and matter as interrelated, but discrete entities. Matter or thought in this case, becomes fixed in specified spaces and times. While CPE may be considered to be open to change, like "a boat tacking in the wind"¹³⁰ (Lipman, 2003, p. 21), it operates *with/in* human-centred Newtonian conceptions of space and time. Time becomes a succession of discrete moments, incorporating ideas of thinking as progressive, singular and ordered. For example, dialogue is determined by turn-taking and the selection of a single question to start the enquiry. The CPE becomes a space of 'what is produced' philosophically, or at least, 'what exists' can only be understood in terms of human-centred thoughts, ideas, and language. The CPE as container foregrounds the influence of dualist ontological claims to knowledge which assume time, space, and matter as ontologically separate. Furthermore, the container metaphor foregrounds individuals-as-objects-in-spaces, which speaks to the *Politics of Location* (Rich, 1984), an ethnocentric approach where humans are considered in relation to the power play and politics of the environment, but not as part of it. Barad (2007) offers some cautionary advice on the politics of location. They draw attention to how this perspective sets up the notion of human identity as the outcome of environmental conditions. Thus, a binary is established: human/environment, where the focus is very much on human orientated justice. Barad (2007, p. 225) suggests a 'politics of possibility' which takes response-able¹³¹ ways of re-imagining human and more-than-human relations of power. Such an approach requires the re-configuring of spacetime-matter.

¹³⁰ Lipman (2003) was referring to the unrestricted, progressive movement of thought towards new and temporary destinations.

¹³¹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

4.2. Spacetime mattering

In an interview with Daniela Gandorfer, Barad states: “What I am suggesting by spacetime mattering is that there is no givenness nor fixity nor separability of space, time, and matter” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 44). What do they mean and why is that important?

To re-iterate, Cartesian representationalism and Newtonian ontology have established a human-centred conception of space, time, and matter. Space is enacted as a ‘container’ holding things in it, such as people, animals, ideas, concepts and the world at large while time is theorised as linear and inevitable, where the past is closed and no longer changeable. But ontological in/determinacy of quantum field theory ‘blasts’ through these conceptions of space and time and radically reconfigures the boundaries of spacetime matter, thereby re-working causality and agency (Barad, 2017a, 2017b, 2018). Paying attention to what becomes included and excluded is a matter of mattering, and also, a matter of ethics and justice. Why is this? The fundamental dis/continuity of Quantum Field Theory (QFT) troubles the nature of difference: “‘Otherness’ is an entangled relation of difference’ (Barad 2007, p.236). Humans do not *have* but *are* porous bodies. Not things in the world, *in* space and time, but relational phenomena – a spacetime mattering. As a *spacetime matter* manifold, there are no linear causal relations between one thing and another – only “ongoing topological dynamics of enfolding”: “phenomena are forever being re-folded and reformed” (Barad 2007, p.177). This also holds for relations ‘between’ researcher and child and the pedagogical interventions (agential cuts¹³²) that are, in fact, ‘intra-ventions’: atmosphere, international assessment, clock time, policies, parents, land. These *relata* (Barad 2007, p.137-8) are not autonomously existing entities that pre-exist their relations. They are dynamically and iteratively enfolded into one another.

In an effort to disrupt the above dualist ontology, the CPE is instead theorised *and* practised as a nomadic wanderer (in agential realism theory and practice always go hand-in-hand). The CPE enact two moves. The first is a shift away from method-centric approaches where

¹³² Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

the focus of research is on design and protocols that determine how and what data should be captured *before* the human and more-than-human encounters. Resisting method foregrounds the humans in this study as matter materialising through intra-actions, and in this way spacetime-matterings radically re-configure boundaries between the human and more-than-human. The second move disrupts the container metaphor of space, in this case locating thinking, data, and participants in the CPE. Conceptualising the CPE as a wanderer draws in an openness to entanglements over multiple spatial-temporal matterings.

4.3. Re-configuring the CPE as philosophical wanderer

Figure 4.1. (on the next page) is an extract from my diffractive journal that emerged during the philosophical enquiries with the children. The entry is written in the original form in order to foreground the affect and dilemmas encountered in the theory-practice of this study. Including the entry here is a methodological move that indicates the ambivalence of working against method and thinking in unknown spaces. These moves make visible the disruptions to the chronology of thoughts and writing in this thesis journey. These disruptions are significant, for as Barad states, (as cited in Kleinman, 2012, p. 81) “...the temporality of response-ability is not one’s own. ‘Past’ and ‘future’ bleed into the ‘now’ of the questioning. Presence is not a matter of a thin slice of now, but rather the hauntology of inheritance, inheriting the future as well as the past”.

The journal extract re-configures the CPE as *philosophical wanderer*. The notion of enquiries as wanderers disrupts chronological ‘clock time’ (Murriss & Kohan, 2021). For instance, disrupting unilinear time shifts enquiries away from research protocols that call for descriptions of linear timeframes in which data was collected. Consequently, research writing that takes place does not focus on the 6-month duration of doing enquiries, nor the weekly Thursday morning one-hour sessions that took place at each centre. Each ‘re-turning to data’ event troubled notions of space, time and matter as ontologically separate. Data was not conceived as evidence collected in the past to substantiate claims (‘findings’) in the present in order to move research forward in a particular field of enquiry.

The philosophical space was not limited to the physicality of the environment. Often it depended on where the school was currently located, and what spaces with/in the school became available to us. Sometimes it was what and where the children choose to go (like the trampoline). Or out on the playground. And sometimes in quiet, inconspicuous areas that allowed dis/connected behaviours such as marching in circular lines, soliloquies and refuge from other human bodies. For Tony Stark (participant's pseudonym), thought occurred while pacing in a familiar (comforting) spot in the garden, undisturbed.

Often, enquiries took place inside the school's premises, though even here, spaces mattered. Different spaces determined the mood and level of engagement within enquiries. For example, factors such as changes in the positioning of table and chairs, distance to the bathroom, acoustics or the echoing of empty rooms, the exciting views from the window or sitting next to a new person, determined what thoughts were thought. Enquiries which were conducted on the playground were often short-lived, as the children tended to wander off, engrossed in playthings, formulating discussions or absorbed in solitary thought. Thinking became a spacetime matter endeavour, one which was facilitated by silence. As we experimented with thinking in various spaces and places, we found that sometimes the solitude of individual thinking was spurred by the materials which they encountered and drew them into deep thinking practices.

The enquiries were not always about the reasoning capacities of the human mind. Rather, enquiries brought in body movement and sensation. When we are indoors, we sat around a large oblong table, where they were jammed into position by the chairs. Enquiries on the floor end up with limbs and trunks sprawled into various directions. When outside, bodies thought with swings, ropes, leaves and jungle gyms.

Most often our enquiries took place within a large, unbounded space, which had once served as the common dining room, lounge and TV room in a flatlet on the premises. The flatlet now housed the senior group at CBC, and comprised of two bedrooms, one bathroom, the common space and a kitchenette. The enquiry space was the 'main classroom', bordered by glass doors on one side, the kitchenette and door on the opposite side, as well two classrooms leading off the main space adjacently.

The space itself was an area of multiplicity, for it served many functions: morning ring took place on the edges of the table, staff walked through the space en route to the kitchen or the playground. Here mathematics, English and reading were taught. Enquiries were often disrupted by children entering or leaving the space according to allocated times for speech/occupation/physical therapy sessions. Classroom assistants would saunter in, fetching stationery or documents. Tuckshop, mopping, cooking, sweeping, toileting, lunches, singing, tea-breaks, greetings, parties, unwinding, escaping, learning, videoing, thinking, disciplining, laughing: these were lived with/in the spaces and times of enquiry.

Figure 4.1. Diffractive journal extract pertaining to the CPE

Spacetime mattering performs enquiry as philosophical wanderer off beaten paths. The wanderer (neither a person nor a thing, but phenomenon!) is nomadic, and re-configures thinking as material, experiential practices with/in the world as opposed to mental abstractions that proceed in the direction of resolutions (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021).

4.4. Tracing the entanglements of the (CPE) philosophical wanderer

What does the journal extract in figure 4.1. make visible? How does the CPE disrupt the container metaphor of space, time, and matter? What human and more-than-human relations emerge through the CPE as philosophical wanderer? Thinking with these questions produced by figure 4.1., the writing puts to work Barad's notion of tracing entanglements. They write that tracing entanglements are a travel-hopping of (temporal) diffractive patterns alive with politics, history and memories (Barad, 2018, p. 235). It is not to be mistaken for a chronological sequence of events nor for a personal/historical account of what has gone on before (Barad, 2018). Tracing entanglements is a material, travel-hopping labour that re-configures spacetime matter to the im/possibilities of erasure (Barad, 2018). Here, the writing re-turns the affect¹³³, politics and history of human and more-than-human affective relations of the CPE as philosophical wanderer.

4.4.1. The land

The philosophical wanderer was (geographically) entangled with/in two learning centres in the suburbs of Johannesburg North, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa (see figures 4.2 and 4.3.). Both centres operated from two renovated residential sites which were rezoned for business purposes. The centres accommodated children between the ages of 7-16 years of age who were diagnosed with autism and/or other significant (academic, developmental, emotional, social) challenges to mainstream and/or remedial schooling. Centre A implemented the Impaq homeschooling approach to education (<https://impaq.co.za>). The Impaq approach aligns with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is the national curriculum framework in South Africa

¹³³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

([https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements\(CAPS\).aspx](https://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatements(CAPS).aspx)). Centre A also offered onsite services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychological, and remedial therapy. Centre B followed an Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)¹³⁴ approach to intervention and implemented the Foundations Program of the Morningside Academy (<https://morningsideacademy.org/academics/foundations/>). The Foundations Program focuses on core literacy skills such as maths, reading, writing, and language. Like Centre A, Centre B offered additional therapeutic services such as speech, occupational and remedial therapy.



Figure 4.2. 'Leafy' northern suburbs of Johannesburg in which both schools are located (Google (n.d.))

¹³⁴ Please see the Glossary of terms.

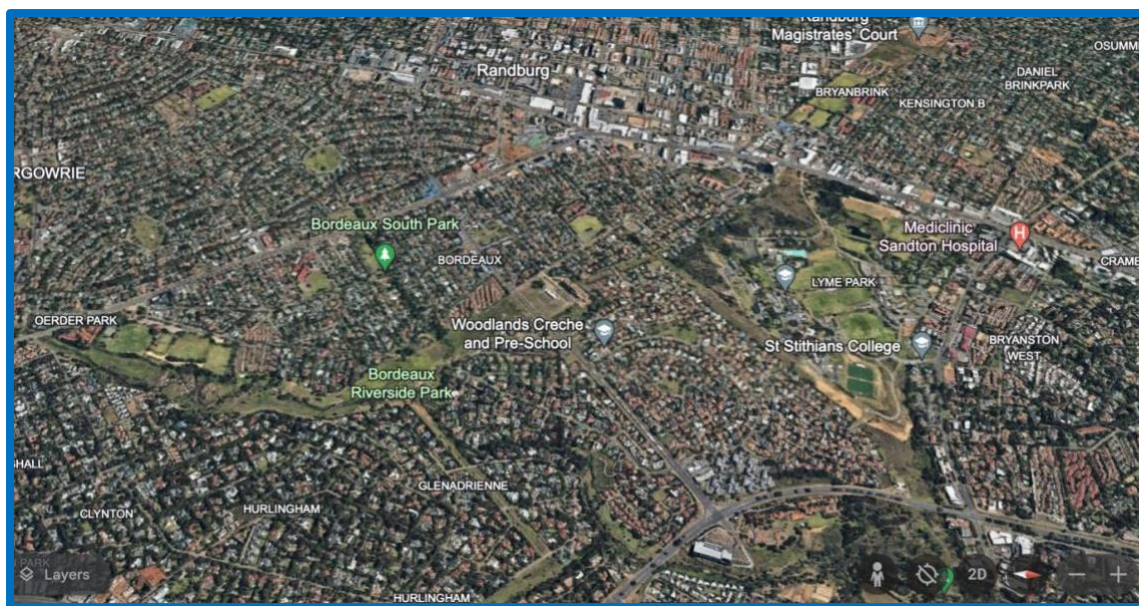


Figure 4.3. Google earth map of the schools situated in the broader metropolis of Randburg, Gauteng, South Africa (Google, n.d.)

At the time of this study¹³⁵, the centres were amongst the ever-increasing educational options available to children who would otherwise have had little to no access to schooling. The relatively short supply of quality, affordable educational facilities in Johannesburg, and South Africa at large, for children with severe learning challenges brims with issues of (geopolitical and economic) accessibility. For example, figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the suburb and surrounds of the two centres are located with/in one of the wealthier areas of Johannesburg. What is apparent in figure 4.2. is the upkeep and maintenance of the suburbs which is not representative of the rest of the Gauteng province. With the exception of the coastal areas most of South Africa (and sub-Saharan Africa) experiences a dry climate and weather conditions. Indigenous vegetation consists of an abundance of succulents and hardy plants that can survive droughts. The presence of greenery is indicative of the resources required to maintain the land.

The snapshot of the Randburg metropolis in figure 4.3. indicates that both centres are in close proximity to three parks, two private schools, a hospital and magistrates court. Again, this is indicative that centres are situated in well-developed suburbs which have the benefit

¹³⁵ The enquiries were conducted before the COVID pandemic when online schooling became necessary and subsequently the preferred educational choice for many families.

of better infrastructure, service delivery, access to prime living conditions and so forth. Despite learning differences and educational challenges, the children at the centres could access quality educational options due to affordability as well as transportation¹³⁶. Such a situation is not reflective of the geo-political access to autism facilities in the country.

The suburban set-up and location of these centres was met with concerns by the neighbours regarding the legitimacy of the educational services provided, which caused substantial delays to acquiring business rights to operate as an educational institution as well as obtaining a license to operate. In some instances, there was resistance from residents in the area. For example, centre B was forced to vacate its original location on account of a petition by the neighbourhood regarding the infringement of peace and quiet that arose from the traffic congestion during pick-up and drop-off times. As a result, the centre had to move locations four times during the period of a year. All four locations were within a 1km radius and depended very much on rental agencies and rezoning permits for business rights. In order to remain operational, the school had to adapt the educational model implemented by shifting from in-person teaching to outsourcing the staff in order to secure an operational licence which permitted the ad hoc presence of learners at the premises. The fourth and final move came about when the principal bought a property with existing business rights. Substantial time and effort went into ensuring that all protocols were met insofar as acceptable noise levels, accessibility to roads and driveways, safety, traffic, and so forth. All of these factors became participants that were woven through enquiries. For example, it took a substantial amount of time to orientate the children to philosophical enquiries after each re-location. Teachers had to spend time setting up the school, and there were days when the children were asked to stay at home. The change of routine, new environment, and confusion regarding the moves were challenging for the children. On more than a few occasions I arrived at the school to assist in other capacities than facilitator and researcher. Sometimes I enlisted the help of our family handyman with tasks such as constructing a trampoline for the children.

¹³⁶ South Africa has an under-developed public transport system. Many South Africans cannot afford the luxury of privately-owned vehicles and tend to use public options such as taxi minibuses and buses. That the children in this study used private transport is an indication of wealth.

4.4.2. Threading enquiries through the land

In the writing that follows, particular attention is paid to centre B on account of the multiple times that the learning, teaching and therapeutic spaces changed physical locations. Despite the circumstances of the multiple moves, enquiries took place in the building structure of the centre. The physicality of the enquiry space mattered as different areas of the centre influenced the children's temperament and level of engagement in the enquiries. For example, factors such as changes in the positioning of table and chairs, distance to the bathroom, acoustics, or the echoing of empty rooms, the views from different windows, or sitting next to a different person mattered in how the children engaged with the stimulus. For instance, figure 4.4. shows the children sitting on the carpet for the enquiry after a recent move. Their classroom tables, chairs, pictures and so forth were in the process of being set-up. Given that we sat on the carpet in a circle at the previous location, the children automatically tried to orientate themselves on the smaller carpet space. However, the space on the carpet did not allow them to form a circle so they sat down in a manner that ensured they could all fit.



Figure 4.4. 'Making it fit': Un/doing a circle during a philosophical enquiry

Figure 4.5. shows the allocated space for enquiries at centre B's permanent location. The space was a flatlet attached to the main property. The enquiry space was the 'common area', where maths, reading and English were taught. The common area was bordered by glass doors on one side, the kitchenette and door on the opposite side, as well two classrooms leading off the main space adjacently. Figure 4.6. shows the main entrance to the senior class, as evidenced by the sliding door and an iron gate. Note the close proximity to the parking and cars, suggesting that space had to be maximised for efficient use, as well as safety. The common area became a space which served many functions. For example, morning ring took place on the edges of the table, staff walked through the space en route to the kitchen or the playground, learning, enquiries, and lunch-time when it was too cold to go outdoors.



Figure 4.5. The 'common area': What the table makes possible.



Figure 4.6. Doors and gates that include/exclude

Enquiries were often disrupted by children entering or leaving the space as per allocated times for speech/occupation/physical therapy sessions. Classroom assistants would saunter in, fetching stationery or documents. Tuckshop, mopping, cooking, sweeping, toileting, lunches, singing, tea breaks, greetings, parties, sauntering, escaping, learning, videoing, thinking, disciplining, laughing: these were lived with/in the spaces and times of enquiry.

Enquiries took place in different spaces with/in the centres. If they were experiencing a bit of a stressful morning, the enquiry would incorporate time on the trampoline (see chapter 7 for further discussion). Sometimes, they would choose to have the enquiry on the playground where playground equipment, trees, insects, pathways, additional buildings (such as therapy rooms) would become part of the space. Questions and thoughts about previous encounters would be re-membered, often enhancing the stimulus topic of the enquiry or shifting the focus in different directions. Sometimes the children spoke to each other about such ideas and thoughts, or silently participated. Experimentations with thinking in various spaces and places brought forth thought met with unexpected partners such as the boy-leaf-chalk-doll encounters in figure 4.7. below.



Figure 4.7. Be(com)ing friends on the playground: An encounter with a leaf and chalkboard figure

The enquiries included the children's extra-curricular activities such as outings to MacDonald's, pizza parties, golf mornings or paintball. On one occasion, Tony Stark¹³⁷ brought in a brochure on the Disney on Ice show, which generated substantial interest and discussion amongst the senior group. The principal, encouraged by their interest, arranged

¹³⁷ Participants' pseudonym.

for them to watch the production during school time. The children's experiences would permeate the enquiries for many sessions thereafter.



Figure 4.8. Thursday mid-morning golf lessons at the nearby golf course



Figure 4.9. Midweek outing to the local pizzeria



Figure 4.10. Discussing Disney on Ice during an enquiry

Re-membering the philosophical enquiries show how COEs have stretched, filtered and meandered across different geo-political locations. Barad (2018, p. 123) writes:

re-membering is an embodied practice which is not about going back to what was, but rather about the material reconfiguring of spacetime-mattering in ways that attempt to do justice and to produce openings, new possible histories by which time-beings might find a way to endure.

What justice can be done? What openings and possible histories might we encounter through re-membering the philosophical wanderer?

4.5. Re-membering the COE as wanderer

As I think with/in the COE as wanderer, I am re-minded again of Barad (2018, p. 239) who writes:

Memory is not merely a subjective capacity of the human mind; rather, “human” and “mind” are part of the landtimescape spacetime-mattering – of the world. Memory is written into the worlding of the world in its specificity, the ineliminable trace of the sedimenting historicity of its iterative reconfiguring.

The worlding of the CPE is more than the in/separability amongst the humans, events, locations, COE’s, leaf, chalk figure, Disney on Ice, pizzeria, therapists, table, doors and gates, carpets and so forth. Re-membering is a(n) (activist) bodily re-turning to the politics and history which have produced situations which might otherwise remain ignored. The COE as philosophical wanderer re-ignited political and historical memories of how autism and education is situated in South Africa. The enquiries diffracted through (my situated) knowledge and position as a board member of Jozi4Autism¹³⁸; as an interdisciplinary team member of Autism South Africa’s (AS;A) diagnostic and intervention outreach clinics, and as the ex-secretary of AS;A’s national executive committee (NEC) (2018-2020). With/in the

¹³⁸ Jozi4Autism is a non-profit company in Johannesburg which focuses on family support and service provision for autistic children in underprivileged areas. See <http://jozi4autism.org.za/> for further information.

aforementioned roles, my experience of autism in Africa was entangled with the unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and access to education. From the (my) autism-Africa entanglement emerged numerous community projects such as petitions (class actions) that lobbied support for the rights of autistic individuals; putting into place support measures for autistic children and their families; devising culturally and linguistically accessible options for education and intervention; and following discussions pertaining to programmes such as the World Health Organisation’s caregiver skills training for autistic children and families from underprivileged parts of the world, which included South Africa (see for example Schlebusch et al., 2024).

4.6. Autism in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

Spearheaded by the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, there is a shortfall of knowledge about autism in Africa (see for example Abubakar et al., 2016), and what little is known comes from high-income countries (see for example Pillay et al., 2022). For instance, a scoping review of all autism-related research published in SSA indicated meagre knowledge about epidemiology, ECE and EI, as well as school-based studies (Franz et al., 2017). The scarcity of research is attributed to limited awareness and service provision amongst the broader, and often rural, South African communities (Adams, 2024). Additionally, South Africa is characterised by great cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, which have led to many theories (and by association misconceptions and stigma) about autism (Adams, 2024). For example, during an outreach visit to traditional healers (‘sangomas’) in rural parts of the country, A;SA’s NEC were told that “there is the autism that you white people¹³⁹ understand and the autism that only we understand” (personal communication, 2019). Apart from the lesson in ontoepistemic humility as activists, board members, researchers, and clinicians, the sangoma’s words would come to ‘haunt’¹⁴⁰ the enquiries with the children in this study. The sangoma re-minded me that autism is not a condition but a way of be(com)ing that we (as researchers and practitioners) may lose sight of amidst the

¹³⁹ The reference to ‘white people’ included those who were not black African, and who followed Western approaches to knowledge which included the pedagogies, support systems, and therapeutic interventions communicated to the sangomas.

¹⁴⁰ Please see the entry on hauntology in the Glossary of terms.

urgency to channel dominant knowledge practices to those in a 'lesser' position. Notwithstanding the value of what we were imparting to the communities, particularly insofar as access to services and family support, I wondered about the markings of neoliberal colonialism that are entangled with/in autism in Africa. Perhaps un/wittingly, the sangoma troubled the (our) 'inflexible' perceptions of autisms dis/ordered and dis/abled. The sangoma was amongst the first individuals I encountered in person that outrightly challenged the 'colonised' knowledges in autism, if not the very ontology of being autistic. Subsequent to this encounter with the sangoma, I would learn of the Māori word for autism 'Takiwātanga' (Opai, 2018). This is an affirmation of autism as gifted and means 'in his/her own time'. Re-turning the COE as philosophical wanderer through the sangoma and Takiwānga produced an agential cut¹⁴¹ of fractured/healing where the enquiries affirmed autistic child as a learner in 'his own time' through educational policies that began and ended from the perspective of autistic child as lacking. But how does education 'work' for autistic child in South Africa? How does the philosophical wanderer diffract with the aforementioned educational policies/practices?

Schooling for South African autistic children is entangled with/in historic inequality, a three-tiered schooling system, and South African laws and policies which favour inclusive education. The writing that follows explores three aspects of education for autistic children in the literature: the impact of the educational crisis in SA; the state of special-inclusive education; and issues of educational accessibility for high-support-needs children. Moreover, I will continue to argue that posthumanism makes it possible to also attune to the more-than-human, and disrupts critical binaries for autistic children, such as, the adult/child, inner/outer, mind/body, culture/nature and able/disabled binaries that make it possible to think differently about what 'ideal' educational provision is. Let us take a closer look.

¹⁴¹ Please see the Glossary of terms.

4.7.1. The educational crisis in South Africa

Perhaps the greatest injustices of the apartheid regime in South Africa are the unequal access to learning opportunities for South Africans of colour, notably dis/abled black Africans. Post the historic 1994 elections which saw Nelson Mandela elected as president, the department of education was founded by dissolving the previous (19) racially-segregated educational departments in order to create one national educational system (Thobejane, 2013). Sayed and Kanji (2013) write that though dismantling the previous apartheid infrastructure was the biggest challenge for the new educational system, the new government failed to address the inequalities such as transforming teaching and learning practices, lessening the disproportionate school resources per capita expenditure per learner, as well as ensuring quality teacher training for those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Thobejane (2013) adds that post-apartheid educational systems also struggled under the different viewpoints on democratic education amongst key political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), and the Pan African Congress (PAC). Many learners in public schools continued to fare poorly owing to poverty-related issues such as the lack of access to basic services, inadequate infrastructures to support education at large, as well as issues of language and communication with/in schools for most South African learners¹⁴² (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). Furthermore, the objectives of current education policy documents have proven difficult to implement (see for example, Jansen, 2024). As a result, the South African educational sector is in a precarious state with serious repercussions for those most vulnerable: our children and youth.

4.7.2. Special and/or Inclusive education in South Africa

Apart from the significant socio-economic and political inequalities, there is a division with/in education for children who 'can learn' and children who present with 'barriers to learning' (Brown, 2015). For children with barriers to learning (special needs learners), there has been an even greater lag in terms of educational provision over and above what has

¹⁴² South Africa has 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, and isiZulu are the most widely-spoken languages.

already been iterated. There are two reasons. First, there is a lack of quality and quantity of resources available to cater for unique learning styles, and secondly, there is a generalised, often vague, understanding of what constitutes special needs learning profiles (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Walton, 2010).

Historically, efforts to provide efficient and effective learning opportunities for special needs learners have resulted in many (stand-alone) special needs schools across the country. However, these institutions have generally catered for children who fall on the 'severe' end of the learning spectrum and re-iterate the generalization of learning profiles of special needs learners (Brown, 2015). The South African constitution favours inclusive education for learners with barriers to learning. In keeping with South African law policies, the Department of Basic Education has followed the guidelines such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), where education for special needs learners foregrounded inclusive education. Inclusive education is understood as "the process of increasing access and participation and reducing exclusionary pressures in all aspects of school life" (Walton, 2010, p. 241). This means in practice that children should be educated within the same educational facilities, regardless of ability. For example, children with autism should be allowed to attend the same school as their neurotypical peers with some measure of support provided to cater for learning differences. Given the historic educational injustices and the disparity in wealth and resources, a three-tiered educational system of learners with barriers to learning was introduced. Nthibeli and colleagues (2022) explain that the first tier is inclusive education, which has not resulted in significant developments owing "to many mainstream schools' lack of 'will' and capacity to provide equal opportunities to all learners" (p. 1). The second tier are full-service schools which are schools with sufficient resources to care for those with and without dis/abilities. Third level schools are special education which are geared towards learners with high needs support.

Yet, as evident from the discussions above, inclusive education is a "complex, contradictory educational environment that confounds linear progression towards inclusivity" (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2024, p. 2151). For example, the Department of Basic Education has made significant efforts to work with/in the international and national parameters of inclusive education (for further information see Engelbrecht et al., 2015, Walton & Engelbrecht, 2024). This is apparent from a

series of policy documents, starting with the White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001) which recognises the need to support children with barriers to learning and most recently the approval of the National Education Policy Act (27/1996) on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

However, autistic children remain educationally disadvantaged, and it appears that the heterogeneity of autism poses challenges to planning of the curriculum and the level of support required to engage learning (Pillay et al., 2022). It is also known that most research and resources focus on low-functioning autism and younger children as opposed to higher-functioning autistic individuals (Heflin & , 2012). Furthermore, the misfit between schooling culture and the nature of autism means that children are often deemed 'uneducable' by formal (remedial/special needs) school institutions. The reasons range from lack of adequately equipped remedial teacher/special support services to child's unruly, behavioural outbursts and social inappropriateness, though in most cases, it is child's apparent lack of intellectual ability to manage with the demands of the curriculum (Walton, 2010). It comes as little surprise that most children at the two centres in this study presented with a history of school-related anxiety, which has often been managed with anti-anxiety medication. The disability-education discourse problematises not only the crisis of education in South Africa, but also the general resistance to inclusive education, especially for those with increasingly complex intellectual and learning needs.

4.7.3. Issues of accessibility for children with severe to profound intellectual disability in South Africa

School spaces are highly political places of learning that operate based on rules. This includes the structure of the curriculum and curriculum delivery, rules of engagement, promotional criteria, hierarchical levels of what counts as intellectual intelligence. The list is endless. Learning spaces are entangled with issues of time and legislations, all of which mark bodies, and human bodies in this case. However, one of the two learning centres bore the markings of *illegitimacy*, because at the time of the research it did not carry a certified Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) licence. The issue of certification and accreditation is important as it raises the issues of legitimacy of being different and the different ways of learning and knowing. Certification implies that the school meets the standards of what

constitutes acceptable, and even good, learning practices. A large part of the certification process is a rigorous analysis of the curriculum being taught and in this case the CAPS curriculum. Many children with special educational needs often struggle with the content of the curriculum, resulting in educators seeking out different learning options. In South Africa, alternate educational programmes such as Impaq are sought to enable an education, or a way of learning, that is 'achievable'¹⁴³ for the child with educational difficulties. However, ultimately the demand of the curriculum privileges a normative education that assumes particular notions of cognitive development and is limited in terms of what counts as 'language' (Murriss, 2016), but unfortunately one that is recognised within the wider (schooling) community and therefore the gateway of success, opportunity, and progress.

Certifying learning spaces that do not conform to governmental and provincial legislation is certainly a vexed issue for authorities (see for example, Abdulatief et al., 2018). What standards, what criteria to use when the spaces cannot be contained? There seems to be significant grappling with how to rethink special education, and more so, how to evaluate standards and determine criteria for these non-institutionalised facilities. How do authorities make sense of education where narrow notions of literacy – which may be achievable only for some - are the pinnacle of educational achievement for children? Or when education is entangled with early intervention? What is often forgotten or overlooked is how international testing regimes and the pressure of securing and holding on to one's place on international 'league tables' (e.g., PIRLS), directly influences teaching practices on the ground (Abdulatief et al., 2018).

4.8. Re-turning the CPE as philosophical wanderer

Wedge in between QR and PQR, this chapter queried how to foreground the participants in this study without succumbing to the anthropocentrism of method while simultaneously heeding an (my) affective response to side-stepping research design altogether. The question guiding this chapter explored how to do PQR research-writing practices without

¹⁴³ By 'achievable' I am referring to the child's ability to work within the structure and goals of the curriculum. Some of the learning programmes/methods facilitate extra time that the child may need to reach the goals of the curriculum. This makes it easier to work at a slower pace or to pay closer attention to areas that require more input.

foregrounding human-centricism. This question emerged from the ‘untraining’ of method as PQR researcher, and desire to afford ontoepistemic equality to the human and more-than-humans. In seeking out the main question, the chapter situated the COE as philosophical wanderer with/in spacetime-matter. Barad (2007) reminds us that “events and things do not occupy particular positions in space and time; rather, space, time, and matter are iteratively produced and performed” (p. 393).

Drawing on Barad, the CPE as a philosophical wanderer becomes heavily entangled with the histories, the social, political, and educational mapping of autism in South Africa. Diffracting the enquiries as spacetime-mattering has produced patterns of knowledge of autism in relation to the land, the institution of school, the nature/circumstances of education and who is deemed educable in South Africa. The CPE as a philosophical wanderer produced enquiries which re-emerged through moments when the group dissolved itself, or when the enquiries took place in different settings. The nomadic enquiries were entangled with the ‘eviction’ of school from its ‘normal’ premises, and the uncertainties brought about by having to shift locations. The wanderer brought in the more-than-human in the form of emotions, resettling, new physical environments, watching teachers pack, unpack and repack teaching materials and school paraphernalia (computers, desks, chairs etc.) and reorientating to new spaces. The chapter disrupted the ‘container’ model of space where the world is conceptualised as discrete entities located in space and time. Barad (2018, p. 239) writes that “[t]ime-beings do not merely inhabit, but rather are of the landtimescape – the spacetime-mattering of the world in its enfolding of interactive intra-activity”. Thinking with spacetime-mattering entanglements highlight the political and social forces which haunt education for autistic children, and subsequent educational/therapeutic interventions. What emerged is how spacetime-mattering (lands, bodies, histories, politics) produce diffractive patterns that generate justice as a practice of response-ability and ethics.

A posthumanist performative approach put to work the COE as a philosophical wanderer that entangled human and more-than-human participants. Thinking with Barad’s spacetime-mattering disrupted the COE as a container metaphor which holds philosophical thoughts and experiences. Instead, the COE drew in participants such as humans, power,

land, access to education, disruptions to education, affect and staggered philosophical ideas to name a few. Theorising the COE as a spacetime-mattering makes visible the 'unintelligibility of daily life that is threaded through thinking, and in relation with other thinking partners. Not only is enquiry disrupted but also portrays the porosity of enquiries and the fluidity of who and what counts as a participant, drawing in the ethics, politics of power and illustrates how caring research takes place but also the specificity of the PQR journey.



5

DISRUPTING DATA LINES **Diffraction data through ontoepistemic** **injustice**

This chapter is the third story to emerge with/in Carrier bag II. Given the slow scholarship approach (Fullagar & Bozalek, 2022), carrier bag II has attended to the manner in which this

study has sought to ‘untrain’ habitual research habits in doing postqualitative research (PQR). In thinking with/in the relational ontology and the significance of the more-than-human, it became apparent that the question of data needed to (be) re-turn(ed) in order to make visible the material-discursive diffractive patterns and entanglements. However, the re-turning brought forth an ‘altruistic’ form of ontoepistemic injustice against (autistic) child in the educational and therapy spaces, the very spaces that are meant to emancipate child from injustices. How much erasure of child’s knowledges is perpetuated in such spaces on the basis of ‘developmental lack of?’ The chapter asks: What if the material-discursive entanglements suffer from prejudice and stereotypes¹⁴⁴ on account of ‘in-human’ status? How do injustices against data implicate autistic child as knowledge-maker? These questions are addressed by troubling the ontological and epistemological tenets of qualitative research (QR). Such research practices appear to institute ontoepistemic injustices against data on account of (data) being in-human, and thus ‘incapable’ of knowledge-making. Paying attention to parameters such as data collection, descriptions, and analyses, the chapter explores the status of data (materiality of data) and subsequent (adult researcher/practitioner) claims about children in their capacity as knowledge-bearers.

¹⁴⁴ Please refer to the Glossary of terms and also chapter 2 for further discussion.

5.1. The intra-action¹⁴⁵ of data and ontoepistemic injustice

How and where does data and ontoepistemic injustice intra-act ? What are the entanglements involved? And what are the agential cuts¹⁴⁶?

Situated with/in the scholarship of critical posthumanism, ontoepistemic injustice calls into question the marginalisation of children as worthy bearers of knowledge on account of ageist prejudices¹⁴⁷ (Murriss, 2016). In response to ontoepistemic injustices, Murriss (2016) proposes decolonisation of education by attending to knowing as a concept that emerges through complex networks of human and more-than-human participants that attend to a relational ontology and the material-discursive in knowledge-making practices. Matter is unhinged from Newtonian descriptors such as ‘passive’, ‘fixed’ entities with/in prescribed spaces and times,¹⁴⁸ being neither labels nor placeholders for things (nouns) and descriptions (adjectives) that represent the world. Barad (2007) proposes matter and materiality as more-than-human elements that are lively and always in relation with other matter in the ongoing re-configuration of worldly phenomena. Data as material-discursive is always producing new phenomena in relation with/in entanglements. To illustrate the materiality of data, this chapter threads MacLure’s (2013) notion of *data that glows* through feminist storytelling practices (as discussed in chapter 1). Theorising the entanglements as *data-stories* invites in unexpected phenomena which contest habitual approaches to data analysis. The entanglement disrupts qualitative research (QR) by drawing attention to the following:

- The significance of the ontology that underpins research practice;
- The politics of data in terms of method, collection and analysis;
- The dynamism of researching with/in data.

¹⁴⁵ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹⁴⁶ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹⁴⁷ Ontoepistemic injustice is discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁴⁸ See chapter 4 for further discussion on spacetime matter.

- The robustness of thinking data through material feminist research practices, such as diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007) and posthumanist cartographies of the knowing subject and knowledge production (Braidotti, 2013).

However, to think of data as agential raises methodological questions and concerns in terms of how to put the theory to work (St Pierre, 2014). How do we do research with human and more-than-human entities? Do we research with ‘old’ methods and new approaches? What does shifting of questions from epistemology to ontology entail, and how would this work? How is it possible to think outside of human meaning-making and interpretation? To what extent is it possible to conceptualise method without method? This chapter attempts to trace the entanglement and intra-action of data and ontoepistemic injustices through re-turning data through a ‘different’ lens. Let us take a closer look at what this means.

5.2. The politics of researching injustices

Mitigating injustices are intrinsic to the qualitative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Yet for the better part, the concepts of justice and injustice have been conceptualised with/in the domain of the social world, which presume human cultural, political, and communicative competence (Hendersen, 2018). Furthermore, injustice (whether social or epistemic) tends to (still) focus on (marginalised) human cultural and social experiences¹⁴⁹ (Fricker, 2008). Why is this the case?

This discussion commences by exploring injustice as theorised with humans (QR) in comparison with more-than-humans (PQR). Since injustice is conceptualised differently in QR and PQR. For example, posthumanism might theorise injustice in relation to materiality, while QR could reflect on injustice as a (human) social reaction to the inequalities in the world. This chapter suggests that the ontological and epistemic claims matter in terms of how injustice is theorised and put to work in different research paradigms, and particularly the analysis of data/phenomena.

¹⁴⁹ Please note that more-than-human has been pivotal in environmental educational research and indigenous knowledge practices. See for example the work of Tuck and Yang (2018).

Admittedly, to theorise injustice requires a lot more time and space than this thesis allows. For instance, injustice might beg the questions of what is injustice, how do different belief, cultural and value systems theorise injustice, or perhaps more importantly the question of “towards what justice?” (Tuck & Yang, 2018). However, this discussion does not aim to address the concept of injustice as an autonomous ontological category of its own. Yet given that injustice is rooted with epistemological claims about the world, there are implications which must be considered insofar as research method and interpretation of findings (emergence of phenomena is concerned) (Hendersen, 2018). Considering that posthumanism rejects a metaphysics of individualism, the epistemological construction of injustice matters in terms of how the concept is disrupted through PQR practices. The re-configuration of injustice is key to understanding how the agency of data transforms education and motivates the shift from QR to PQR. In order to avoid any misinterpretation regarding how the concept of injustice manifests with/in posthumanist research practices, this chapter begins with the parallels between justice and injustice as theorised in social epistemology and consequently the QR paradigm.

Social epistemology is a branch of epistemology that is concerned with the construction of knowledge and attends to the diverse manner in which humans engage in the processes of coming to know the world (see, for example, Goldman, 2020). These processes include acquiring, creating, analysing, storing, transmitting, receiving, and reviewing knowledge (Fricker, 2007). Of interest to this chapter is that social epistemology focuses on institutional, *collective* epistemic agents such as communities, teams and juries to name a few (Goldman, 2020). It would appear that social epistemology is concerned with human opinion, voice, and experiences with/in social contexts. Put differently, social epistemology sets the stage for human, interpretive research practices, or qualitative enquiry.

In addition, it seems that the emergence of social epistemology itself has spurred the qualitative paradigmatic departure from quantitative research. Notwithstanding the humanism inherent to social epistemology, the field of enquiry demarcates a shift away from traditional epistemologies which signify the autonomy of individual human thought, or the Cartesian knowing subject (Goldman, 2020). For Hendersen (2018), the epistemological move from the individual to the collective has influenced the trajectory of research

practices, to the extent that it became a 'normative take away' for researchers. It might not be surprising that the paradigm wars between positivist (quantitative, 'hard' science research) and postpositivist/interpretive (qualitative research) coincided with the rise of social epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hendersen, 2018). The impetus towards collective, shared and communal thinking called for a critical reappraisal of existing lines of research enquiry that could authenticate the (human) social construction of knowledge¹⁵⁰. Such claims about knowledge bring about ethical questions as to whose knowledge, values and beliefs came to matter in the world, and the (discursive) avenues which might verify such claims to knowledge¹⁵¹. It would appear that not only did qualitative research imbricate social epistemology but also reconfigured injustice with/in human social contexts.

Now, why might the emphasis on social injustice in QR be potentially problematic?

Fricker (2008) provides an interesting critique of social injustice, albeit from a human-centred perspective. She explains that social epistemology is problematic because it reinstates epistemic injustices on account of the repetitive patterns of power and identity relations across communities of people (Fricker, 2008). Fricker (2008) articulates this point through a theoretical model which she refers to as the abstracted social conception of knowledge. She explains that despite the revolutionary departure from the traditional, Cartesian knowing subject, social epistemology has contextualised justice from the perspective of the lone individual which extends outwards in his relations with fellow (epistemic) subjects, the community and then the broader social-political institutions which regulate everyday life. This pattern is referred to as a *horizontal* distribution of justice. Not only does the shift curtail the specificities of the (human) epistemic subject, but it also places the subject with/in relations of epistemic interdependence (where humans are dependent on each other). To recap, injustice is enacted by fixing the subject with/in a particular geopolitical and temporal domain of power and identity. However, the horizontal plane does not dismiss power, and Fricker (2008) states that injustices with/in social epistemology needs to be configured with a vertical plane in order to bring about true shifts

¹⁵⁰ The paradigmatic 'wars' have been described at length in the qualitative literature. Please see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 2014, 2015; as well as St Pierre, 2013, 2014, 2019 for further information.

¹⁵¹ This approach to the construction of knowledge has been critiqued by postcolonial and indigenous scholars on account of perpetuating colonial discourses in academic work.

in power and identity, and to undo epistemic interdependence. It would appear that not accounting for the plane of justice (horizontal or vertical) not only undermines the autonomy of the human knowing subject, but also potentially re-establishes the very injustice that our research methods might seek to quell. But let us take a look at how social injustices in QR manifest.

5.2.1. Qualitative research (QR) and social injustice

Social injustices in research have come to represent (human) trauma in addition to the inequalities, oppression and discrimination brought about from contexts such as global warfare, nuclear, economic and political disasters, cultural politics as well as the subordination of marginalised humans such as women, children, queer, disabled, racialised, economically displaced, and slaves. In response, qualitative researchers have sought to mitigate social injustices by making visible the ethics and politics of human subjective experience through meaning-making and experiential accounts of the world (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, 2018; Denzin & Giardina, 2015, 2016, 2018).

However, despite the ethical responsibilities towards remediating social injustice, the key aspect of QR is a re-avowal of the commitment to humanist ideals (St Pierre, 2014, 2016). As evident from the discussion above, the fact that justice has been largely conceptualised from a social epistemological perspective implies that QR is embedded with/in human discourses which situate the human as the primal knowing subject. In fact, a critical aspect of recuperating social justice in QR is the continuous 'upgrade' to methods that enact different meaning and patterns of responsibility to unstable (human) realities (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). For instance, qualitative researchers have re-aligned research methods in order to accommodate research *about* humans to research *with* humans. Subsequently, researchers have foregrounded social justice research methods such as critical action research performance autoethnography, as well as social media and multimedia methods in art-based inquiries.

For posthumanist researchers, the aforementioned response to the need for social justice continues to foreground prevailing forms of inequalities that pertain to human knowing

subjects only. Such research embeds ethics that operates with/in a framework of human rights that situate social injustices along the lines of unequal power relations such as the rights/protection of research subjects versus the researcher (Mauthner, 2018). It would appear that research practices are constructed around the knowing human subject, which re-instates the pervasiveness of the Cartesian philosophy such as dualisms and representationalism. Yet there is little attention afforded to injustices as phenomena that emerge from mutually implicated human and more-than-human relations. Mauthner (2018) states that ethical accountability with/in research is not “necessarily about how (social) injustices are constructed within specified paradigmatic approaches, but rather the manner in which ontological assumptions about data are constituted” (p. 689).

5.2.2. The politics of evidence

At the heart of socially just research are political and ethical concerns about the nature of evidence. The question that arises is what counts as evidence? There are a number of ways in which QR has addressed the issues surrounding evidence. Some of the relevant key issues are discussed below.

The nature of evidence is underpinned by a “historical present¹⁵² where the need for social justice has never been greater” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 33), as well as a neoliberal market agenda where research itself might very well be a “specific political economy of knowledge production of advanced capitalism” (Braidotti, 2018, p. xvii). Historically, the qualitative paradigm has undergone at least three significant shifts over the course of the last five decades, namely the postpositivist resistance to the positivist ideals of scientific method; the competing wars amongst conventional qualitative research, critical theory and constructivism; and having to defend qualitative research in light of the politics of evidence (such as randomised control trials and evidence-based practices) brought about by neo-

¹⁵² Denzin & Lincoln (2018) draw attention to how justice has been conceptualised in the qualitative research paradigm. For postqualitative researchers such as Elizabeth St Pierre (2017, p. 38) there is no historical present for a posthumanist ontology that disrupts time as unilinear. The posthumanist notion of temporality invokes “different presents with different histories that have enabled different approaches to social science inquiry”.

positivists in the first decade of the 21st century (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; St Pierre, 2014, 2017, 2019).

The notion of evidence is 'evident' in the shift away from positivism, and particularly the lexicon which validates the practice of QR. For example, terms such as 'patterns, tendencies, likelihoods, trustworthiness and so forth appear to authenticate the unpredictable nature of the social world (see for example, Lune & Berg, 2017). This distinction is important because it has established the QR paradigm as one which 'speaks' to the human aspect of research, knowledge and being in the world. Further ideologies of the QR paradigm include the 'richness of data', 'thematic analysis', 'grounding theory in experience', 'open-ended questions and investigations', the 'ethics of equity and fairness'. To this end, QR is perceived as a journey of attending to the details of the unknown. Through research approaches such as ethnography, case studies, phenomenology, narrative discourse and grounded theory, qualitative researchers engage with the politics of cultural and linguistic diversity, if not discriminatory practices such as colonialism, patriarchy, racism, classism and so forth.

However, the fact that QR foregrounds method, measurement, tools and strategies to 'contain' the chaos and unruliness of the social world re-instates the world with/in the metaphysics of individualism and an ontological hierarchy of supremacy based on the human capacity for reason and rationality. To this end, the representational, structured and process-orientated nature of QR is quite vexing given the shift, or rather degrees of freedom, away from quantitative research.

However, the notion of Big Data, also referred to as the 'datological turn' (see Clough et al., 2015) has reconfigured the nature of data and the subsequent construction of knowledge is situated with/in technological human and more-than-human entanglements that foreground life-codes. Research in this era transcends the human social condition and demands ethical accountability to all entities that shift conditions. Social injustice in these times is reconfigured through the politics of hope and possibility of (radical) democracies that are yet to come. In other words, researchers seek out emancipatory and transformative ways of doing research in a manner that offers 'healing' or at least some degree of resistance to overt social injustices.

5.2.3. The status of data

For St Pierre (2014), the role of data in conventional (humanist) qualitative research has historically been guided by the logic of the Cartesian knowing, and the entitlement of the human subject in attributing meaning to the world. Embedded with/in the interpretive, empirical, and positivist research paradigms, data has served as an interface between research questions and findings. Data 'waits' to be collected, analysed, included/excluded from research findings (Koro-Ljungberg & Wells, 2018). It is the 'raw' material that generates and informs knowledge concepts (Koro-Ljungberg & Wells, 2018). It becomes refined through research processes such as rigorous data collection and methods of analysis. The 'fragility' of data is apparent from methodological rigour undertaken to ensure its capability. Indeed, terminology such as validity, authenticity, bias, and subjectivity are but a few of the boundaries which encompass data.

With/in the aforementioned paradigms, data is fixed according to function and the propensity for meaning making. Function and meaning making are fixations of both space and time. For example, data is set with/in a chronological ordering of information, in which it is succeeded by (data) analysis. Spatially, data is structured with/in 'judgements' such as participant criteria, conditions of possibility, validity, verification, and triangulation. But perhaps most importantly, data is a conduit to truth claims about the world. Once verified, data 'becomes' brute in a sense that it cannot be (easily) discounted by other forms of reasoning (St Pierre, 2014). In this way, data is assimilated into a bedrock of knowledge that generalises the social and scientific practices of the world.

Outside of the research protocol, data is lifeless, inert, passive, disorganised and 'in need' of researcher judgement in order to become a 'worthy bearer of knowledge'. Perhaps one might rightly theorise that the ontological inferiority of data creates a reliance on the researcher in order to be rendered capable, which constitutes ontoepistemic injustice against data.

Yet drawing on the capaciousness of matter in the co-constitution of the world, posthumanist researchers in education (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; MacLure, 2013; Mauthner,

2018) argue that the ontological liveliness and agency of data matters in phenomena. Affirming the status of data with/in research draws attention to the complexities of human and more-than-human relations which demand different approaches to research method and practice. Posthumanist researchers have increasingly theorised the relationality of data with/in research by foregrounding different analysis and approaches such as concept as method (St Pierre, 2019) and thinking data through theory and theory through data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). Yet despite the commitment to research creativity and experimentation, it seems that the ontological status of data (the agency and performativity of data) has been largely overlooked (Koro-Ljungberg & Wells, 2018; Mauthner, 2018). Indeed, the status of data is problematic for it is hotly contested and bears different definitions for different scholars (Koro-Ljungberg, 2018). Here, let us re-turn to the 'data' in this study.

5.3. Re-turning storying as data

Re-turning storying and data that 'glows' (MacLure, 2013) enacts knowledge-making, or the ongoing re-invention of claims pertaining to reality. Knowledge-making is also a performative practice of worlding in which the world itself is constantly (un)(re)folded with/in material and discursive entanglements (Barad, 2007). The re-turning of data as stories, or data-stories, is theorised as a performativity of knowledge-making practices. It is not surprising that the data-stories as part of this study's research produced multiple events on account of the diverse relations. Indeed, data-stories have been co-created with humans (supervisors, colleagues, children, and my posthumanist subjectivity [see chapter 0]), texts, technology, spaces (office, home, libraries, coffee shops) and different temporalities. Collectively, these forces are threaded through the data-stories told below, and warrant acknowledgement to the knowledge-making in this chapter and thesis. Let us re-invite storying practices into this chapter.

5.3.1. Storying

In chapter 2 of this study, storying was proposed as the research method in this study. Storying attends to the complexities of theorising data that did not comply with the framework of dominant narratives on child, voice, education, research method, and ability.

Thinking with Barad (2007), Dali (Carroll & Dali 1969/2015), Ingold (2016), and Le Guin (1989), storying practices drew attention to the politics of power and privilege that underscore 'heroic' portrayals of reality. A key concern with/in the chapter pertained to the ethics and accountability to research-data-stories that were not told, erased or discounted from the history of the world.

It is apt to re-turn storying practices in this chapter on account of the disruption to space and time. As Le Guin (1989) states, storytelling is about the capability of indiscernible things to tell different realities. Stored, saved or shared stories are constantly being transformed. Entities and partnerships do not adhere to specifications of time, space or ontological definitiveness (categories of use). So, re-turning storytelling is about re-configuring the chapter/s as porous carrier bags that collect and hold disparate entities, creating unexpected conversations between unexpected partners. This chapter-bag takes on an array of shapes, colours and functions as it stories data through qualitative and postqualitative research. The bag is heavy with data-stories that continuously generate an endless number of 'mini bags' (Fairchild et al., 2021). Key to storying practices in this chapter is re-configuration of data as data that glows (MacLure, 2013).

5.3.2. Re-configuring data that glows

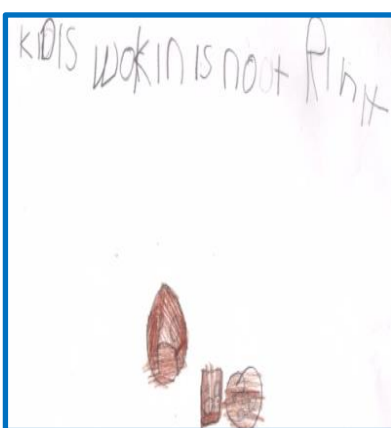


Figure 5.1. Data that glows

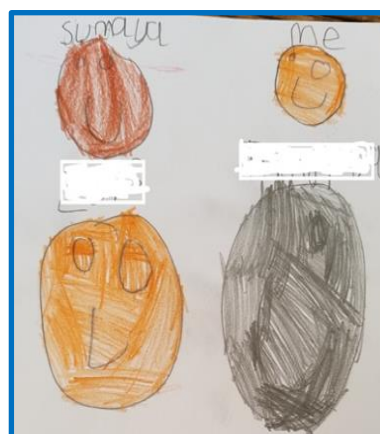


Figure 5.2. Data that glows

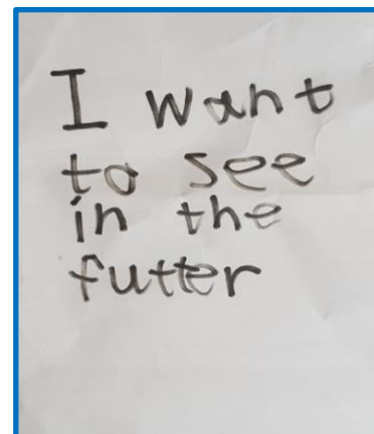


Figure 5.3. Data that glows

MacLure (2013, p. 661), explains 'data that glows' as follows:

The glow seems to invoke something abstract or intangible that exceeds propositional meaning, but also has a decidedly embodied aspect... calls up the double-sided, material-linguistic status of sense, 'resonating in the body as well as the brain.

Data that glows is embedded with complex figurations of human and more-than-human entanglements and generates affective responses which transcend discursive patterns of (human) meaning-making, interpretation and experience which tend to be the focus of conventional research method and analysis (MacLure, 2013). The data appears as hotspots or disruptive events with/in the collective gathering of data, altering the speed, time and intensities of thinking theory and practice together (MacLure, 2013). Data that glows generates perplexity and curiosity, all of which spill over into everyday events such as casual exchanges with colleagues, haphazard events during transcriptions, or engaging with research technology.

Hotspots of data, albeit data that glows, acknowledge the material-discursive and show the entanglements with the researcher. Lively and agential, data that glows resist habitual research practices such as the exploration, organisation, and structuring of data with/in particular schemas of knowledge (MacLure, 2013). In this way, data disrupts the world as a fixed reality that is separated out from other worldly research practices. The data marks the ongoing transformations of life itself and calls for methods of enquiry that attend to the material conditions that produce research phenomena and the politics and ethics of situated knowledge (Mauthner, 2018).

But why were figures 5.1., 5.2., and 5.3. selected as data-stories?

Quite simply because the *data did something*. Situating the data in an entanglement of human bodies, disruptive thoughts, the politics of listening to child, paper, crayons, camera, and classroom, as well as power relations of who tells the data-story, highlighted the complexity of thinking with/in the data 'itself'. The complexities were embedded within the

notion of affect¹⁵³. The data glowed and provoked an affective response that exceeded (my) human understanding and meaning making. Affect resists research methods which prioritise human experience and conceptual frameworks of the world, particularly the linguistic primacy of analysis and meaning making (MacLure, 2013). Affect itself triggers action in the face of the unknown (MacLure, 2013). Thinking with the data shifted the focus from data as passive to data as agential, especially insofar as de-constructing the researcher-research and human/data binaries. The data questioned the authority of the human (child and researcher) in the production of knowledge. Foregrounding affect, the data moved away from the protocol of method and analysis, inviting in research creation. However, to understand data that glows and the effect of affect, we need to attend to how the data-stories work (MacLure, 2013). Here the chapter discusses three data-stories which indicate the complexity of thinking data as agential. The first story explores how injustices manifest when data is theorised from the perspective of reflection and reflexivity. The second story focuses on the emancipatory efforts of critical qualitative research in mitigating social injustices through the disruption of dualisms such as ableist/dis/ableist. The third story attends to the data within entanglements and the effects of differences produced through the diffractive patterns.

5.4. Putting data-stories to work and politics of injustice

5.4.1. Story 1: Reflective practices

Story 1 experiments with reflection and reflexivity which are key tools of data analysis in QR. Reflection is a critical practice in qualitative research that is concerned with the verification, authenticity, and credibility of research method and findings (Lune & Berg, 2017). Reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher is part of the social world and investigates the role of the researcher in the research process, especially the manner in which subjective interpretations of data contribute towards the outcomes of the research.

For posthumanist scholars, reflection and reflexivity are problematic tropes for thinking about knowledge. Haraway (1997, p. 16) has problematised reflection and reflexivity as

¹⁵³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

optical geometrics which are caught up in mirroring or perpetuating the same phenomena in different places. Embedded within representationalism, feminist theorists have critiqued reflection and reflexivity on account of ontologically separating the world into discrete categories of things. Barad (2007, p. 86) writes that while reflexivity acknowledges the role of the researcher in the world, it establishes the researcher with/in a tripartite arrangement of human knowers, objects in the world, and representations that put humans and the world into conversation. To approach data from the perspective of reflection and reflexivity assumes a linear timeline. Story one puts the material feminist contestation of reflection to work through the data.

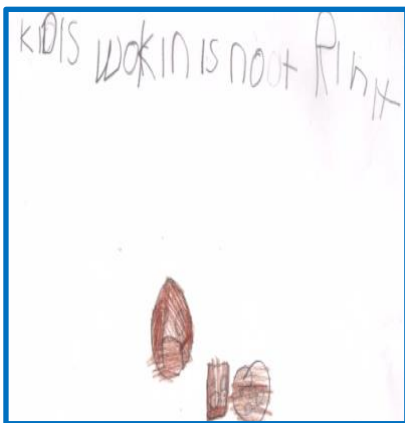


Figure 5.4. Reflective practices

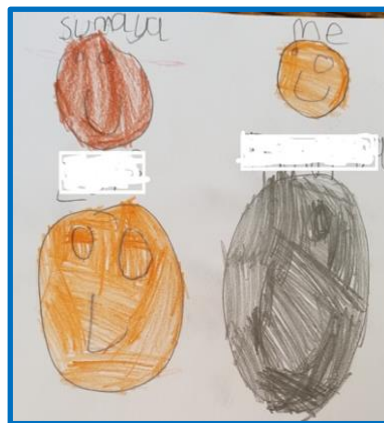


Figure 5.5. Reflective practices

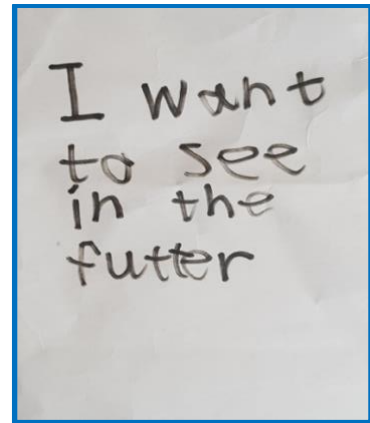


Figure 5.6. Reflective practices

Reflecting on the data, I was once again struck by the political nature of (autistic) children's thoughts which would seem to go unnoticed in education. The politics of child labour (figure 5.4), navigating racial diversity/discrimination (figure 5.5.), and a curiosity about what lies ahead (and in the case of this image, what lies ahead once schooling is complete) (figure 5.6.) are powerful visual depictions of what (autistic) child is capable of. Bringing my social position researcher/therapist/educator in the world to the data might foreground the difficulties of disrupting developmental discourses which more often than not associate communication, linguistic and cognitive disability with inferior thinking skills as well as learning or intellectual difficulties. I reflected on how one might interpret the images given the absence/presence of contextual information (similar to the experiment with ethics in chapter 1). The 'lack' of such information is dangerous for it might pre-empt epistemological, ontological, and social injustices against child. For instance, how can we

make claims about child on the basis of incomplete data? How do we validate the thinking expressed in the images without transcripts, anecdotal evidence, images, and dialogue? What about the circumstances of the data? Did the children copy each other's work, did they really engage in the process of thinking in community? Were the spelling errors random? What are the ethics and accountability *to* the images without contextualising the circumstances which produced data? The use of the term *contextualise* is a deliberate reference to how data is normally theorised: within particular spaces and times, and in relation to the research questions or aims of a project (see Patton, 2014). Contextualised data/knowledge is different from the feminist notion of *situated knowledge*. For Haraway (1988) situated knowledge highlights the politics and power that creates embodied, specified locations of knowledge. To situate the data requires more than contextual information, it requires inquiry into the materiality of the data such as the entanglements and agency of the images, and the devices which 'capture them'. Reflecting on the data called into question the injustices of wrongfully conceptualising (autistic) children as inadequate thinkers on account of 'lacking' the (developmental) maturity to express knowledge through voice, language, art, images.

But what of the *materiality* of the data itself? What were the ontological, epistemological conditions, assumptions and relations of data that produced the questions? What of the technology, videos and so forth? How was the data co-implicated in the emergence of the questions and thoughts? Let us think with the neurodiversity and activism literature.

5.4.2. Story 2: Be(com)ing autistic

Still thinking with *affect*, I re-turned myself-through-the writing to chapter 1 (p. 34) where Yergeau (2018) contended that any claim about autism is essentially a storytelling exercise that embeds hegemonic, ableist perspectives of human life. Chapter 1 drew on the neurodiversity scholarship to illustrate research practices that are increasingly foregrounding the phenomenology of autism¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵⁴ Please refer to chapter 1 for further information.

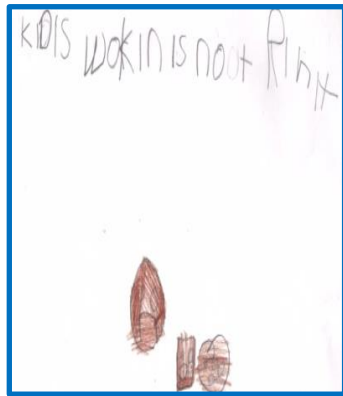


Figure 5.7 'Being' autistic

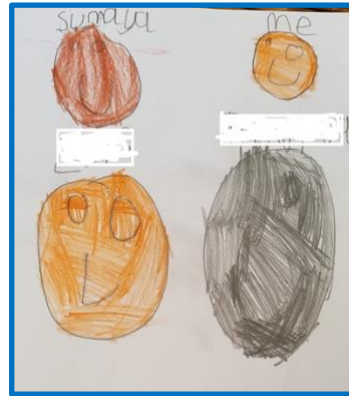


Figure 5.8. 'Being' autistic

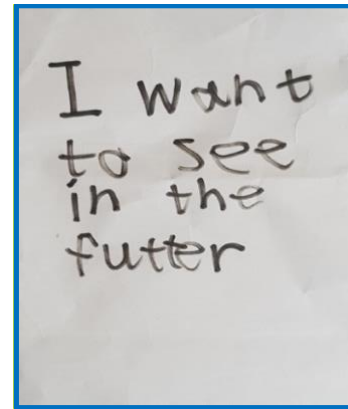


Figure 5.9. 'Being' autistic

The neurodiversity literature draws attention to the positioning of autistic child. The history and roots of the movement indicate activism of any sort for neurodiverse (autistic) individuals stemmed from adults with a vested interest in autism. This included parents, teachers, medical personnel, autistic individuals, policy makers, government and government stake-holders and so forth. In fact, there is little evidence of autistic children being involved in activism. Certainly, there are noteworthy events led by young autistic children which have warranted attention. For example, Naoki Higashida authored the book *The reason I Jump* at age 13. His achievement was celebrated given the intellectual articulation of being autistic despite the social communication and verbal challenges with which he presented. Naoki was 13 at the time the book was published. But what of other autistic children who are neither 'able' nor 'capable' of 'intellectual giftedness'? What of children who are severely dis/abled? Or what of children whose intra-actions during the philosophical enquiries produced figures 5.7., 5.8., and 5.9.? Burman and colleagues (2017) have problematised dis/abled child and adult as two different forms of *being* child. Child (of chronological age and order) is couched with/in ECE and EI which offer opportunities of redemption to be(come) 'human' before adulthood. Dis/abled adult on the other hand is theorised as the 'eternal' child who might always require assistance and support insofar as financial, social, and vocational care is concerned. The dis/abled *childadult* is an ongoing and pervasive trope in the neurodiversity literature that invites in the complexities of disrupted lineages (see chapter 8).

5.4.3. Story 3: The materiality of data

Story 3 is an invitation proffered by the data to attend to the materiality of data. Often, we encounter research events which we (researchers) might all too easily discard as uninteresting or out of conscious range (MacLure, 2013). Ironically the dismissal of such invitations may very well amount to a recuperation of the ‘heroic’ narratives that Le Guin (1989) cautions against.

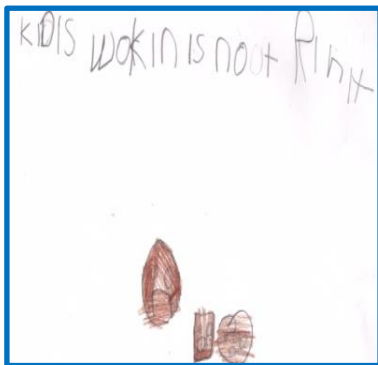


Figure 5.10. Data as material

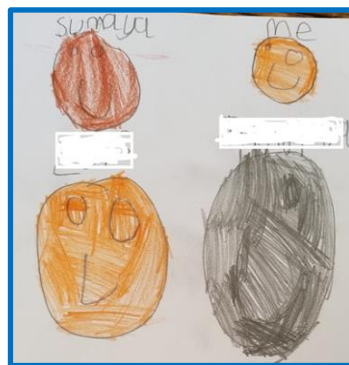


Figure 5.11. Data as material

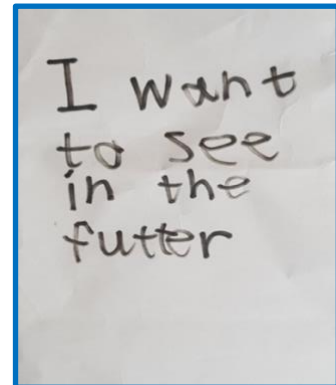


Figure 5.12. Data as material

Inasmuch as data that glows generates affect, it is also saturated *with* affect, or a sense of wonder (MacLure, 2013). Wonder is uncontainable and un-knowledgeable for “it is a liminal condition, suspended in the threshold of knowing and unknowing” (MacLure, 2013, p. 228). In this way data is activated as agential and capable of responding, or rather disrupting the Cartesian framework which positions it (data) as innocent, passive claims to representing the world (MacLure, 2013). Wonder is relational and situated with/in the entanglement of data-researcher. To think with data requires a position of epistemic humility on the part of the researcher in order to listen to what is being communicated. Epistemic humility shifts research practices from (human) judgement and decision-making by engendering responsibility to the data ‘kicking back’.

Thinking with the data, I deliberately sidestep the hegemonic discourses in research, data, child, education, and autism, which have shaped my persona as researcher. The data induces perplexity, confusion, curiosity, intrigue, all of which were blurred and defied description – how does one describe the medley of thoughts, feelings, bodily reactions, interrupted writing and thinking practices with single words? Certainly the thoughts through

words and images make themselves known. But what also becomes visible are the large gaps of silence. The lack of linguistic-grammatical-representational connectors represent inarticulate thoughts that cannot be fully recuperated. For example, all three data snippets are unsubstantiated by transcriptions, video-recordings, images or other forms of data that would facilitate an accurate interpretation of the phenomena. The philosophical ideas hover within the silence as concepts that are present-absent. The silence carries 'empty spaces' which should have been filled with contextual information, such as descriptions of the participants, the particularities of the research site, participant criteria, sampling strategy, and methods of authenticating the data itself. Most often, silences with-in data cannot be captured empirically on account of lack of evidence – evidence referring to that which can be described, documented and validated.

But what of the data? To what extent do we do injustice to data by judging it as incomplete? Mauthner (2018) states that traditional research practices continue to engage data as an arbitrary entity that is subject to (human) meaning making and experience. Yet to theorise data as subservient to human knowledge-making practices raises questions of ethical response-ability to the wonder that exists with/in human-more-than-human relations in the practice of knowledge-making. Just as much as autism and child are implicated onto-epistemic injustices, I wonder if it is possible that data (as non-human actor within the entanglement) is subjected to ontoepistemic injustice account of *being* impartial, incomplete and unauthenticated accounts of what child is capable of doing? Do we judge data as an unworthy bearer of knowledge? How do we research data-stories-injustice?

5.5. Data and ontological incommensurability

PQR operates from an ontological starting point that resists the very nature of method. In fact, the orderly, structured, and process-orientated qualities of method are ontologically undone by posthumanist research. As Springgay and Truman (2018) write, the ontology of PQR and method-orientated research practices are theoretically incommensurable. QR assumes an onto-epistemic divide which separates humans out from non-humans. The relational ontology and performativity inherent posthumanist research displaces normative concepts such as coding, thematic analysis, criteria, objectivity, validity, and reliability.

Instead, posthumanist research proposes that concepts are enacted and re-created through assemblage, nomadism, entanglement and so forth.

A relational ontology rejects the metaphysics of individualism, or the notion that the world is composed of things with unique sets of properties, and instead considers existence and phenomena in the world as practices of being in the world (see chapter 3). Phenomena are distinguished on the basis of mutual relations. These relations are of greater ontological significance than the entities themselves. The primary unit of existence is not matter but phenomena (Barad, 2007). To iterate an earlier point, entities do not exist in autonomous, independent and individual states, but are agential and come into existence through entangled human and more-than-human relations (Barad, 2007). A relational ontology foregrounds the seamless articulation of human and non-human forces that produce new, creative and imaginative phenomena. Decentring the human knowing subject, a relational ontology proposes a monist, non-hierarchical ontoepistemology (knowing in being) which not only dissolves binaries but also situates human and more-than-human entities on the same plane (Barad, 2007, 2010, 2012; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Taylor, 2019). Put differently, the relational ontology does not position matter at the expense of the discursive or vice versa but instead proposes that matter and discursive practices are so tightly bound to each other that it is impossible to separate them out. A relational ontology is performative, for it shifts research practices away from descriptions of lived experiences and the subsequent essentialist, fixed perceptions of realities that arise from such research. However, the ontology does not only disrupt realities that are constructed on the basis of representations, language and meaning making, but also reconfigures the world by enacting differential patterns which mark new boundaries, properties and meanings (Barad, 2007, p. 139).

5.6. Data-stories and inheritance

How does the entanglement of data-stories address issues of injustice? By disrupting time. Barad (2018) states that quantum physics disrupts in multiple ways, but especially time as located within fixed spaces and linear lines. Theorising data as glowing unhinges data from its position in the past and threads it through the present and future. The act of re-turning data through data-story entanglements acknowledges the notion of inheritance, not as

something that is to be received, or something from the past, but acknowledging that the two can never be separated out. Re-turning data-stories renders data capable but also leaves the past open for reconfiguration. Koro-Ljungberg (2016) asserts that to incorporate the past (qualitative research) into the future is to acknowledge the debt of PQR to QR. It is a matter of inheritance.

The purpose of this chapter was to disrupt the qualitative approaches to data by thinking with critical posthumanism and onto-epistemic justice. Re-turning storytelling and data that glows, the chapter focused on how three data fragments reconfigured the notion of injustice. The data drew attention to how data itself is subjected to injustices on account of being data and thus considered to be an unworthy bearer of knowledge unless contextualised with/in human-centric research practices and conditions. Instead, a posthumanist thinking with/in data-method-research entanglement produced knowledge-making as embodied, active and agential. Method is not ousted but rather re-configured in relation to human and more-than-human entanglements.

Posthumanist research practices engender a collective thinking, which is thinking in the presence of others, inviting spaces for hesitations and resistances (Springgay & Truman, 2018). All of these produced new lines of research enquiry and generated unpredictable patterns of possibility. Data-stories evoke questions about inheritance where the presence is not what is known but rather requires an attunement to the happenings of events.

QR is currently at the crossroad of the posthuman condition, and is marked by the agitations, controversy and complexity of how to theorise our world. A disruption to QR is the impetus towards social justice by way of activism through poststructuralism and postcolonial theory. These theories have produced critical questions about the manner in which contemporary research practices are enacted. To this end, Braidotti (2013) cautions that a failure to fully appreciate the post-human condition is tantamount to research being “a data -mining exercise for subjugated academic institutions”.

An agential realist, relational approach portrays data as emerging agential cuts that are co-constituted by material-discursive forces and rendered capable as well as proffering response-ability to human and more-than human counterparts in the ongoing re-making of

the world. Theorising methodology demands a creativity and experimentation that can only come into being when studying and theorising the onto-epistemic conditions that underpin knowledge claims. To resist methodology is not a deliberate resistance to human-centred practices and method for the sake of critique but rather an affirmation of how to enact different research practices. The data-stories in this chapter provoke research practices which attend to the happenings in the world. These practices fold in the ongoing, contingent sensuality and relationality of social conditions. Barad (2010) reminds us that the ethics of entanglements is *inseparability* and response-ability. Drawing on Derrida, Barad (2010) states that justice is not about attending to injustices of the past or approaching the past in order to change it. The past is not a given location in space and time. Justice-to-come is about the disjointed nature of time as past|present|future. To think of ontoepistemic injustices against data is to undo time and render data capable through spacetime-mattering.

DiffRACTive Thinking Time 2¹⁵⁵

Neurochthonics

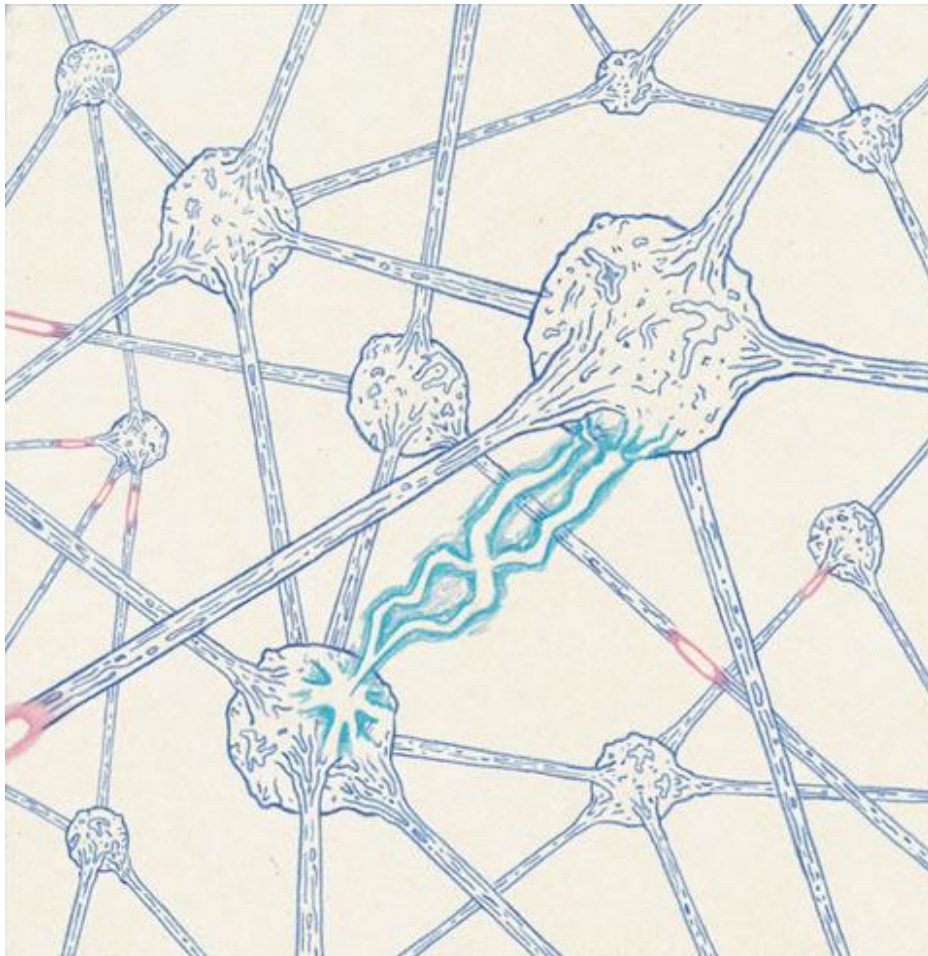


Figure DTT 2A. 'Impulsive' neurons (Morris, 2018)

The storying in carrier bag II shows that PQR not only disrupts human-centric claims to knowledge but also produces (re)new(ed) patterns of knowledge when the agency of the material is foregrounded. Here, in diffractive thinking time 2, autism is re-turned insofar as the neuroscience underpinning the diagnosis and interventions.

Reading with Haraway (2016), I am fascinated by the structure and appearance of neurons as indicated in figures DTT 2A and DTT 2B (see below). Is it fortuitous or co-incidental that neurons materialise as 'critter-things'? With spidery legs, tentacles, digits and perhaps unruly hair, neurons may well be *chthonics*. Haraway (2016) described chthonics as

¹⁵⁵ The thinking that takes place here is a diffraction of posthumanism and P4wC practice where the community of enquirers are encouraged to introspect and share thoughts about the events that have transpired during the enquiry. Please see the Writing conventions for further information.

“monsters of the earth which are simultaneously ancient and new beings that perform and demonstrate meaningfulness and consequences of earth processes” (p.2). Chthonics compost the world through un/making material matters. They belong to no one, occupying earthly spaces with other critters of kin. Chthonics generate multi-species relations that disrupt anthropocentrism and generate ongoing stories of kinship (human and more-than-human). So how does chthonic re-configure the neuroscience of autism?

Lenz Taguchi (2016) states that “... the contemporary obsession with the neuro(n) seems to emerge from the desire to know more about the learning subject, knowledge, and the problem of how something new comes into the world” (p. 213). This comes back to the initial paradox encountered in this study – can ‘brains of dis/ordered’ neurons achieve complex thinking? Indeed, this question is embedded in representational paradigms which take as a starting point that the neuron is fundamentally an anatomical and physiological unit of the central nervous system. But the neuro(n) is also political, for it has ushered in the era of ‘neuro-power’. Neidich (2010) writes that neuro-power refers to theories in which power dynamics and relations are embedded with/in neural networks, particularly the (human) capacity for futuristic planning. Neuro-power has become the cultural, social, and linguistic tool of cognitive capitalism (Neidich, 2010). As Lenz Taguchi (2016b) points out, the rapid advancements of neuroscience have resulted in a proliferation of academic sub-disciplines with an interest in the neuron which have been popularised by adding the word ‘neuro’ as a prefix (e.g. neuro-education, neuro-economics, neuro-psychology, and so forth).

Lenz Taguchi (2016b) suggests that the neuro(n) be theorised as an event, where we think with *concept as method*. This entails thinking of neuro(n) as conceptual maps that attend to the vitalism of the (entangled) material forces that produce patterns of differences. Drawing on the PQR methods in carrier bag II and thinking with Lenz Taguchi, diffractive thinking time 2 threads the neuro(n) as conceptual method through chthonics to produce *neurochthonics*. What would be neurochthonic?

The neurochthonic becomes an event that invites us to think with its appendages and rhizomatic circuitries across spacetimematterings (see figure DTT 2B). Neurochthonics are saturated with the perplexities of putting posthumanist, philosophical enquiries to work with autistic children. But how does neurochthonic work?

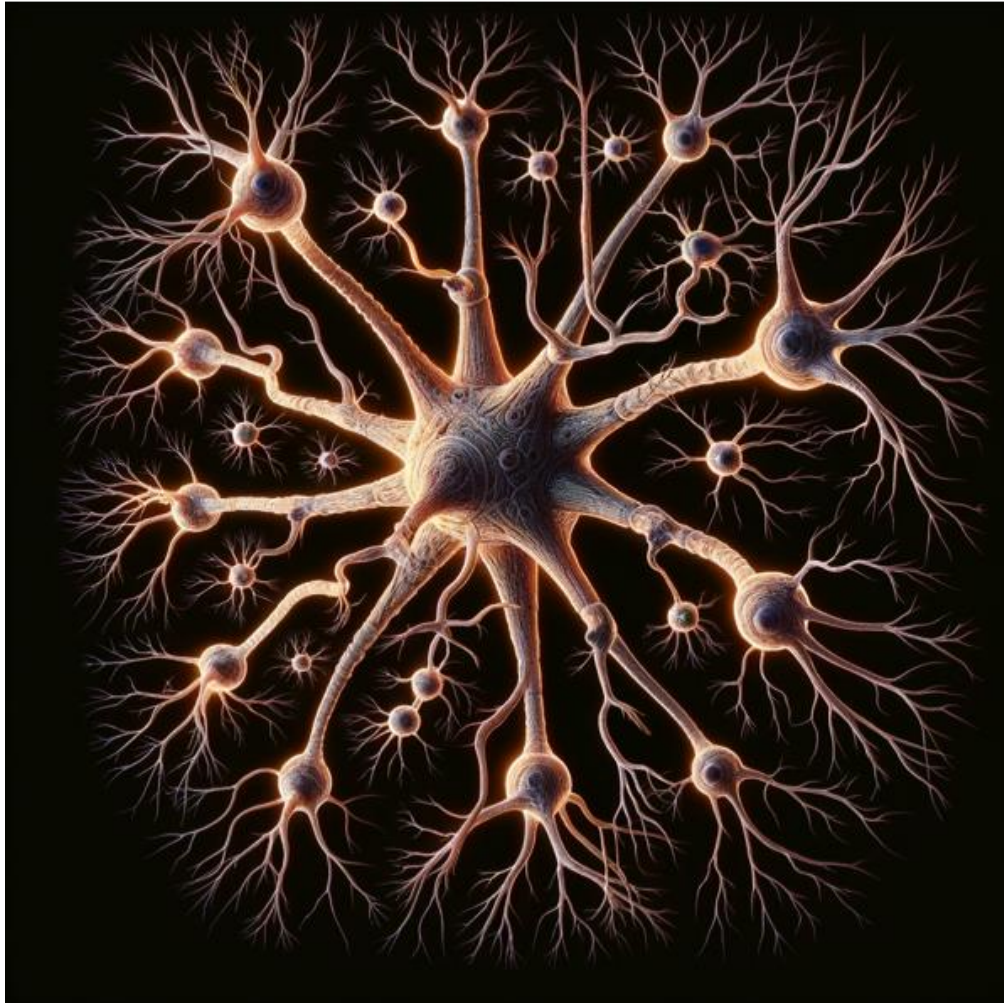


Figure DTT 2B. 'Neurochthonic' (Neurons in the Human Brain: Structure and Function, 2023)

Neurochthonics trouble the ontological underpinnings of thinking-impaired-mind-child. In this study, these critter-things re-visit(ed) the data, opening it up and re-turning things over in order to look for differences, which were propositions of data that sought to be known yet remained inconspicuous. Neurochthonics showed that the children's thoughts were neither absent, missing, impaired, punitive, nor immature. Instead, the children were experimenting with philosophy as practices of worldliness¹⁵⁶. It was not that they 'could not think dialogically' but rather that representational theories did not make place for concepts and thoughts which defied the boundaries of language. Not only did the children in this study re-enact ontological and epistemological possibilities in education, but they also challenged the very notion of anthronormativity. Neurochthonics constantly re-turn(ed) the enquiries. For instance, the neurochthonic queried the role of voicelessness in the

¹⁵⁶ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

production of knowledge by shifting attention from the voice-thought interface to the vitalist material entanglement of the ribcage, lungs, larynx, the vibrations of sound, airflow, articulations and the bodymind capacity to engage in communication and thought. While human dialogical skill is highly dependent on voice, articulation, communication and language, these abstractions are entangled with/in the materiality of body, air, bones, muscles and so forth. Under such circumstances, how was it possible to claim dialogical competency on the basis of the discursive only?

Thinking of data with neurochthonics requires what Le Guin (1989) refers to as the logic of attunement. This logic requires a leap of faith for it demands that we listen with and to the data. The appendages of the neurochthonic fold us into troubles and strange ways of be(com)ing with/in the world, most notably where thought is not bound to language only and neurons are more than just components of the human body. Haraway (2016) proposes that we engage in wily thinking patterns that work with/in creative uncertainty that engages “collective knowing and doing” (p. 34). The collective that Haraway refers to is about letting go of trust in oneself and rendering the material (in/non/more-than/human) capable to re-write themselves into thought and research practices.

Carrier Bag III

A Posthumanist Performative Approach To Philosophical
Enquiries With Autistic Child
The queen's croquet ground



Figure CB III. The Queen's Croquet Ground (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)

“How should I know?” asked Alice, somewhat surprised at her own courage. “It’s no business of *mine*.”

The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, began screaming “Off with her head! Off with - ”

“Nonsense!” said Alice, very loudly and decidedly, and the Queen was silent.

The King laid his hand upon her arm, and timidly said “Consider my dear: she is only a child!””

(Carroll, 2015, p 66)

Why does Alice’s retort provoke a silent response from the Queen?

What compels the King to dismiss Alice’s response?

What prejudices are levelled against Alice’s knowledge on account of being “only a child!”?

While carrier bag II of this study generated postqualitative research stories of human and more-than-human partnerships, carrier bag III is concerned with how P4wC might mitigate ontoepistemic injustices against autistic children despite social and communication challenges that might impede philosophical thinking. The carrier bag emerges with and through Dali’s rendition of The Queen’s Croquet Ground, which is the eighth chapter of Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015).

The Queen’s Croquet Ground marks Alice’s first encounter with the Queen of Hearts in Wonderland. Here Alice finds herself in the garden which she has sought out since her first glimpse of it in chapter 1 of the book. Yet upon entering the garden, Alice immediately observes the consequences of not carrying out instructions as ordained by the Queen. Carroll depicts this through Alice’s meeting with the three gardeners who are attempting to paint the flowers on a white rose tree red. Alice discovers that they have incorrectly carried out the Queen’s request for red roses, and fearing punishment, they aim to remedy the situation as best as possible. This scene is followed by a grandiose procession of guests, who by way of hierarchical importance, introduce the Queen of Hearts. Alice encounters the Queen as an authoritarian, rule-governed monarch with/in an established hierarchy and feared by her subjects. Her autocratic approach to governance is depicted by the phrase

“off with her or his head!” in response to any slight act of disobedience. The irony of the chapter is that the Queen quells the fantastical and imaginative bending of space, time and size, as well as impossible more-than-human experiences that characterise the story. For instance, the humanimal characters amount to little more than animate objects (the flamingos are the mallets and the hedgehogs are the balls in the game of croquet). The mysteriousness of the Cheshire Cat is violently disregarded on account of the King demanding its execution. Yet in contrast to the Queen’s subjects, Alice’s initial interaction with the Queen is marked by resistance to authority through indignant questioning, commands and phrases before being rendered passive, subservient and subjugated out of fear of losing her head. The chapter is a sobering reality check for Alice. It is the first time in the book where Alice is silenced. The threat of execution causes Alice to comply with the Queen’s orders. As a result, Alice refrains from sharing her thoughts not only because she is not listened to but also because her testimony might jeopardise her life.

In Dali’s illustration of the chapter there is no evidence of the game of croquet, the various characters engaged in the game, or the absurdity of hedgehogs as the croquet balls and flamingos as the mallets. Instead, Dali plays with size, shadows, the relatively vast, empty landscape, and texture. For instance, the king and queen have fish scales and appear quite large and domineering in relation to little Alice who is located at the queen’s foot (or fishtail). The lengthy shadows of the king and queen fill up the landscape and portray the figures in relatively accurate detail. In comparison, Alice’s shadow is minimalistic, jutting out at an angle from where the queen stands. In addition, her shadow does not encompass the full extent of her appearance. Her shadow reflects a portion of her body for it is evident that the shadow does not mimic the position and angle of her hair, and her body seems to be too thin in relation to her physical body. In addition, the king and queen are easily identified in detail through the playing cards attached to each body respectively, whereas Alice remains faceless and nameless. One way of reading this image is that the adult/child relation in both Dali’s artwork and Carroll’s *writing* suggest a power imbalance between adults and children, or an adult/child binary which postulates that child is the antithesis of adult (Burman et al., 2017). The binary positions the adult as mature, capable, independent, and capable of knowledge and reason whereas the child is immature, lacking and in need of

guidance to become adult (Murriss, 2016). As such child is not afforded the privilege of an epistemic subject, a worthy bearer of knowledge.

Now what is the relevance of *The Queen's Croquet Ground* in relation to the pending discussions on ontoepistemic injustice¹⁵⁷ with (autistic) child? Carroll's depiction of Alice, The Queen, her subjects and the gravity of insubordination is a caricature of the construction of child and childhood, notably in the Victorian era (see for example, Ren, 2015). For instance, the authority of adults over children is apparent from the fact that despite the fantasy, bending of space, time and size as well as impossible realities that take place in the book, Alice and Wonderland are constrained within pervasive (adult-dominated) laws, structures, governance, and social rules. There are also power imbalances between adults and other beings – evident from the manner in which children and animals (lesser beings) are portrayed throughout the chapter. What is most striking is Carroll's portrayal of silenced thoughts by way of retribution (beheading) for any act of disobedience, including following orders incorrectly, articulating an opinion, untoward comments directed at the Queen, or any other act that challenges the Queen's authority. Carroll draws attention to Alice's anxiety and her fear of incurring the wrath of the Queen. As a result, Alice refrains from sharing her thoughts, opinions, judgements and questions. Alice, in her capacity as knowledge-maker with/in the world, becomes silenced.

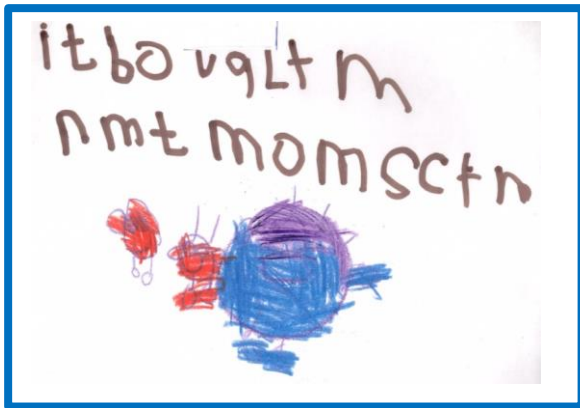
The Queen's Croquet Ground provokes us to re-consider contemporary (adult) discourses that influence child and childhood studies as well as learning spaces. Thinking with Alice's situatedness as (silent) knowledge-maker, carrier bag III of this study diffracts the concept of ontoepistemic injustice (Murriss, 2016) through the data gathered from philosophical enquiries with autistic children. Diffraction maps out patterns of differences, and like all the chapters in the study, the differences are woven together in a story of unexpected material-discursive partnerships. Guided by pointed questions, there are three stories that emerge with/in carrier bag III. Chapter 6 explores the role of dialogue in the CPE through the question "why do dialogical enquiry where there is no dialogue?". The writing seeks to

¹⁵⁷ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

affirm the ontoepistemic status of autistic child with more-than-human encounters, and in/visible moments which might have otherwise been excluded from 'what counts as dialogue'.

The second chapter in carrier bag III is guided by the notion of philosophical progress with the autistic learners. Attending to a posthumanist hauntology the chapter re-turns the first enquiry conducted with the children in order to explore how the concept of progress is disrupted when attending to the material-discursive diffractive patterns.

The eighth chapter of this study re-turns autistic child through Murriss's (2016) posthuman figuration of child. Drawing on Barad's (2015) work on the creative wanderings of materially charged matters, autistic child is (un)(re)constructed through a concept of datatext. This concept 'galvanises' autistic child as natureculture phenomenon that disrupts unilinear temporalities (such as development and progress) and emerges through messy entanglements with the more-than-human.



6

LINES OF QUARKS/QUIRKS **Un/dialogical encounters with/in the** **community of enquiry**

This chapter emerges with/in carrier bag III of this study and explores the role of dialogue in COEs¹⁵⁸ with autistic children. Outwardly, it would appear that children ‘without talk’¹⁵⁹ are unsuited for pedagogies that involve ‘talk’ since dialogue (mostly understood as reason through speech (Wegerif, 2020)) seems incongruous with the key aspects of autism¹⁶⁰. In this chapter, the ‘enigma’ of dialogical pedagogy with autistic children is diffracted through critical posthumanism, particularly Barad’s re-configuration of the material-discursive¹⁶¹. The title of the chapter Quarks/Quirks is an (my) affective response with/in¹⁶² the entanglement of thinking, dialogue and autism through each other. Quarks, phenomena of particle physics, are elementary particles of matter that re-combine to form the rich internal structure of protons, neutrons, and hadrons of atoms. Quirks are understood as odd, unusual or eccentric verbal-behavioural manifestations which might be casually associated with autism. However, as written with the forward slash, quarks/quirks cannot be separated out, always entangling, re-combining and re-configuring the other. The quarks are the quirks and quirks are the quarks. This chapter asks, how might quarks/quirks re-enact agential cuts¹⁶³ of simultaneous differentiating and entangling for autistic children through dialogical pedagogy? Let us re-turn¹⁶⁴ a vignette which has profoundly impacted my theorypractice as

¹⁵⁸ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹⁵⁹ Neil Mercer (2008) uses ‘talk’ to indicate the articulatory/speech aspect of dialogical teaching.

¹⁶⁰ Please see entry on autism in the Glossary of terms.

¹⁶¹ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹⁶² Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹⁶³ Please refer to the Glossary of terms.

¹⁶⁴ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

SLT/P4wC¹⁶⁵ practitioner.

6.1. 'Why do dialogical pedagogy if there is no dialogue?'

Madrid, Spain 2017. It is the 18th biennial ICPIC¹⁶⁶ conference. The conference theme is *Philosophical Inquiry with Children Coming of Age: Family resemblances*. I am presenting work from my doctoral research. The title of my presentation is *Facilitation As A Material-Discursive Practice: Thinking With Children With Language And Communication Impairment*. At the end of the presentation, and during the Q&A, a colleague asks me the following question about facilitating philosophical enquiries with autistic children: 'Why do dialogical¹⁶⁷ pedagogy if there is no dialogue?'

Diffraction through this question, the question is literally opened up. With temporal diffraction – unlike reflection – the past is not closed. Words are not only discursive but also material. Let's walk around in the question. What flashes up (Barad, 2017a) is the quintessential (ableist) logic that underpins assumptions about communicatively impaired children in educational settings. Questions re-turn:

- How is dialogue theorypractice(d)? What counts as dialogue and who decides?
- Why is it that communication tends to be seen only/mainly as through words and gestures? Who/what is included and excluded?
- Can more-than-humans (animals, plants, thoughts, emotions) dialogue?
- What are the dialogical difficulties for children with autism? Who/what else is subject to dialogical difficulties?
- Are there scalable differences between dialogical skill and logical thinking for children with autism? Do these differences matter?
- What are the ontoepistemic injustices that prevail for children included/excluded from dialogical pedagogy on the basis of ability and competence?
- How does a material-discursive approach matter in dialogical spaces?

¹⁶⁵ Please refer to the Writing conventions.

¹⁶⁶ ICPIC is the acronym for the International Community of Philosophical Inquiry with Children.

¹⁶⁷ Dialogue in this instance is understood from the Lipman-Sharp tradition of P4C.

The questions keep cascading with each re-turning (Juelskjaer et al., 2021). Thinking together about some of these questions during research supervision, Karin made the following comment in response to my writing:

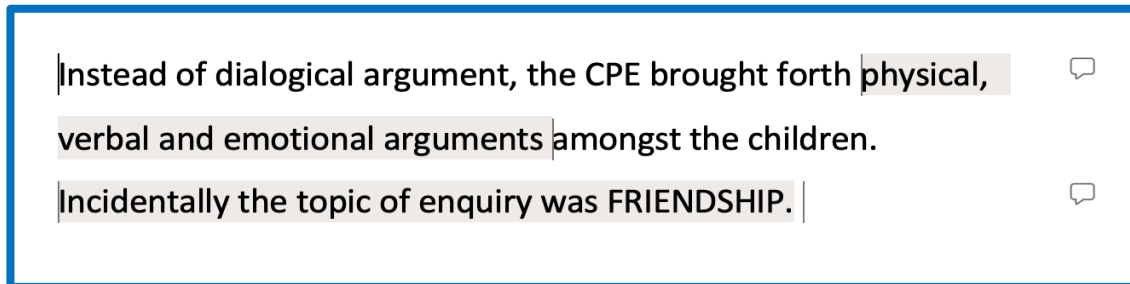


Figure 6.1. Screenshot of my writing during supervision

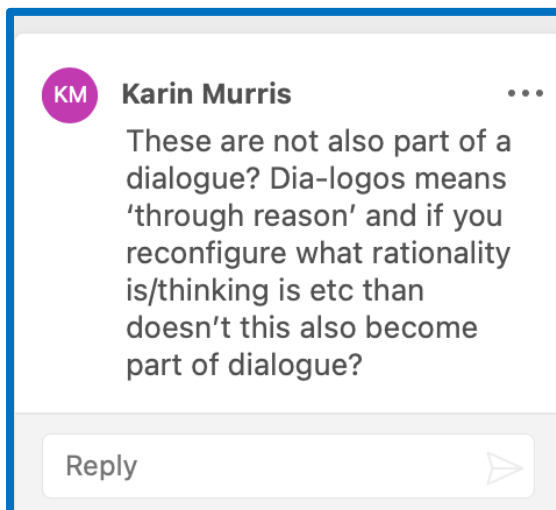


Figure 6.2. Screenshot of Karin's response to my writing

Karin was referring to what appeared to be a binary in the (my) writing between dialogical argument versus physical, emotional, and verbal arguments, as well as how to work through the binary in order to re-configure rationality. The process of disrupting the binary called into question the human-centric nature of dialogue, especially the dialogical human as knowledge-maker. For Davies and Renshaw (2020), anthropocentric theories of the human-dialogue interface continue to foreground human exceptionalism in knowledge-making practices. Such theories and practices have been criticised for inciting discrimination amongst humans themselves. For instance, Braidotti (2013) illustrates the dangers of

anthropocentric theories by illustrating how Da Vinci's Vitruvian man,¹⁶⁸ an iconic representation of the prototype human, established categories of 'otherness'. Of relevance to this study is how communicatively and intellectually differently abled individuals are 'measured' on the basis of rationality and reason, skills considered to be amongst the most valuable of all human criteria in distinguishing humans from 'lesser' species¹⁶⁹. Humanism positions the (human) cerebral communicator as an agent who constantly strives to better rationality, a concept that is pervasive in education (see for example, Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Yet, even with/in Humanism, dialogical humans are ranked according to universally accepted ideals of critical reasoning and self-reflective practices. Hejnlol (2017, p. G88) explains the stratification of human discursive and mental skills by way of the illusory thinking ladder, a metaphor which depicts thinking as discrete points (rungs) that ascend from concrete to abstract. This grading of thinking can be traced back to the Aristotelian "Scala Naturae" or Great Chain of Being, and Darwinism. Both are evolutionary processes which characterise thinking as a correlation between the level of neural complexity, and the capacity for controlling the body, in relation to the environment. The rational human subject appears at the pinnacle of the thinking ladder while 'simple' organisms (with 'less evolved' mental functions) feature lower down on the hierarchy. And as will be discussed through the figurations of child in chapter 8, children have long been positioned at the bottom of the ladder on account of under-development (or lack) in all spheres that pertain to the rational (read: adult) human. Of course, autistic child presents as a greater anomaly of child given the authority of interventions that aim to 'fix' dis/abilities. But if we are to re-configure rationality and explore the dialogical pedagogy/autism intra-space, then we need to attend to the apparatus of measurement, which in this instance is the dialogical pedagogy of the CPE. It is when we pay attention to the entanglements that re-produce dialogue that it becomes possible to trouble human exceptionalism. Let us begin with

¹⁶⁸ Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing is based on the work of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius Pollio in Book III of his treatise *De Architectura*. It depicts the ideal proportions and workings of human on the basis of biological capabilities, discursive and intellectual capacities, as well as moral and spiritual values. However, the work has been critiqued by feminist posthuman scholars (see Braidotti, 2013) for essentialising the ideal human as white, male, heterosexual, and able-bodied. This configuration of human has led to individual, social, and cultural prejudices as well as injustices against people who did/could not meet the criteria for 'human' inclusion. The excluded or 'othered' are/were women, children, dis/abled, gender and sexually different people.

¹⁶⁹ Haraway's work on cyborgs and companion species manifesto are amongst the important works in feminist scholarship which disprove the privilege of human exceptionalism.

dialogue as theorised in the Lipman-Sharp¹⁷⁰ tradition of philosophical enquiry.

6.2. Dialogue with/in the CPE

In education, dialogue is theorised as an interactive, social approach to pedagogy, teaching, and learning practices that incorporates the shared transmission of knowledge and understanding amongst teachers and learners (Wegerif et al., 2020, p. 1). Rooted in the conventions of oral education, dialogical education¹⁷¹ is traced back to Socrates, often described as an oral thinker who taught by dialoguing through open-ended questions. Incidentally, Socratic dialogue is highly influential in P4wC. In contemporary education practices, dialogue is increasingly valued for the acquisition of higher-level thinking and forging of interdisciplinary social connections which are considered essential to nurturing (human) democratic citizenship and well-being. Yet, despite the favourable pedagogical intentions, the concept of dialogue in education can be dangerously deceptive given the theoretical tensions in the field (Wegerif, 2020). For example, some scholars consider dialogic education to refer to pedagogy whereas others associate dialogue with issues of identity. Or as posthumanist scholars propose, the creativity of dialogue transcends the limits of language to include the material and relations between humans and more-than-humans (Davies & Renshaw, 2020).

Insofar as autism is concerned, dialogical pedagogy with autistic individuals is increasingly favoured in education due to the role of language and social interaction (Conn et al., 2018). Davies and Renshaw (2020) write that dialogue with communicatively dis/abled persons opens up productive spaces for re-thinking dialogical theory beyond the human, albeit that such research receives insufficient attention. With reference to the P4wC literature, there have been positive outcomes documented insofar as the cognitive, communicative, emotional, intellectual, and social profiles of autistic children who participate and engage in dialogical pedagogy (Cassidy et al., 2018; Gardelli et al., 2023; Garwood, 2023; Lukey, 2004; Nouri & Philgren, 2018; Trigo Clapés, 2022). Yet despite the encouraging findings, there are

¹⁷⁰ Please refer to the Glossary of terms and chapter 1 for further discussion.

¹⁷¹ See Wegerif (2020) for an in-depth account of the history and theoretical differences in the field of dialogic education.

aspects of the research that require careful attention. For example, all of the studies conducted included autistic children who were either verbal (had intact language and communication skills) or attended mainstream schools (indicating an absence of notable learning challenges). What the research seems to suggest is that the integrity and robustness of dialogical pedagogy is reserved for autistic children with specific cognitive-linguistic profiles of dis/ability. In this instance, it might be that the literature on autism and dialogue unwittingly re-inscribes a competent/idiot figuration of child¹⁷². A further concern pertaining to dialogue and autism arises from my clinical experience as SLT. I have found that the relatively versatile nature of dialogue is often confused with social skills training programmes¹⁷³. The conventions of (Cartesian) disciplinary boundaries not only make it difficult to track the goals of education versus therapy but also raise tensions that call into question the pedagogical and therapeutic interventions that take place in learning settings.

With regard to P4wC, while Lipman and Sharp have acknowledged the oral roots of dialogue, they have explicitly stated that the dialogical pedagogy of P4wC is rooted in philosophy and that the role of language is to facilitate the process of philosophical thinking. In fact, Lipman (2003, 1991) writes that dialogue is the bridge between the thought (inner speech) and verbal expression, and the means through which thought is demystified and ordered. Essentially, dialogue is the mechanism through which the refining of critical thinking (reasoning and logic) is actualised, and outer dialogue is refined into thought. Lipman (1994) argues that the role of logic is primary to language acquisition, and that there are clear demarcations between dialogue and conversation. The key difference is that dialogue is marked by a strong logical thread whereas conversation is not.

So how does the philosophical approach to dialogical enquiry work with/in communities of autistic children? Let us re-turn the data.

¹⁷² See chapter 8 of this study.

¹⁷³ Social skills training refers to therapeutic approaches that aim to improve the social/interpersonal skills of children with social-communication difficulties. It is usually led by professionals skilled in Applied Behavioural Analysis, SLT or other professionals with experience in developmental dis/abilities. The training targets verbal and non-verbal behaviour and takes place in group settings so that individuals can practise these skills with each other.

6.3. The story of the monsters

Thursday 7:30 am

It is a chilly Thursday morning in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, and I am headed to the two learning centres (centres A and B) for our weekly one-hour philosophical enquiries. Autumn is setting in. The news blares on the radio as my car weaves through the morning traffic trying to outmanoeuvre the minibus taxis which skip intersections, and load-unload passengers along the roadside at whim. Glancing at the clock on the dashboard, I wonder if I will be on time, as there is a new provocation¹⁷⁴ up for discussion. At centre A, the philosophical enquiries – which the children refer to as ‘Philosophy Club’ – takes place at 8 am. The ‘Reading Friends Club’ is scheduled for 9:30 am at centre B.

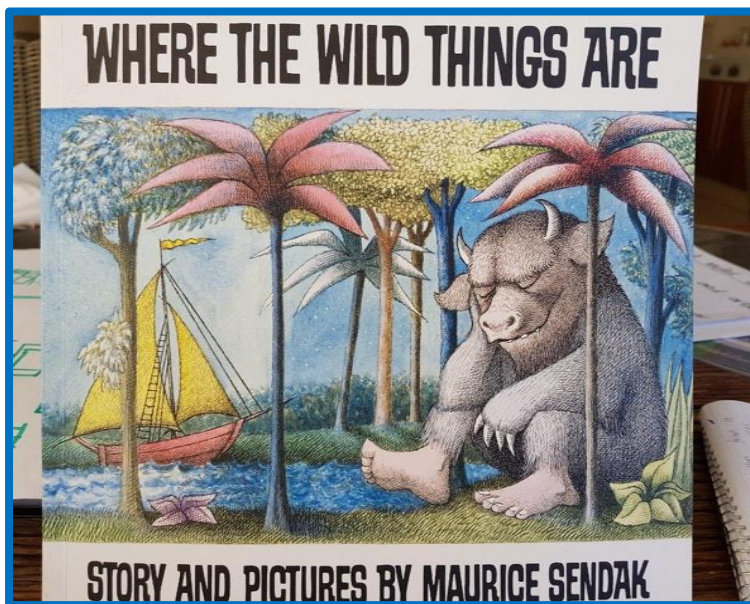


Figure 6.3. *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak (2015)

Today’s philosophical enquiry is about monsters and Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things are* (2015) is the provocation for the enquiry. The book is about Max, a boy who gets into trouble with his mother for being mischievous. He is sent to bed without having had his supper.

However, once in his room, Max embarks on a remarkable voyage to an island where the wild things are. Despite their scary appearances and intimidating tactics, Max subjugates the wild things with a magic trick and becomes their leader. Max enjoys a ‘wild rumpus’ with the

¹⁷⁴ In P4wC, a provocation or stimulus is anything (such as object, image, books, thought, phrase/quote) that initiates philosophical thinking amongst the community of enquirers. The provocation/stimulus is usually introduced by the facilitator on account of the range of philosophical concepts and discussion that might be generated.

wild things and then decides that he is lonely, hungry and needs to go home. The book ends with Max in his bedroom with his hot supper waiting for him. The book sparked interest in our last enquiries, on account of the image on the front cover: a creature with horns, frightening eyes, razor-sharp claws, and menacing smiles. A monster. Furthermore, *Where the Wild Things Are* is considered to be a quality picture book in P4wC on account of the opportunities for philosophical thinking that might be raised by a community of enquirers (Haynes & Murriss, 2012).

As I pull into the parking space at centre A, I wonder how the enquiries will unfold. The lesson plan in figure 6.4 illustrates possible strategies and materials to entice participation in the CPE, and dialogical engagement. The ideas in said lesson plan are inspired by Stanley's (2012) philosophical play approach to P4wC. Drawing on Lenz Taguchi (2010), Stanley and Lyle, (2017, p. 53) write

What we call 'philosophy by children' differs from mainstream P4C in that the philosophical is generated by children in play, in their conversation and in their intra-active relationships with people, all living organisms and the material environment.

Stanley (2012) theorises play as an opportunity where curiosity, imagination, and meaning making connect to produce worldly creativity. Through play, children live out stories that are co-created. They re-test theories of the world with/in human and more-than-human entanglements. I would later be struck by Stanley and Sue Lyle (2017, p.53) who state that in a community of enquiry "children's interests include the unknown, the unseen, the mysterious, the challenging, the puzzling, the possible and the impossible". The openness of enquiry, child, and more-than-human call for a position of epistemic humility on the part of the practitioner.

As I lug a clear storage box filled with materials for the enquiry from the boot of my car, I wonder about the human and more-than-human engagement in today's enquiry. Posthumanist scholars in early childhood studies (see Taylor, 2016, for more detail) remind us that knowledge, agency, and meaning making are mutual, ongoing configurations of human and more-than-human relations. The plan depicted in figure 6.4 is a part of the P4wC

apparatus that continues to (un)(re)fold from when it was typed up on my laptop, printed out on the day of the enquiry, and theorised in the here-now of this chapter .

Sumaya Babamia
P4C sessional planning

Book: Where the wild things are (Maurice Sendak)

1. Philosophical questions

a. *Criteria for questions*

b. Some questions to think about:

- i. Is it ok to be bad?
- i. Different identities (e.g. wolf versus boy)
- ii. Was the punishment (no dinner) justified?
- iii. How do we know what is real and what is imagination/fantasy? What is the difference?
- iv. What makes a good leader?
- v. Is a rumpus good or bad? Should we have rules?
- vi. Can a king be lonely or scared?
- vii. Why does a wild thing need love?
- viii. Is it ok to love someone in a hurtful way?
- ix. Can you be beautiful and ugly at the same time?

2. Concepts

- a. Justice
- b. Fairness
- c. Leadership
- d. Freedom
- e. Friendship
- f. Order
- g. Tame
- h. Wild
- i. Magic
- j. Real

3. Activities

- a. Who should be a leader and why? Figurines
- b. Bring in a crown – who will be the leader?
- c. Voting for a character (lion, monkey, elephant)
- d. Create an island - with no rules? What will we do?
- e. Creating masks – beautiful and ugly
- f. Different foods – what would monsters eat? Creating dishes/drinks? Healthy diet for monsters – vitamins etc? or would monsters need horrible food to become horrible?
- g. Freedom – come to school as anything you want to be
- h. Document a narrative – philosophy bag with items

4. Session 1

Materials: monster figurines, paper, pens, book, den/tent for story telling, story spying book, envelopes for consent forms (A4), concept cards.

Figure 6.4. The lesson plan as an apparatus for philosophical enquiries

6.4. Event 1: A (monstrous) fight

7:50 am at centre A

Re-turning the COE as philosophical wanderer (see chapter 5), the (nomadic) enquiry here takes place with/in the library at centre A. The library is a rectangular room situated on the north-eastern side of the building and is one of the many spaces of a house which has been renovated (and rezoned) for educational purposes. Previously, it might have been an undercover patio, storage facility, or an extension of what was once the living area of the house. Although the staff and children refer to the space as ‘the library’, it is rarely used as such. The configuration of the room makes it difficult to accommodate shelving or bookcases to hold books, and comfortable seating arrangements.



Figure 6.5. The material-discursive configuration of the library during a philosophical enquiry



Figure 6.6. Human and more-than-human bodies with/in the library space

Figures 6.5. and 6.6 show the physical dimensions for human and more-than-human engagement with/in the library. The camera was positioned at the lower end of the room and shows a large window on the top left corner of the room that looks out onto a passageway that connects the different classrooms. Adjacent to the window is a glass door which the children usually use to enter and leave the space. On the right wall, there is a small, eye level window that slides open. On the opposite wall, slightly diagonal to the small window, is a stone-cladded structure that juts out into the library space. There are some low bookshelves along the wall at the lower end of the room, along with random wall hooks, and cushions. These materials are positioned behind the camera.

The library has a round wooden table with four slender aluminium legs, and a cut-out in the centre which accommodates a blue bowl. In figures 6.5 and 6.6, the table is surrounded by mini chairs: plastic chairs of different colours as well as two white wooden chairs. A cushion is positioned upright along one of the table legs. Human bodies sometimes fit awkwardly into the chairs, and often, the children rearrange seating and standing arrangements. On many occasions the proximity of the chairs, cushion, table, and human bodies cannot sustain a circle for communities of enquiry.



Figure 6.7. The table asking questions of the drawings



Figure 6.8. The material-discursive blue bowl

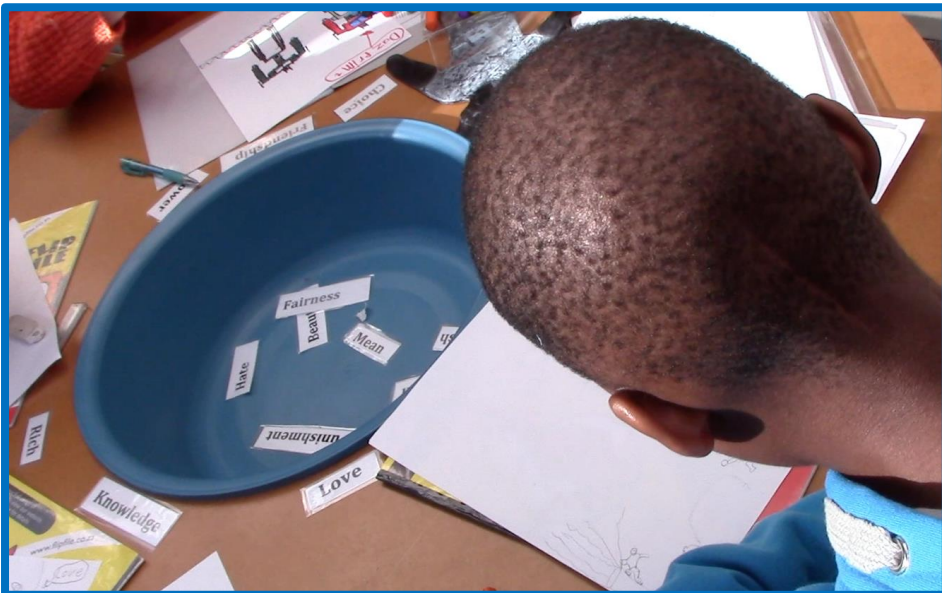


Figure 6.9. Thinking with/in the blue bowl

In figures 6.7, 6.8, and 6.9, the table is most suitable for activities such as drawing, writing, and working with art materials such as playdough. The bowl in the centre of the table can be removed, creating a donut shape in the table. The bowl 'holds' ideas, thoughts, crayons, concept cards, chalk, pictures, votes, toilet paper, and objects (e.g., figurines, beads, bits of paper, and string). Like a porous carrier bag, the bowl creates unexpected partnerships amongst objects.

8:05 am at centre A

The other members of the community of enquirers trickle into the library. They notice and comment on the camera that participates in the enquiry.



Figure 6.10. The camera notices the children entering the library space from the door at the lower end of the room

The room is hot. The small window is opened as far as possible, and jackets and sweaters are removed despite the crisp morning air.



Figure 6.11. The sweater struggles to get over Mario Rohito's head

Nic Cage¹⁷⁵ swings his jacket around and hangs it over a piece of rope suspended above the table. It stays there until the table becomes the focal point of the enquiry.



Figure 6.12. Nic Cage's jacket is central in the enquiry

The camera catches the blur of the movement as Springtrap. Fnaf 3's jacket swings into the recording frame (figure 6.13). Holding his jacket in his hand, he purposefully waves it in front of the camera before hanging it on the wall hook behind the camera.

Springtrap. Fnaf 3 reminds us that we need to sign some forms. He is referring to the assent forms which the community enquirers need to complete for purposes of acquiring ethical clearance for the collection of data for this study. I thank him for the reminder and ask the children to take a few minutes to complete the forms before we read the book. Ethical consent is materially and discursively entangled with/in the data.

¹⁷⁵ The anonymity of the children is protected by names which they have chosen for purposes of this study only. The following names may feature in this chapter: Barney, Avatar, Chase, Hulk, Tony Stark, Thomas the Engine, Ben 10, Nic Cage, Gun Nut, Sonic (Diego Costa), Mario Rohito, Rafar Nadar (Michael Jackson), Foxy Fnaf 1234, Springtrap. Fnaf 3

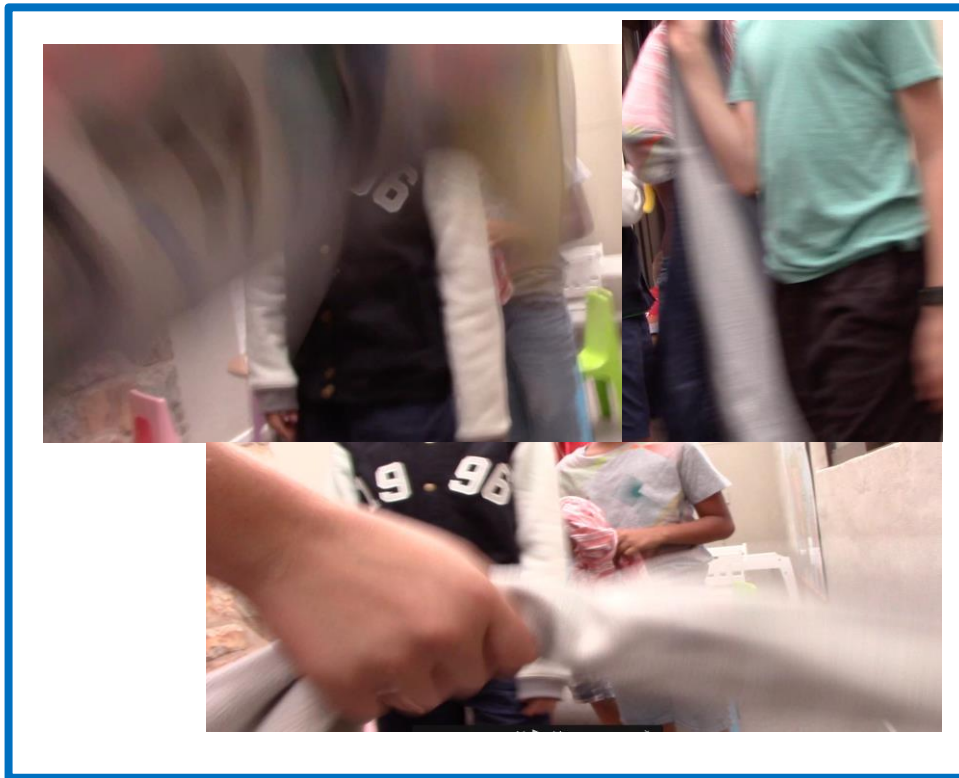




Figure 6.13. Springtrap. Fnaf 3's jacket in the camera frame

Sumaya Babamia
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (child)

Assent
Date: 2016-03-10

My name is _____

I don't want to be in Sumaya's book	I want to be in Sumaya's book
 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>

A picture of me (signature):




Figure 6.14. Gun Nut assent form

Figure 6.14 indicates Gun Nut's assent form with his illustration Foxy Fnaf 1234. Springtrap. Fnaf 3 draws our attention to the drawing, and we all stare at the drawing in shock. Gun Knut has drawn himself shooting Foxy Fnaf 1234 with an automatic rifle. In the drawing, Foxy Fnaf 1234 lies on the ground riddled with bullets. As Gun Nut finishes his drawing, I notice that he has ticked the box with the stop sign. I am curious and ask what prompted his decision. He looks down quickly at the form and tells me that he does want to be in the study. He goes on to explain that he was concentrating on the drawing and mistakenly ticked the wrong box. I ask him to please rectify if this is the case. He agrees. However, he is distracted by the dissent that arises from his drawing.

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: It is not right to kill people. Even if it's not in real life.

Gun Knut: It is my page, and I am allowed to write whatever I want to

Foxy Fnaf 1234 is silent. With hands tightly fisted, his breathing increases rapidly and his jaw clenches. Some laughter, taunting and silences fill the room. Sonic and Hunter crowd around the drawing. They appear to be horrified and shocked.

Gun Nut:this is my revenge for what happened last year. For how Foxy Fnaf 1234 betrayed me!

Foxy Fnaf 1234 punches the table and kicks the bowl out from the centre of the table. Mario Rohito's ruler flies in the air and shatters against the stone-cladded structure in the room.

Mario Rohito: Hey!!! You guys just broke my ruler! It's all your fault Gun Nut and Foxy Fnaf 1234!

Gun Nut: Shaddup!

There is tension in the room. A jacket buries Ben 10's face. Springtrap. Fnaf 3 covers his ears with his hands, and Sonic stands up and walks about restlessly in the small space. Writing and re-writing how I describe this event is significant for untraining habitual research practices (see chapter 3). How can researchers start writing without the inner/outer binary, without already assuming children's intentionality. It appears im/possible.

We will now call the first witness!

Mario Rohito: (giggles)
Are we allowed to do this and that and the other there?

Gun Nut: I'll go first. So last week he called me a hobo.
And he did the same thing to me last year.

Foxy Fnaf 1234: I didn't!

Gun Nut: Traitor!!!

Sonic Diego Costa: Gun Nut punishes too early and can't take a joke.

Gun Nut: I can't take a joke and that's just a problem of me ok? He makes fun of me, and I will destroy him.

Foxy Fnaf 1234: (grinding his teeth and breathes loudly and rapidly)
When my temper is snapped, I snap like a stick.

Nic Cage: Thank you Gun Nut. Our next witness is ...

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: I will go next. See the problem with bullying is that ... it's that ... its partly ... actually just words and the other part is called kineticet.

Nic Cage: What? What's that?

Gun Nut: (Stands up and gets in Springtrap. Fnaf 3's face)
So now you're calling me a bully?

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: (responds to Nic Cage) It's something my younger brother says. But I don't really listen to him, and he doesn't listen to me.

(turns to Gun Nut)

Yes, you are being a bully.

Nic Cage: A bully takes your lunch.

Mario Rohito: Or he is someone who wants to take his sweets ... and his friends.

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: (speaks to Gun Nut)
Then why did you draw a picture of you shooting Foxy Fnaf 1234 with a gun? And with so many bullets?

Gun Nut: Because a king has to be powerful. He has to have the most powerful laser gun ever.

Sumaya: So, being a king is about power, and power is about weapons?

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: That's wrong and bad.

Sumaya: Well, that's Gun Nut's perspective, his thoughts. What matters is that we respect his thoughts but also discuss how his thoughts are respectful to everyone here.

Ben 10: Doesn't matter if he can't take a joke. What matters is if they do the right thing.

Nic Cage: Ha-ha! Gun Nut has a thought.

Gun Nut remains angry, the space is tense. We forget about correcting the assent form.

6.5. Event 2: Be(com)ing monsters

Thursday, 9:35 am – centre B

The second philosophical enquiry of the morning takes place at centre B. The children at centre B refer to the enquiries as the Reading Friends Club, named for the books we read. *Where the Wild Things Are* is introduced with a crown. In the story, Max becomes king of the monsters by staring into their yellow eyes without blinking once. This ‘magic trick’ frightens the monsters and makes Max the scariest of all of them.



Figure 6.15. The yellow crown



Figure 6.16. Max with his crown and sceptre

For the philosophical enquiry, I have made a crown out of yellow cardboard with pointed tips (see figure 6.15). The colour and style of the crown are inspired by Max’s gold crown in the book (see figure 6.16). Red squares are added in the pointed tips of the crown, a reminder of the monsters’ red eyes. Instead of claws, I add in inked fingerprints. Red and blue spirals of glitter signify the forest.

As I make the crown, I wonder how it might guide the enquiry. Would enquirers want to create their own? Perhaps they would all want to be kings? How would they change the

(current) crown? What will they do if the crown doesn't fit on all heads? Whose head matters when crowned king?



Figure 6.17. Intra-acting with the crown

The images in figure 6.17 show the crown positioned on the table and how it is moved into different positions. Hands touch the crown, passing it around and placing it on top of various heads. The crown moves in and out of the enquiry space, as do the other bodies – the bodies of the human enquirers. Chair legs scrape as bodies twist and hands reach out for the crown. Hands and heads engage in a balancing act to accommodate the size and shape of the crown. The children enter, leave, and shuffle around in the enquiry. They walk around and sit in each other's chairs. Peek-a-boo games are played. Hands touch other heads. I bring out the book from my portable storage box of P4wC materials. The book is introduced to the community. Bodyminds listen as I read out the story. Heads rest on arms, and some of the mouths yawn. Eyes droop. Two bodyminds concentrate with open mouths, and saliva drools down faces and onto arms and the surface of the table.

As the story ends, some questions and comments are spoken:

- Why did he get punished? Why did his mom not want to give him dinner?
- He should have stayed on the island ... because it's more fun...
- How come he was King, and he was sad?
- He was small, and he could fight?!

The image on the cover re-turns the book; the horns and physical size of the wild things (aka the monsters), the brute strength, red eyes and 'growling of their terrible growls'. Bodies shift in chairs, legs and arms twisting as they turn to each other. Voices growl and hands claw the air as they become monsters. Imitating, modifying and re-inventing growl-gesture patterns. A competition erupts quite spontaneously: who is the best monster? Who should win and be like Max? Who should be in charge of all the other monsters in this group? Who should be the king of the monsters?

The community of enquirers favour the question 'Who should be king of the monsters?' and explore the question by creating playdough monsters. I bring out different colours of playdough. The cool, smooth texture and tangy scent of the playdough re-minds me of making the dough in my kitchen together with my children. We mix flour, salt and water,

and contemplate various colours available such as blue, pink, red, yellow and green. My children ask: “Mom, can we have it once you are done with therapy?”



Figure 6.18. Creating shapes in the monster



Figure 6.19. Fingers resting on the monster

Fingers press into it, and the playdough re-acts by sticking into and sometimes under fingernails. What's left of the playdough becomes a new creation – intermingling with all sorts of micro-organisms which lurked in the grooves of fingerprints. Fingers continue to roll and stretch, playdough becomes activated. Hands warm up.

The playdough is smooth and 'roll-able'. It is cold. The children roll out the different coloured playdough onto the smooth wood-veneered boardroom table. The surface of the table enables fingers to stretch the playdough to a point of thinness, where 'holes' begin to emerge. The children re-create monsters. Monsters re-create children.



Figure 6.20. Playdough monster 1



Figure 6.21. Playdough monster 2

10:40 am

The (clock) time for our enquiry is over for today. Each monster is photographed before the children pack them away. Hands hurriedly shove the monsters into containers, squishing them and distorting their shapes. A dark blue playdough monster is packed away into an empty 1kg yoghurt tub – Parmalat¹⁷⁶ double cream plain yoghurt. The tub is sterile, yet it smells of plastic and lemon scented dishwashing fluid. But the lid is not closed properly, and air gets in which causes the playdough to dry out. The monster hardens and white salt crystals appear.

¹⁷⁶ Parmalat is a brand of yoghurt in South Africa.

Another mid-morning Thursday enquiry at centre B

9:15 am



Figure 6.22. The 'rotten' monster that died

The yoghurt tub is opened, and quizzical eyes peer down at the playdough. Contorted faces. EEEWWW! This one's rotten!!

The yellow crown sits on the table alongside the photographs of the monsters (see for example figures 6.19, 6.20, and 6.21). Barney, Thomas the Engine, Tony Stark, and Chase peer at the photos of the monsters which have been printed out.

I ask the question 'Who will be King?'

I observe the children, noticing that they appear to be confused for they don't seem to know how to proceed. They stall and hesitate. Bodies turn to each other, teasing gently, laying hands on tops of heads. The enquirers walk around the room or wander off into the kitchen. They lean heavily on arms and the table surfaces. Perhaps they are unsure about what is expected from them. Re-turning to figure 6.4, I wonder how the questions,

concepts, and activities proposed in the sessional planning document diffracts with our current moment in time.

The dark blue playdough lies on its own. The children are curious but say little –again, no one is quite sure how to proceed. Two small hands cautiously approach the ‘rotten’ playdough, seemingly re-memembering the monster. Avatar re-memembers a book called MUNCH, which we read in a previous enquiry. Munch loved to eat toast and jam. When a mysterious monster villain threatened his favourite treat, MUNCH lost his temper and ate the villain!

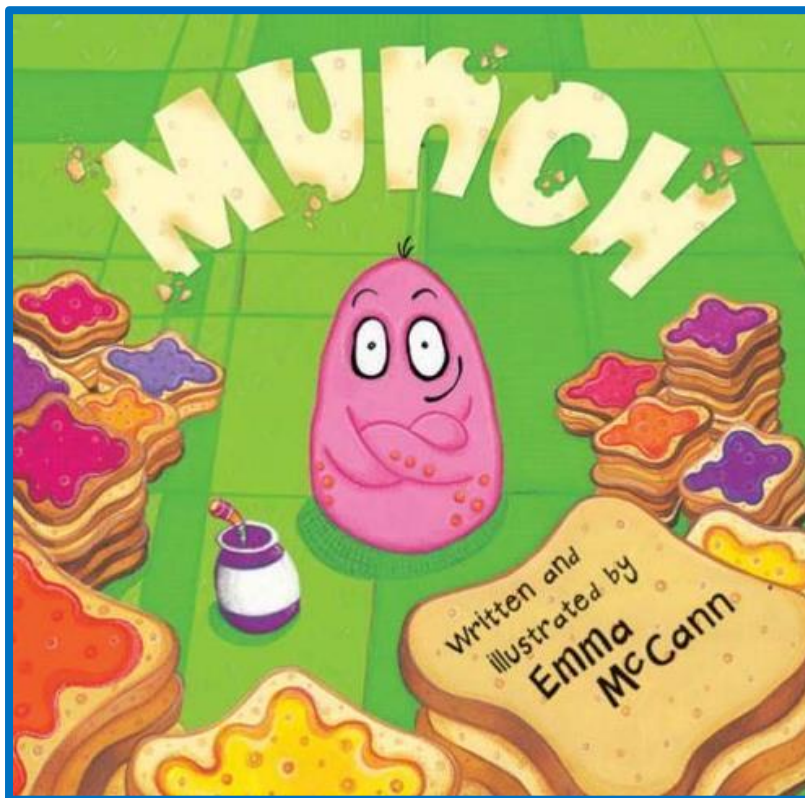


Figure 6.23. *Munch* by Emma McCann (2006)

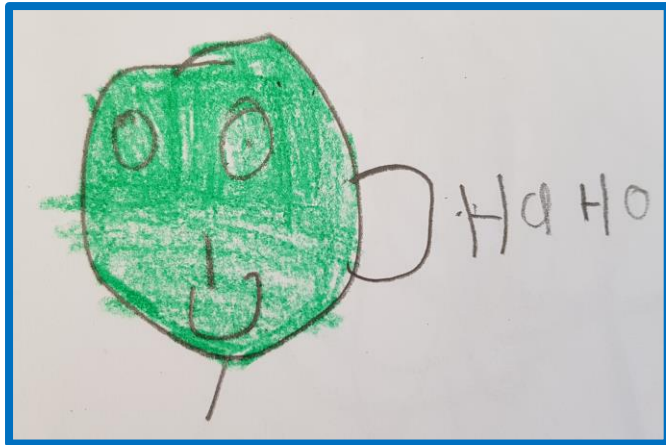


Figure 6.24. Hulk's drawing of *Munch*



Figure 6.25 Avatar's drawing of *Munch*

I wondered where the 'philosophy' in these enquiries resided, and in my diffractive journaling I ask the following questions:

- Would these encounters be considered as dialogical?
- How are/ could these moments be considered philosophical?
- What is it to think outside of language?
- How does the material-discursive matter in thinking with thinking?
- Does the data disrupt the conventions of dialogical pedagogy? If so, how?

6.6. Re-turning the data

The data is a story about a philosophical provocation, Maurice Sendak's (2015) picturebook *Where the Wild Things Are*, introduced to two CPE's that took place at centres A and B. The data-story began with my drive to the schools, and materials encountered en route. The book was entangled with (my) anticipation of the children's responses, the weather, the box of stationery accompanying me, the camera for recording, the physical setting, the children's playfulness and bodily reactions to the temperature and spaces in the room, the argument, consent forms, playdough, (human) bodies that twisted around the table and chairs, heads that wore the crown, mouths that drooled, fingers that rolled, pinched and squished playdough, Emma McCann's (2006) *Munch*, and the photographs of the playdough monsters. Thoughts were spoken and silenced. Articulations were purposeful and random. Evidence of oral language for transcription was erratic. Social communication was rich with affect that permeated the enquiry space. How do we understand dialogue from this data? How do we re-configure rationality?

6.7. A P4wC perspective of dialoguing with data

In my attempt to theorise the data from the P4wC approach to dialogical enquiry, a friend joked that perhaps the data analysis should take the form of a draw-a-logue instead of dialogue. Essentially she proposed that since there was insufficient dialogue to analyse the outcomes of philosophical progress with/in the group, it might be a better idea to look at other forms of representation such as the children's drawings and other artwork. The suggestion was helpful, though (un/intentionally) re-iterated the systems of representation (language and semiotics) that dominate our thinking practices and perceptions of knowledge-making.

The representational philosophy underpins how thinking is constructed in P4wC. This is evident throughout Lipman's writing about the nature of thinking and its relation with the world (see in particular Lipman, 2003, 1991). Insofar as dialogue is concerned, Lipman (2003, p. 150) writes that "thinking is an epistemic movement of mental acts that takes place through dialogue". He defines mental acts as "actions or performances such as questioning, challenging, explaining, discriminating, collaborating, accepting, listening, respecting, comparing, clarifying, differentiating, justifying, inferring, and judging" (Lipman, 2003, p. 151). These acts are refined through "mental moves (philosophical techniques) such as offering arguments, requesting definitions, making inferences, identifying assumptions, seeking clarification of concepts, engaging with the perspective of others in a respectful manner, building on ideas, and supporting claims with evidence" (Lipman, 2003, pp. 150-151).

What can be inferred from Lipman's conception of thinking is that 'evidence' should take the form of philosophical encounters that represent the presence and performance of mental moves. With reference to the data, possibly the best example of dialogue is the fight that takes place amongst the children in event a). The fight is initiated by Gun Nut's drawing (where he is shooting Foxy Fnaf 1234 with an automatic rifle). There is a deeply personal element to the drawing, which sparks controversy and argument amongst the community. The spontaneous role playing of court is remarkable given the sense of personal injustice felt by both Gun Nut and Foxy Fnaf 1234. The event and the dialogue are goal-directed as the community works towards resolution of the conflict. There are also elements of instability and dis/equilibrium. For example, there is argument and counter argument in the following exchange between Sonic Diego and Gun Nut:

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: It is not right to kill people. Even if it's not in real life.

In this statement, Springtrap. Fnaf 3 simultaneously clarifies, and challenges Gun Nut's drawing and the epistemic movement would be to define concepts and ask that claims be supported with evidence.

Gun Nut: It is my page, and I am allowed to write whatever I want to.

Gun Nut's response highlights respect and listening as mental acts, where he establishes that his right is respected and that he be 'heard'. The epistemic movement would be to support his claims and also to reciprocate the respect and listening to his enquirers.

The dialogue is characterised by deep emotions and care towards Foxy Fnaf 1234 as evident from the following exchange:

Foxy Fnaf 1234 is silent. With hands tightly fisted, his breathing increases rapidly and his jaw clenches. Some laughter, taunting and silences fill the room. Sonic and Hunter crowd around the drawing. They appear to be horrified and shocked.

The following exchange shows reasoning and logic:

Springtrap. Fnaf 3: (speaks to Gun Nut) Then why did you draw a picture of you shooting Foxy Fnaf 1234 with a gun? And with so many bullets?

In this instance we see evidence of challenging that requires claims be supported by evidence.

Gun Nut: Because a king has to be powerful. He has to have the most powerful laser gun ever.

Gun Nut's statement alludes to the power relations that not only dominated the enquiry but also the justification for leadership (being chosen as king). Power was implicated with violence, respect, and ownership.

From this snippet of data, it is evident that the community engaged in mental moves through dialogue. Yet this piece of data was amongst the few moments where the encounter could be represented in language. But what of the data that could not be transcribed, and the children who did not engage discursively in mental moves? What are the ethics of not engaging with 'undialogical' data?

In P4wC, it would appear that there is less attention afforded to the critique of dialogue as a pedagogy, particularly the ontological and epistemological claims that underpin dialogue, and the subsequent implications. For instance, Burbules (2002) states that despite the liberal rhetoric, and openness to difference, the criticality of dialogue risks the submersion of voices which may not be able to participate fully in dialogue itself. Consequently, the power dynamics with/in dialogical enquiries (subtly) re-inforce hegemonic practices and thinking skills. Some examples of the precariousness of dialogue have been problematised from the perspective of the linguistic and cultural barriers (Vadeboncoeur, Alkouatli, & Amini, 2015), and dis/ability (Saur & Sidorkin, 2018). How can we do dialogue differently?

6.8. The data-dialogue entanglement

Re-turning the data illustrates philosophical moves that could not be captured by (verbal) dialogue. For example, in answer to the question of ‘who should be king of the monsters?’, the children thought with playdough monsters that were neither described (in language) nor justified through dialogical reasoning/logic. In fact, it might seem that there was little thought that went into some of the playdough monsters as some did not look like monsters at all, but does that mean they did not think about monsters? Just because of how, for example, we adults think about monsters? At face value, it would be at the discretion of the (adult) observer to interpret the children’s creations, and consequently, judgements made about the children’s language and thinking skills. Yet, playdough monsters varied in size, texture, and shape. Was this not material evidence of thinking diffracted through the book, the crown, the feel and smell of the playdough? The two small hands which tentatively touched the ‘rotten’ monster might have contemplated, re-membered, and re-thought monster-making process as marked by fingertips and affect. What knowledges were re-created when encountering the lemon-scented ‘rotten monster’ entangled with the plasticness of the yoghurt tub and the inter-textuality of monster literature: *Munch* and *Where the Wild Things Are*?

For Barad (2007), “knowing is not a human centred activity or capability, rather it is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement “ (p 379). Knowledge is also not representational, i.e., the concept ‘monster’ represents monsters ‘out there’ in the

world. And insofar as the 'talk' of dialogue, Barad (2007) writes that discourse is interchangeable neither with language nor speech acts. Instead, "discursive practices are specific material configurings of the world through which determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted" (Barad, 2007, p. 335). Words are not independent of the material apparatuses, and the intra-actions that take place. Discursive practices are material conditions for meaning making where meaning is an ongoing performance in worldly articulations (Barad, 2007, p 335). In the case of the playdough monster, the monsterring practices of the children are a worlding practice without external criteria to judge them as 'proper' monsters.

In order to further understand the critical posthumanist perspective, let us return to figure 6.13 where the camera records the jacket swinging. The camera captured the moment in which the children took off their jackets. A sweater hung from the ceiling, some were swung around and some left on the floor. The manner in which the items of clothes were taken off tell of how the bodies reacted to the temperature of the small space, despite the chill outdoors. Weather conditions entangled and disentangled themselves through the data. It tells of a familiarity that might not be evident in spaces where uniforms are compulsory. The colours, thickness of the fabric, zippers and hoodies are part of a learning environment that does not carry the same expectations as a traditional classroom. Rules of engagement and boundaries are different. Could these material configurations have been a force that brought about the spontaneity of the 'trial'? I re-member my surprise at the smooth transition between the preceding argument (regarding the violent assent form) and courtroom role-play activity. The affective responses from the children indicated a depth of emotion that would later be identified in a humanist manner as sorrow, empathy, confusion, and hope. In subsequent sessions, it emerged that the children felt anxiety about not being part of mainstream schooling and found some degree of comfort in their friendships with each other. The sense of betrayal that Gun Nut and Foxy Fnaf 1234 felt was perhaps one of many agential cuts amongst the material-discursive realities in which the children found themselves entangled.

A relational ontology disrupts the dialogical nature of the CPE, and the role of language as mediator between thought and expression. In the data, argument/counterargument, logic,

reasoning are not erased but re-configured outside of the linguistic framework which governs the metaphysics of individualism. Meaning making is not an outcome of words or syntactic structures but rather an ongoing performance of the world or learning encounters that the children experience in relation to the CPE.

So how does posthumanism re-configure rationality? A posthumanist perspective disrupts the notion of dialogical pedagogy for improving thinking skills as such a theoretical approach considers the world as composed of discrete entities, subsequently perpetuating the *Scala Naturae*. For Barad (2007), theorising (thinking) is an experimentation open to the world and is part of the world's ontology. There is no standing at a distance with mediation between world and human. Thinking occurs with/in relations, and no two intra-actions are ever the same. The child is not outside their experiences, dialogue, the camera, monsters and so forth. A posthumanist account of dialogue cuts rationality together-apart: burrowing under sedimented notions of dialogue by disrupting the bridge between inner/outer speech and bringing worldliness back into play. In the recognition of the rationality and 'dialogicality' of the phenomena of the heated library court room, rationality's meaning is reconfigured with more-than-human thought moves.

6.9. Disrupting dialogue through quarks/quirks

Working with the question of 'why do dialogical pedagogy if there is no dialogue?', the chapter sought to re-imagine dialogue in relation to autism. The data was considered from a P4wC perspective and also from a critical posthumanism relational ontology.

In the CPE, dialogue is theorised as the medium through which thought and utterance engage and is critical to refining thinking skills. Though individuals with autism (who experience social communication and language difficulties) would be expected to struggle to participate in CPE, research has shown this is not the case. However, there is consensus that autistic individuals who did participate in CPE required assistance and flexibility of the enquiry process. What does the assistance entail? Is the adult who once again establishes the protocol for dialogical participation and the level of support needed? Do the figurations of child remain sedimented? Questions of thought, or theorising, are deeply political and ethical matters. A critical posthumanist account of dialogue disrupts the linguistic

framework of the CPE and draws attention to the material-discursive relations enfolding the CPE. Language, dialogue and thought are not individual entities but rather relata that emerge within specific intra-actions. A posthumanist analysis draws attention to the everyday lived realities of being in learning spaces where children present with notable barriers to normative curriculum and pedagogical practices. It shifts the landscape from tailoring the CPE to suit the needs of the autistic child to looking for (posthumanist) differences that map out troubled moments entangled with the enquiry. Paying attention to differences breaks the homogeneity and positions philosophical enquiry as a generic teaching method that potentially works for all individuals, including children with autism.



7

THE LINES OF (HAUNTOLOGICAL) ENQUIRY

PHILOSOPHY **WITH** MATTER?
PHILOSOPHY **THAT** MATTERS?

Chapter 7 is the second story that emerges from carrier bag III of this study. Following chapter 6, where material-discursive practices re-configured the (linguistic) framework of dialogue, this chapter asks how the CPE might achieve its purpose of dialogical success given the social -communication difficulties associated with autism. In particular, this chapter is guided by questions posed by the principal at NBP: “Does the pedagogy work?” and “did the (autistic) children make (philosophical) progress?”. These questions are threaded through nine vignettes that emerge/d from the initial philosophical enquiry that took place with the participants. The writing in this chapter is fractured by the vignettes in order to re-create the haunting or ‘ghostly’ practices of re-memembering the enquiry where (past) enquires are never closed and always open to re-configurings.

7.1. Re-turning the concept of progress in the CPE

For autistic children (and children in general with learning challenges), questions of progress are historically such a significant aspect of their being that it is not possible to separate child from progress. Certainly, this is true of many children’s experiences in schools given the heavy influence of developmental theories in ECE and ECI¹⁷⁷ (see for example, Goodfellow & Burman, 2019). Kohan (2018, p. 433) explains that in chronos time, pedagogically “there is a precise time, an opportunity, when some contents can be learned, and cannot be learned either before or afterwards”. Drawing on chronos time, progress is a measure of movement from one successive point to the next. The question of progress in relation to autistic

¹⁷⁷ Please see the Writing conventions.

children suggests an able/dis/able binary or at the very least a ‘differently abled’/‘neurotypical’ comparison. This is not surprising given the learning and symptomatic profile of autism spectrum disorder, particularly insofar as dialogical pedagogy is concerned. That childhood education tends to focus on educational quality perpetuates the neoliberal constructions of the (ideal) human (see Dahlberg et al., 2013; Moss, 2016). As will be discussed in chapter 8, the neoliberal construction of autistic child has led to a “commodification of autism” in which autism is converted into a socio-economic entity that is traded, consumed, exchanged and produced (Mallet & Runswick-Cole, 2012, p. 112). The rise in autism coupled with (human-centric) policies in early childhood practices have increased the market value of autism, subsequently driving the (re)search for quality educational programmes for autistic children (see Odom et al., 2022). It would seem that the questions posed by the head teacher regarding philosophical progress are reasonable given the expectations of any pedagogy and intervention undertaken with autistic children.

However, part of P4WC’s appeal is the egalitarian and inclusiveness endorsed by the CPE. Lipman and colleagues (1980) discuss the benefits of the philosophical curriculum in relation to children from various socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those with linguistic and cognitive difficulties. Sharp (1987, as cited in Gregory and Laverty, 2018) makes special reference to the participation of children who are relatively silent during enquiries, or who choose to express themselves through other (non-verbal) modes of thinking (art, paint, dance). Even though the CPE works by establishing open, fair, and democratic practices, there is ongoing discussion about the epistemic values and ideals which guide enquiries. Haynes and Murriss (2012, p. 4) write the following:

The degree to which the community of enquiry is inclusive depends on rights, freedoms and relations of power operating in particular contexts and the practical, material and social conditions for involvement: these are all entangled. What matters, who and what can speak, with what authority and by what means; in which spaces; who and what listens; and what is the new that is produced?

So how does P4wC maintain egalitarian practices and work towards philosophical progress and whose progress is it?

Golding (2017) writes that epistemic progress is amongst the key aspects of the CPE and takes place in several ways. For example, progress could be the improved active participation of the enquirers, or creating conceptual problems, making connections, suggesting resolutions and so forth. What is apparent is that progress is linked to movement with/in the CPE. The connection between progress and movement is characterised by terminology such as growth, development, build, emerge, and succession of the CPEs.

But how is the notion of progress, quality, and achievement addressed in posthumanism? A relational ontology is incongruous with such ideals on multiple accounts. For instance, apart from disrupting the normative language that governs the notion of progress in the human subject, a posthumanist approach foregrounds the significance of entanglements and in Barad's agential realism, the material-discursive intra-actions map patterns of differences. So, rather than focusing on tracking an individual's progress through external criteria, in agential realism, phenomena are traced by researchers. Importantly, the researcher is not outside or external to the phenomena, but ontologically part of it and so are the apparatuses that measure so-called (individualised) progress. What else is going on that remains invisible when focusing on individual humans only? What is made possible when it is not identity, but difference as the starting point of philosophical contemplations? Attending to differences and agential cuts is neither an act of replacement nor erasure but a temporal diffraction that leaves the past open to re-configuring (Barad, 2017a, Barad, 2017b). Let us begin by tracing the CPE.

As discussed earlier, the CPE is at the heart of P4wC and acts as both pedagogy and methodology (Lipman, 2003). The CPE is considered a shared space for self-critical practice where children's experiences are pondered upon and explored through dialogical reasoning. Caring and collaborative thinking (i.e., social cognition and interaction) are encouraged by way of group cohesion such as inclusiveness, interpersonal relations, and non-adversarial engagement wherever possible. Guided by the (adult) facilitator, the aim of the CPE is (epistemic) movement through dialogue. The role of the facilitators is to implement thinking moves through modelling, encouraging shared cognition, prompting deliberation, working towards reasonableness, invoking new questions, as well as mediating challenges and logical argument during the enquiry process (Lipman, 2003). For this reason, the CPE is

prized for its epistemological value in building and scaffolding self-reflective practice so that beliefs and values move from judgements of opinion to judgements of facts (Lipman, 2003, p. 103).

Much has been written about other learning dimensions nurtured through participation in the CPE. For example, Lipman and colleagues (1980) draw attention to the teaching of democracy and citizenship through experiencing democratic practices, while Sharp (1987 as cited in Gregory & Laverty, 2018) writes about the ethical, moral, and socio-political aspects inherent in the CPE. Sharp was committed to ideas of living well, which is endorsed by the CPE. This included egalitarian pedagogical practices which focused on child in relation to personhood, feminist practices and also the role of the CPE in generating ethical global consciousness. However, despite the multiple learning dimensions, Lipman and Sharp were adamant that the primary objective of CPE was philosophical, albeit a transformed 'philosophical' that is experiential and practical: the aim of P4wC is the development of reasonableness. Moreover, in order for the CPE to work, children need to cultivate habits of listening, turn-taking, considering the ideas and emotional responses of others, as well as making decisions and judgements supported by well-reasoned evidence. Now, as human-centric and paternalistic as this might appear, bear in mind that Lipman and Sharp were advocates of the child philosopher, and their writings were aimed at 'training' adult facilitators to be proficient in CPE practices. Let us stay with this thought for a while.

7.1.1. The structure of the CPE

Subsequent to the Lipman-Sharp philosophical curriculum, P4wC practitioners evolved the manner in which enquiries took place¹⁷⁸. Such an epistemic move shifted the practice of P4wC. Amongst the major changes in the structure of the CPE are the move away from classroom-only enquiries, the type of provocations used for the sessions, and the type of training that teachers required for facilitating enquiries.

¹⁷⁸ Please refer to the Glossary of terms for further information on the differences between the Lipman-Sharp P4C versus P4wC movement.

Lipman (2003, p. 83) wrote that the CPE is structured, goal-directed, and aims for some kind of settlement and judgement even though this may be impartial and a temporary resting place – always open for further revision. Enquiries are progressive and measured in terms of the complexity of skill as well as the direction that the argument takes. There is strong evidence of logic through dialogical encounters as opposed to conversation. The idea is not resolution of the topic but rather shifts in thinking skills. In order to maintain the philosophical integrity and rigour of the CPE, Lipman and Sharp have suggested a set of procedural rules that govern enquiries. These rules are conceptualised as five discrete and sequential stages of doing enquiries and remain influential in the practice of P4wC worldwide¹⁷⁹ (see Lipman, 2003, pp. 101-103).

- a) The first stage is the offering of the text or provocation to the community of enquirers, which serves as a mental ‘kickstart’ to get reflective thinking going. While Lipman used specially-written philosophical novels, other practitioners have increasingly used a variety of texts and objects.
- b) The second stage is where the agenda is constructed by the community in response to the provocation. The agenda takes the form of questions generated by the participants (and not the facilitator!) which are discussed collectively and subsequently voted for by the participants in order to determine the direction of the dialogical enquiry.
- c) The third stage is where the community comes together through further dialogue, in the process of answering the questions voted for in b). Here participants are encouraged to share their thoughts on the chosen theme or concept and are encouraged to use dialogical skills in order to think through their thoughts in community. The role of the facilitator is to work through mental moves that encourage self-critical practice and reasoning.

¹⁷⁹ My experience of the structure of P4wC in this manner comes from the summer programmes I took part in at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children in Mendham, New Jersey.

- d) In the Lipman-Sharp tradition, the fourth stage of the enquiry entails implementing teacher lesson plans/exercises in order to refine thinking with 'professional guidance' from the teacher manuals. However, proponents of the PwC movement typically extend the dialogical encounters.
- e) The fifth stage is the point at which the CPE is drawn to a close. Participants are encouraged to reflect on the enquiry and share final thoughts as per their level of comfort in sharing such knowledge, and also by way of different forms of expression such as oral retelling, stories, painting, drawing etc.

However, there are three in/separable concerns which disrupt the Lipman-Sharp framework of doing enquires. These are discussed below.

7.1.2. Troubling (human-centric) CPEs

Of great consideration is knowledge-making partnerships at work with/in CPEs. The posthumanist ontology radically undoes the metaphysics of individualism which underscore the prototype structure of the CPE. For instance, the procedural guidelines of how to conduct enquiries are embedded in human-centric knowledge-making practices, Newtonian temporality, fixed ideas about the identity/ies of subject/object, and the causal relationship between mental acts and epistemic movement which play out in CPE.

Following the realities of autism and dialogue with/in CPEs, the third factor picks up on adult assumptions of and expectations from children with/in enquiry settings. Sharp (1987, as cited in Gregory & Laverty, 2018) writes that despite the pedagogical value of the CPE, there is a risk that adults take for granted children's capacity for tolerance, care, and respect towards each other's feelings, thoughts, imagination, and discourse. She also questions the moral, political and social expectations of children in the CPE such as committing to reasonableness, impartiality, objectivity, and fairness. Sharp's (1987) concerns are compelling in the case of CPE with autistic learners given the social communication difficulties experienced and it raises ethical questions of how to engage in CPE with/out

prejudice and stereotypical judgements about the capabilities of autistic child. How does this come to matter in CPEs? Let us re-turn vignette 1 below.

Vignette 1

IT IS OUR FIRST DAY OF PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY

It has taken some time for the children to adjust to the session today,

Philosophy is new for them;

Never have they encountered a thinking pedagogy which draws on their thoughts,
experiences, and desires with/in the world -

without concerns related to measurement and performance.

INTERFERENCES

Tickles, pokes, prods, laughs, yawns, incessant chatter,

as they plop down onto the carpeted floor in an assortment of body positions,

Bottoms churn awkwardly into place, as they attempt to form a circle.

Some bodies prefer to prance around, trying to make sense of this new situation.

Or perhaps it is an opportunity to bend the boundaries of strict teaching and learning
protocols,

Mis/behaving bodies?

I find their experimentation (with defiance) to be encouraging,

hopefully more boundaries will be challenged,

Curious eyes turn to me,

“Shemaayaa...”

my name is unfamiliar to them.

“What we doin now?”

and then to my box of philosophical materials,

“What’s in there?”

Without hesitation, bodies crowd around, opening the box,

Quizzical hands pull out the contents,

THINKING, feeling, touching, moving, exploring

LEARNING.

Picturebooks, paper, pens, string, doll figures, stickers, camera, consent forms, crayons and pictures fall out.

“ooh, can we draw?”

“What will you draw?”

“Me and MYSELF!”



Figure 7.1. Self-portrait by Tony Stark¹⁸⁰ which includes his age

7.2. A posthumanist hauntology of re-membering

The vignettes in this chapter are conceptualised as re-membering practices and events from early enquiries that took place with the children at centre B. Methodologically, the story pieces are purposefully positioned as human-centric memories that are ruptured by the posthumanist notion of hauntology in order to work through the concerns foregrounded in the introduction of this study.

Throughout this study, ontology has been discussed in term of *relata* (‘things’ in relation), and how a *relational ontology* not only disrupts Cartesian and Newtonian canons of ontological and epistemological separation but also creates rich opportunities for theorising knowing-doing as material-discursive practices of being part of the world in its ongoing re-configuration and re-constitution. Staying with the relational ontology, the writing here

¹⁸⁰ This is the pseudonym as chosen by the participant.

works with the Baradian notion of hauntology as “a material feature of the world that disrupts the binary logic of ontology as being/non-being” (Barad & Gandorfer, 2021, p. 17).

A posthumanist notion of hauntology is entangled with/in assumptions of ontology with reference to the concept of ‘being’. From the perspective of quantum field theory (QFT), Barad (2010) writes that the notion of being brings to the fore questions of non-being. Put differently, quantum field theory troubles the distinction between being/non-being. But what constitutes being and non-being? In *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Derrida (1994) writes that ontology of the here and now is ‘haunted’ by the presence of ‘ghostly’ memories and associations of the past. Hauntology for Derrida is a state of non-being, or a ghostly zone where time-memories collapse into each other creating a shadow of the past that goes unnoticed. What appears is the distinction between ontology(being)/hauntology(non-being). Why is this problematic for Barad?

Derrida’s notion of hauntology produces a different kind of binary, or a binary with/in a binary. It is not just the metaphysical distinction between ontology/epistemology that is apparent but the binary with/in ontology itself (being/non-being). Barad (2010) writes that an individualistic metaphysical interpretation of the nature of ontology sediments ideas of time, space and matter, as well as re-memorizing a practice of re-configuring the past into the ‘here-now’. Diffracting through Derrida, Barad re-configures hauntology to include the more-than-human (Murriss, 2022). Now, how does Barad’s hauntology work in this chapter? Memories are not actually things that entities ‘have’ but rather memories, pasts and the reverberations of events are part of what makes the world. Diffracting the Baradian notion of hauntology through the vignettes articulates the ghostliness of enquiries. For agential realists, memories are not located in time, space and matter and are not merely reserved for humans. ‘Things’ have memories too: pens, cells, water, and also vignettes. The vignettes in this chapter are also ghosts of the past – often going by unnoticed unless we pay attention and attune to the more-than-human. Yet a quantum notion of hauntology holds that the past is always open to re-configurings because the researcher is always ontologically part of the entanglement. In other words, the historicity of the picturebooks, paper, pens, string, doll figures, stickers, camera, consent forms, crayons and pictures are all

part of the ‘thick now’ (Barad, 2007). A multiplicity of times threaded through one another create knots of spacetime-matterings, materialised in, for example, Tony Stark’s self-portrait. Not merely the social, but how these things are made, the (often underpaid) labour involved and natural resources in their production and environmental damage are entangled in the drawing, not just the human, or what the picture symbolises. The same can be said about Vignette 2.

Vignette 2

The chatter intensifies, and bodies become irritated.

PENS, CRAYONS AND PICTURES ARE SCATTERED ACROSS THE CARPET.

Legs groan at the unfamiliar postures assumed, and shoot out in different directions, most often colliding into other bodies. Backs rest against chair and table legs. Knees are drawn up and engulfed by tired arms. Heads droop, eyes fade.

Ears turn at the sound of the slightest noise. Mouths hang open. Hands flicker and swat whatever comes its way.

“Ouch, oof, STOP it!”

7.3. ‘Fidgety’ bodies

What compels bodies to fidget? In a sense it is the wrong question to ask, because it asks for human intention and assumes the inner/outer binary (Murriss & Babamia, 2018). A better question would be: Why does fidgeting matter in classrooms and other developmental spaces, such as therapy rooms? In re-turning Vignette 2, our attention is drawn to how bodies move in the enquiry space to form a seated circle on the floor. As apparent from the groaning legs, colliding bodies, tired arms, and drooping heads, sitting in a circle on the floor was not easy for the children, most likely because they were accustomed to sitting on a chair in front of a desk (see also Reynolds, 2021).

Historically, children’s bodies and movement patterns have been subjected to judgements insofar as academic achievement are concerned. For example, odd, unexpected, or erratic bodily movements were considered ‘disturbances’ to classroom behaviour which

‘interfered’ with learning, subsequently called for measurements of behaviour and strategies to reduce such behaviour (see Spivak et al., 1971). Over time, un/disciplined bodies that fidget, interfere, disrupt, mis/behave are negatively embedded in frequently social, emotional, physical, cultural constructs of child. Such bodies become the ab/normal, and are categorised along various lines such as ADHD, social anxiety, developmental delay, sensory integration dis/order, learning disorder, and myriads of others¹⁸¹.

Why did we choose to sit in a circle? In P4wC, circular-shaped enquiries result in children engaging with each other face-to-face during discussions. The idea is that such interaction encourages egalitarian and democratic practices amongst participants as it allows all human participants to be seen and heard, follow and make contributions in the direction of the enquiry, and resists the hierarchy of the facilitator over the children (Haynes, 2007; Lipman, 2003). But why sit on the floor and not chairs?

Vignette 3

BUT,

time stops, and the moment expands:

instead of a room of enquirers with inadequate social communication, body awareness and self-regulatory behaviours/responses.

My bodymind is aware of an awkward, yet chaotic intra-action of bodies, floor, tables, chair legs, and art.

Deviations from scripted behaviours.

Something is being produced, yet resists being judged as disruptive, chaotic and disorganised.

Part of me is hesitant to organise the chaos, for I’m intrigued to know how behaviour (be)comes without (my) adult intervention.

But here, the practitioner in me is too strong.

Tock tock tock ... tick

¹⁸¹ I am neither discounting the relevance of bodily differences nor the productive spaces created by interventions such as sensory integration therapy. My point is to trouble the taken-for-granted judgements and humanist assumptions we make about how autistic bodies work in learning settings.

Time jumpstarts my thoughts: we need to establish an open forum of rules to regulate the enquiry

7.4. Un-doing clock time

Time is an overarching trope in child/hood studies, early childhood education, and most certainly in early childhood intervention where the focus is on 'developmental catch-up' (Murriss & Kohan, 2021). Clock time is what Barad (2017a, p. 58) describes as sedimented timelines of progression where the present is linked to the past through ongoing and momentary successions of events, and to the future through projections of the here-now. Time is told, experienced, and recorded historically-culturally to the extent that temporality becomes the force which perpetuates nature/culture divisions. Murriss (2016) writes that the nature/culture dichotomy is at the core of all figurations of child and childhood (see chapter 8). The divisiveness of clock time cuts through the very fabric of children's and adults' lives. For instance, developmental milestones establish timelines of children's worldly interactions where the succession of movement patterns in infancy from rolling, to sitting, crawling, standing and walking determine the extent of child's experiences with the world and subsequent knowledge-making practices. Or in early childhood education (formal and informal learning spaces), clock time is entangled with routine (Farquhar, 2016). Think of naptime, playtime, mealtime, and circle time to name but a few. Also compelling is the political use of clock time which drives a compulsiveness to undo injustices in education. Such an example might be the urgency to 'act now' in generating alternative approaches to neoliberalism in early childhood (see for example Moss & Roberts-Holmes, 2022). In fact, the very idea of P4wC as response to the call for educational reform in the 1970's operated alongside particular educational movements at the (clock)time.

Vignette 3 illustrates a tension at play insofar as how time is conceptualised. The CPE was not following the procedure of the five stages. The chaos in the room cut into the 60 minutes allocated to the enquiry. However, the chaos entangled time itself. The tock tock tock ...tick moment moves the chaos of entangled time to discrete time of rules to regulate time.

Vignette 4

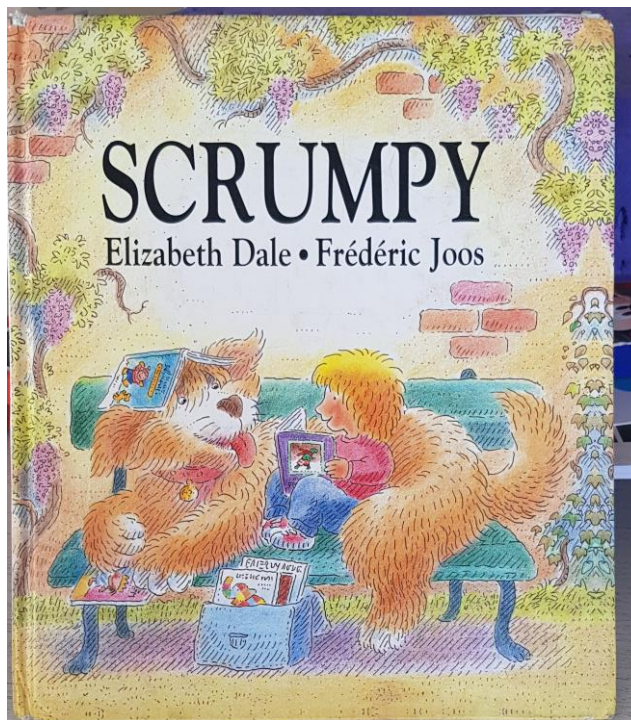


Figure 7.2. *Scrumpy*

“Are we going to read a book, Shoomaaya?
I like the one of the dogs”.

Scrumpy is a book about a little boy Ben and his best friend Scrumpy. They have lots of adventures together, but one day, Ben comes home to find that Scrumpy is sick. Despite caring as best as possible for Scrumpy, Scrumpy dies. Ben is devastated, and Scrumpy’s death affects his life profoundly. Until one day, he witnesses the antics of a mischievous dog George, who chases a cat and causes complete and utter pandemonium in a busy street. Ben witnesses the entire scenario and finds it hilarious. He remembers all the good times he shared with Scrumpy. He goes home and asks his mum if he can have a new dog. Ben’s new dog is a rescue dog, which he names Honey. The book ends with Ben’s realisation that Honey will never take Scrumpy’s place, but she is very special to him in a profound and new way.

The book makes it possible to talk about death of a pet which is a common experience for many children by introducing the process of grief, mourning, healing, love, hope, and living life anew.

7.5. Philosophy and picturebooks

Amongst the rich and diverse approaches to P4wC are the use of philosophical picturebooks as provocations for philosophical enquiries. Pioneered by Gareth Matthews (1994) picturebooks are examples of children's literature that are heavily laden with epistemic, ethical, political and aesthetic dimensions of thought. Picturebooks bring about creative thinking styles that work with fantasy, abstract concepts, bending of space and time, human-animal relations and embodiments, as well as emotions. For Matthews, carefully selected picturebooks contain the themes of traditional Western philosophy. In contrast, Murriss (1992) theorises – and later in collaboration with Haynes (Haynes & Murriss, 2009; Haynes & Murriss, 2012) the very use of picturebooks is also political. She troubles the use of Western *adult* philosophical traditions as the norm of what counts as philosophy (see Murriss, 2000). Philosophy with picturebooks (PwP) (Haynes & Murriss, 2012) disrupts the developmental notion that when children are taught philosophy they should be 'inducted' and 'progress' into a particular adult (Western) logic and rationality. Instead, through PwP, conversations emerge that are playful and thoughtful thinking spaces that trouble adult philosophy as the norm and include children's fantastical and embodied experiences of thought, play, and learning. In her later work, Murriss (2016, 2018) writes that posthumanist approaches to philosophy with picturebooks open up the opportunity to destabilise binaries (adult/child) and reconfigure discourses on child and childhood.

Part of the phenomenon of autism-child-P4wC, is the use of carefully-selected picturebooks as provocations. Picturebooks can be a good choice when they are rich in concepts with ambiguous meanings and affect the reader/viewer through the artwork. For the participants in my research, awareness of the material-discursive aspects of *Scrumpy* (Dale & Joos, 1996) opened up spaces for thought less constrained by linguistic and discursive-only frameworks of learning and participation in CPEs. The materiality of picturebooks also matters, and

re-membering the bodily engagement with a book re-configures the picturebook as an (art) object (Haynes & Murriss, 2019).

On the whole, the children were drawn to picturebooks, or books that could 'do' something. Two of their favourite sound books were *The Gruffalo* (1999) and *Room on a Broom* (2001) by Julia Donaldson. In these interactive versions of the books, they happily took turns to press the buttons as we read the story together.

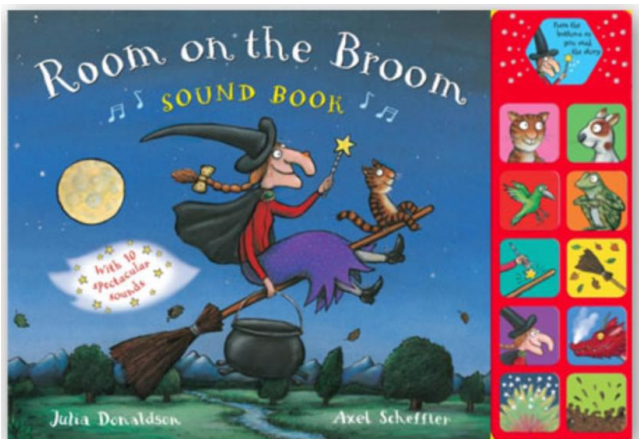


Figure 7.3. *Room on the Broom* sound book

Books that work well for this audience incorporate sound and tactile/kinaesthetic objects, books with flaps or physical gaps/spaces in which they can insert themselves literally into the text through their bodies. Also, the visual (pictures) hold greater appeal than the text. In some cases, I had to abandon the texts and we told the story based on the pictures. It became even more interesting when using books where the text and pictures tell different stories, pulling the reader in different directions in meaning making, as good quality picturebooks do (Haynes & Murriss, 2012, 2019). The interest and engagement in the books were sustained when it was of interest to them, for example, monsters or superhuman characters that mediate (see Haynes & Murriss, 2012).

Vignette 5

I drop my voice to a whisper, barely audible, in fact I'm almost miming as I talk.

"I can't hear you; I can't hear myself!"

They slowly come to a stop.

Curiosity and intrigue.

They can't hear me, so they try to read my lips.

But that's quite cumbersome, even with cues.

So, they look at my facial expressions, my (exaggerated) gestures

I point, sign and mimic.

It is a deliberate move away from linguistic act of speech for communication.

Some giggle, others are uncertain, and a few lose interest.

"How are we going to do anything if we can't hear each other? Or have a chance to talk? Hulk has been trying to tell us something for a while now!

Maybe we need some rules?"

"You mean like NO hitting, no punching, no stealing, no lying?

Otherwise, you have to go to (head teacher) for time out?!"

Actually ...

"How about listening to each other, giving each other a turn to speak?"

Blank stares.

"Ok".

... but ...

"What about girls"

"GIRLS?"

I stay silent, observing their reactions,

PAUSE

"... no girls allowed, except if it's your sister"

"but if it's a girl who is pretty?"

...

thinking time

7.6. Diffraction through vignette 5

For Lipman (2003) and Sharp (as cited in Gregory & Laverty, 2018), CPE requires structure and orderliness so that progress can be achieved. The practice of enquiry involves consensus regarding the management of the group dynamics, and group rules are often handy tools. In the clip above, the space rendered me silent, for I was curious as to how rules were theorised and practised by the community. If anything, children's bodies and minds are always subjected to rules especially in educational spaces, both explicitly and implicitly. Child bodies are marked by rules – when to eat, how to sit at a desk, how to greet, what to learn, how to get rewards, how to behave properly and so forth. What would happen if I did not provide the rules? Would bodies respond? And to what extent? As Michel Foucault would argue, even children themselves have internalised what adults expect of them (their discourses). Diffraction through Foucault and Butler, Barad (2007, pp. 34-5 and 145-6) argues that poststructuralism makes evident the politics of the productive nature of social practices and the discursive constitution of the subject. So, the rules which were generated above signified the deep entanglement of rules, experiences, histories, order, obedience and adolescence. Rules had to be reconfigured when new child bodies entered the space. Rules were generated through the community everyday lived experiences, which simultaneously threaded in rebellion-conformity. This highlighted the status of child as the docile subject who needs 'humanification'. This is not to say that the practice of rules or affirming productive pathways for engagement should be abolished. Rather, it is indicative of the formation of child as humanist subject – a subject that is grown-up, mature, and the ideal figuration for the child philosopher. Moreover, how democratic is the CPE? Who and what is included in important decision-making, such as rules for deliberation?

Often, I found myself drawing attention to social cohesiveness through little phrases such as 'Ok, let's all listen to D' or "Remember our rules? It's Barney's turn to talk now". This action often sped up or slowed down the thinking in the sessions. For example, while drawing attention to the rules of participation, the seeming chaos in which thought was unfolding became disciplined, and it shifted the focus to linguistic appropriateness. The orderliness

triggered a default pattern of rote-learnt behaviour and thinking. Enquiries morphed into patterns of expected behaviour, where conformity and obedience became visible. The boys became subdued, and slipped into a void, where once again, thinking equated linguistic competence, and their in/abilities to modulate language cast them off as other. Although the structure of the enquiry and social interaction was a subtle move, it was powerful enough to disrupt the ongoingness of how thinking and learning took place in the enquiry. The materiality of this move was substantial, marking children who are 'othered' as further 'othered'. It made me question an ontoepistemic injustice that arises from such procedural dimensions of learning in P4wC.

Vignette 6

"DO NOT READ THAT BOOK!!!"

Tony Stark bellows out,

"Why not?"

"Because we don't read books here. Ok?"

But the rest of the group wants to read it.

Our first dilemma, and one which Tony Stark is uncompromising about.

The chatter continues, punching, hitting and achy legs.

"Can we sit on the chairs please?"

7.7. Re-turning *Scrumpy*

Vignette 6 picks up on Tony Stark's resistance to reading *Scrumpy*. His outburst was surprising given the introduction to picturebooks the previous week. The other children had a good sense of what to expect from the Reading Friends Club (our name for the philosophy club). Prior to commencing with the picturebooks, we had spent time discussing what philosophy could entail. I had brought in a couple of books to indicate that we would be thinking and talking about the books, hence the name the Reading Friends. It was to be collaborative, interactive and there was no right or wrong here. We were all free to discuss our opinions

during the time together. We had left the session there, so that everyone could have time to process what the sessions could be about. So, group rules were discussed the following week. I explained the purpose of group rules and put forth some ideas (talking one at a time and listening to each other) and the boys came up with the rest of the rules.

I was intrigued by Tony Stark's reaction, aware of popular opinions pertaining to how autistic individuals react to unfamiliar learning contexts and learning materials. However, such an assumption reinforces the judgements about the value of autistic child's knowledge, and how child is positioned as knowing be(com)ings. There were also other factors at play. For instance, book reading reminded them of schoolwork. In this case, could it be that the picturebook was haunted by the here-now? Or was it a case of attention and concentration difficulties, being unfamiliar with the enquiry situation and unable to anticipate what would follow? Tony Stark was reported to have limited exposure to books outside of the school environment. What are the expectations of him in this situation? What about the other participants' intra-actions with picturebooks? Indeed, the ones who attended were drawn to books which encouraged bodily action and expressed desire to engage with them.

Vignette 7

We do read the book.

After all, enquiry is about democracy,

yet Tony Stark's discomfort unsettles me and has always stayed with me.

He has, very reluctantly, decided that he will stay. But he sits cross-legged in the corner with his head in his hands, staring down at the floor the whole time.

He refuses to participate.

The community is quiet as we finish the book,

(Louis) says: can we read it again?

Tony Stark fumes silently but says nothing.

Even now, the act of writing (re)members my anxiety.

As we read again, Louis stops me, something has caught his interest.

What's that he asks?

It is the most minute detail of the book, George's owner's handkerchief.

It generates substantial interest, more so than an enquiry into Scruppy's life/death.



Figure 7.4. Tony Stark's illustration of Scruppy in the marketplace



Figure 7.5. George's handkerchief shown in the centre of the drawing

Bodies are unbearably tired. Can we go now?

7.8. Diffracting through vignette 7

What was Tony Stark's refusal 'about'? I resist asking questions about a child's motivation in terms of 'inner' mental causes as reasons for 'outer' behaviour. This is difficult for me because I am so accustomed to the humanist practices that formed such an important part of my training. What if I trace this emergent material-discursive phenomenon? Haunted in the 'thick-now' of the present 'moment' (Barad, 2017b), during an enquiry the CPE is governed by democratic principles such as turn-taking, careful listening and respectful engagement with diverse ideas and opinions. In fact, the CPE normalises disagreement and works with difference as an opportunity, rather than a challenge.

The CPE is facilitated by trained P4wC enquirers, but all members of the CPE are encouraged to participate in the group dynamics in terms of cohesiveness, discussions, evaluations, and contribute to the philosophical progress of the CPE. Others emphasise that the ideal is that the mature community self-regulates without the need for an adult to model (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). In this way the P4C pedagogy actively promotes children’s voice, power and citizenship through the democratic nature of the community of enquiry, facilitation styles and the role of dialogue (Haynes, 2007). Within the CPE, the facilitator works towards the formulation of philosophically-relevant questions and criteria, facilitation as an act of clarification and concept formation, the philosophical (not therapeutic) nature of enquiries and what counts as progress within the inquiry. Consequently, P4wC encourages the internalisation of critical, caring, and creative thinking. It is claimed that the effects of the programme have proven to have positive (but human-centred) outcomes on reading, reasoning, listening and language as well as self-confidence and socio-emotional skills, with powerful implications regarding the role of the individual within society at large (Fisher, 1979; Haynes, 2007; Trickey & Topping, 2004).

Vignette 8

The boys rush outside and make for the trampoline.

All eight of them jump on simultaneously.

A rhythmic bouncing, a soothing of tired legs
and an overstretching of the tarpaulin.

Bodies graze the safety nets,
breathing regulates.

The trampoline nurtures, healing the violence of change and disruption brought about from
the enquiry.

There is no talking,

I watch, dismayed but also taken in by the communicative power of silence,
PAUSES and more PAUSES.

The collaborative act of thinking-in-the bounce generates questions.

“Hey Sumaya”,
bounce bounce.

why did Scrumpy die?
Why was Ben sad?
Why did George make the paint splatter?
HE WAS NAUGHTY!

7.9. Diffracting through vignette 8

The children often ask for breaks in-between the CPE where they would rush outside to the trampoline or play equipment. The entanglement of the picturebook, wind, sun, trampoline, tired bodies, rhythmic movements, breath, silence, and questions affect and produce thought that renders the past capable and opens new possibilities for future enquiries. Time is dis/jointed and out of sync (Barad, 2018), and we see that the entanglement reconfigures spacetime mattering. The trampoline is not a space/container that holds the chronological child bodies as mere objects of and for movement. The trampoline, nets and bodies huddled together affect and produce thought as a worlding process where past and futures bleed into the present (Barad, 2018).

Vignette 9

We head back inside
Anxious eyes look at me
“Are we going to read the book ... AGAIN ?”

“Nope”

“How about we draw something that we really liked or didn’t like about the story?”

Using art as an entry point, I keep seeking philosophical questions from them.



Figure 7.6. Thoughts/feelings about death



Figure 7.6 Thomas the Engine's drawing shows people standing around a grave

Later that day, I write the following:

The group of participants did not take to my explaining the purpose of enquiry;
Book reading was tedious for them;
The purpose of rules of enquiry was redundant;
Social communication such as listener sensitivity, staying on topic, taking turns to talk, and
giving each other opportunities to talk were clearly lacking;
Community was difficult to establish;
THE QUESTIONS ASKED WERE NOT THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROSE I EXPECTED

Facilitation was stalled because language-communication lagged.

Bodies that were breaking into new ways of learning;

A desire to exhibit thinking through drawing;

The urgency to think outside of time (constraints);

The power of bodies in motion with matter (trampoline) in generating (philosophical) questions,

Questions which hinted at philosophical concepts of fairness, life, death, and judgement.

And the (mis)representation of language and thought;

This community of enquirers had thought in the most unexpected ways,

They stopped, paused, and always sought new ways of knowing.

They brought to the enquiry a material-discursive approach to knowing, demanding that I as adult facilitator relinquish my expectations of thought as language

7.10. From facilitating to philoso-tating to difficultating

Haynes and Murriss (2021) write that the ethics of facilitation is caught up in conflicts such as political ideologies (inconsistencies?) in democratic systems as well as the developmental discourses and ideologies about progress in education. Drawing on 'difficultating' (Haynes & Kohan, 2018) shows how the role of the facilitator is neither neutral nor egalitarian for this presupposes human-centric assumptions about power relations.

In vignette 9, I address the conflicts of moving away from human-centric practices, particularly when trying to 'fit' into the role of facilitator conflicted with (my) well-worn experience as adult practitioner in SLT. Haynes and Kohan (2018) use the term 'difficultating' to highlight the tensions that arise with/in emancipatory approaches to education that not only clash with institutional requirements but proceed to include the more-than-human in teaching practices. Considering that difficultating pays close attention to the dis/comfort in the teacher-thinking-pedagogy space, I use the vignette to illustrate the difficulties of engaging in transdisciplinary practices.

The term “difficultation” unsettles the ‘easing-always-forwards-in-the-knowing-hands-of-the-educator’ implied in facilitation. This unsettling is an attempt to decolonise the way we understand the relationship between teacher and knowledge. It entails identifying the political role of a teacher in enacting certain epistemologies of teaching. A posthuman approach involves decentring the human, uncoupling teaching from the teacher, opening spaces for nonhuman teaching (Haynes & Kohan, 2018, p. 205) and for transdisciplinary enquiries (Haynes & Murriss, 2021, p 12).

In her earlier work, Murriss (2008, p. 670) writes the adult facilitator acts as “a ‘guide’, a ‘guardian’, and a ‘co-enquirer’, who in a spirit of open-ended enquiry helps to map the territory of dialogue but does not manipulate or steer the course of the enquiry”. This explanation is compelling in that there is an inherent freedom to be(com)ing facilitator in a manner unrestricted by outward definitions and criteria for doing enquiries. I found this freedom quite refreshing, given the ‘difficultation’ of transdisciplinary practice, and also critical in my work with autistic child.

Participating in philosophical enquiries as a speech-language therapist and *philosofator*¹⁸² (philosophical facilitator) brought about significant ‘knots’ that disrupted sedimented ideologies of autism, child, childhood, education and intervention, all of which are bound within the politics of neoliberalism. Typical of posthumanist ‘knots’, subjectivity was undone, and disciplinary boundaries were re-configured. Yet the process was deeply complex. For instance, habitual thinking as SLT constantly drew (my) attention to language-communication difficulties with/in the enquiries such as reduced expressive and receptive language, verbal proficiency, grammatical complexity and listening skills, restricted conceptual knowledge, and a general preference for a concrete use of language (with corresponding interpretations of the world). I wondered about whether or not my focus on such detail might have compromised the level, intensity, as well as the quality of the dialogue engagement achieved. For instance, it was often necessary to accommodate and scaffold language-learning and social communication prior to dialogical engagements. Also

¹⁸² The term facilitator is not limited to the P4C movement. It is a generic term that is used across multiple disciplines including SLT. For example, a facilitator includes classroom assistants or individual guidance that is provided to children with dis-ability in the event that independent mobilization of skill or learning is compromised.

rolled in was the tension of knowing my affective responses that often went beyond the CPE. For instance, the research aims haunted the enquiries, and I wondered what I could, should, and would write up. The camera intra-acted with/in the CPE, and at one stage I realised that the participants were drawn to it and had switched the camera off. On another occasion, by accident the camera lens was aimed at the floor, and then a blank wall. As a result, my attention was split between the enquiry and ensuring that the camera covered as much detail as possible, and I had to ask the children to try not to move the camera and tripod around.

7.11 Re-membering as a practice of response-ability

What knowledges do posthumanist hauntology and practices of re-membering re-create for enquiries with autistic child? The temporal patterns in the data and the CPE are situated with/in a porous bag of unexpected timelines that fold in researching, reading, learning and practice in P4wC literature, thoughts about how bodies work/ed in the NBP classroom, the children's social-communication profiles, their attention and responses to the enquiry, as well as their level of engagement with a teaching and learning approach that did not conform to their previous experiences.

Sharp cautioned about the assumptions we (adults) make about children's capacity for engaging in philosophical enquiries. Attuning to the politics of dialogical pedagogy and communal intra-action brings to the fore the politics of disability, which, if not considered from a humanistic perspective might be an act of erasure. To write of the dis/rupted moments in the enquiry and the unstructured manner in which the enquiry took place undoes the sedimentation of 'neat enquiries' and expectations of 'normal' children. There was a heavy reliance on non-verbal measures, artwork, and construction of material in order to communicate, learn, and articulate thinking. The results show the positive, non-normative differences in thinking, learning and communication in this group of learners. Barad's hauntology draws in the unexpected in the data and makes visible what would otherwise be dismissed as inconsequential and allows for the differences in knowledge construction through the ontological turn (Murris, 2021). These methods of doing research challenge humanist theories and habitual practices of data-analysis in education, what counts as 'data' (Koro-Ljungberg & Wells, 2018) and how we position knowledge in relation

to reality (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). Let us re-turn the head teacher's question about the children's progress.

What has been apparent throughout this chapter is the affective tension of doing 'good' enquiries, from the materials brought into the enquiry spaces, to the questions asked, maintaining group cohesion, accommodating stressed and bored bodies, engaging conflict, the book, participants who are unaccustomed to the 'strangeness' evoked by the P4wC approach, and the vignettes themselves which seek direction and validity of the enquiry process. At each step, the question of human-centric progress is deeply embedded in the material and discursive. (My) role as SLT and difficultator becomes essential to documenting progress, as does the artwork (evidence) of thinking. At times, I wonder how to make the material visible. Is the camera working, what has been 'captured' and what are its affordances? What does it include and exclude?

In a (humanist) sense, there is philosophical 'progress' on multiple levels. However, it is the notion of progress itself which posthumanism de(con)structs (Barad, 2017a). Instead of considering progress as an individual affair and as an outcome of linear, discrete moments in time, paying attention instead to the *community* was a critical move. Child bodies disagreed, argued and counter-argued, maintained group dynamics. Silences entangled with bodies provoked bodily responses. Often, the social communicative chaos (such as talking simultaneously, failing to note social cues, not 'listening' and tangential thoughts/ideas) caused some of them to retreat into silent thinking spaces, and like zigzagging lightning bolts (see chapter 8 for further discussion on Barad's (2015) materially charged matters) directed new creative and lateral thinking. Non-verbal dialogical progress was also evident in the form of gestures and signs, imitations, intra-acting with each other's drawings, questioning each other and organic discussions. Responses were evident through silences, smiles, slouched body posture, togetherness and storytelling.

However, philosophy did not only occur with the children, the materials and me. It also occurred with the environment, the people and things that floated in and out of our space (tuckshop, snack time, the number of chairs in the room, the physiotherapist/speech therapist who often had to bring the child back to therapy, and also the medication which

the boys took). For instance, one of the children participated in the enquiry sporadically given his drowsiness from anti-epileptic medication. This begs the question of 'response-ability'.

Response-ability is a relationality entangled with the world, and an ethical commitment to how knowledge – the enquiry – unfolded. In what way, did I make it possible for the other – human and more-than-human – to respond (Barad, 2007, 2014)? Response-ability is always political and a transindividual commitment to undo the injustices committed to those who are (also) no longer there (as well as our 'own' childhood 'selves'). It involves a different "calculus" (Barad 2014, p. 178). Resisting pathologising and psychologising relationships with 'others' that agential realism undoes the very nature of matter, and core binaries, thereby drawing out the ontological conditions that make such performative practices of pathologising and psychologising possible. Response-ability is about opening up the data, child, place, space and time. It involves enacting temporal diffraction where space is made for ontological in/determinacy and temporal dis/continuity. So instead of progress, let us rather engage with response-ability. While in relation with the book, images, trampoline, there is no order or process or specified way of doing enquiries. As such, the data is 'unhinged', living in the void with/out human-centric mechanisms of meaning-making and interpretations. In qualitative research, such data might be fundamentally flawed (see chapter 5). The images are not erasures of philosophical progress but rather specific material-discursive relationalities sedimented as part of the world (Barad, 2007). The ethics of response-ability is not about rendering child, pedagogy, myself or the thinking capable but rather attending to the vulnerabilities that make it work and opening up to the questions the 'other' (human and more-than-human) might ask.

For example, rather than regarding Tony Stark and the picturebook as two separate bodies, his refusal to read the book is not explained by positing some mental state but doing justice to the complex relationality in between book and him. Neither he, nor the book are agential, but the transindividual phenomenon is. His silence renders his classmates and the book capable.

Tony Stark and the picturebook are not just entangled (a concept often used in posthumanism), but they are *quantum entanglements*. As Barad explains:

Quantum entanglements are not the intertwining of two (or more) states/entities/events, but a calling into question of the very nature of twoness, and ultimately of one-ness as well. Duality, unity, multiplicity, being are undone. “Between” will never be the same. One is too few, two is too many. (Barad 2014, p. 178)

What of the handkerchief? The drawings render the concept of hanky a capable knowledge-partner. Even though it was not the ‘protagonist’ in the story, the children experimented with the hanky amongst bright colours, in different shapes, Scrumpy, George’s dog, Ben’s memories of his dog and his decision to get a new one. All relate as part of the phenomenon that is agentic. A posthumanist hauntology takes notes of silences and absences in the data, misunderstood and undervalued contributions such as George’s handkerchief. It also does justice to the histories of all relate, including ‘my’ ‘self’. Threaded through the data are my own histories of living and working with autistic children, including the trampoline in our garden, The trampoline opens up space for enquiry in a way that was not easy to access through questions.

This chapter has explored, experimented with, and opened up the notion of philosophical progress for autistic children by theorising principles of egalitarianism and inclusivity endorsed by the CPE. These ideals were explored through nine vignettes, purposefully chosen for the chafing, conflicting, messy, multi-layered, and uncomfortable moments underscoring the realities of difficultating enquiries. They do not work towards progress but rather attend to the entanglements and relationalities with/in response-ability. This chapter attends to the differences brought about by disrupting human-centric hauntings of the enquiry, notably the concept of structure, progress and temporality as well as the role of the adult facilitator. In doing so, posthumanist hauntology re-configures the writing in order to create ethico-ontoepistemic movement in (our) thinking.



8

DISRUPTING THE LINE(AGE) OF CHILD

The (Posthuman) autistic child

Chapter 8 of this thesis explores a posthuman (de)(re)construction of autistic child through Murriss's (2016) figurations of child, and the creative wanderings of matter as charged electrons (lightning) (Barad, 2015) that nurture fertile ground of new imaginaries for autistic child. Disrupting the *line(age) of child* is a deliberate play with the words that 'speak' to the aforementioned disruptive intra-actions and entanglements. The *lineage* and *line of child* question the (metaphoric) timeline of human development which perpetuate injustices against children's claims to knowledge (Murriss, 2016, 2021). Significant to this discussion is the nature/culture binary, which underpins Western lineages of autism child/hood and subjectivity and proposes posthumanist pedagogical and therapeutic approaches for autistic child.

Putting the line(age) of child to work entails threading an image produced by Barney¹⁸³ through the writing in this chapter. Theorised as 'concept as method' (Lenz Taguchi, 2016), the *datatext* creates leaky and porous spaces to re-think the autistic child. The chapter¹⁸⁴ becomes a porous story bag of materially-charged engagements amongst entangled relata such as adult, knowledge, listening, art, child, dis/ability, voicelessness, and education.

¹⁸³ Barney is a pseudonym chosen by a child in this study.

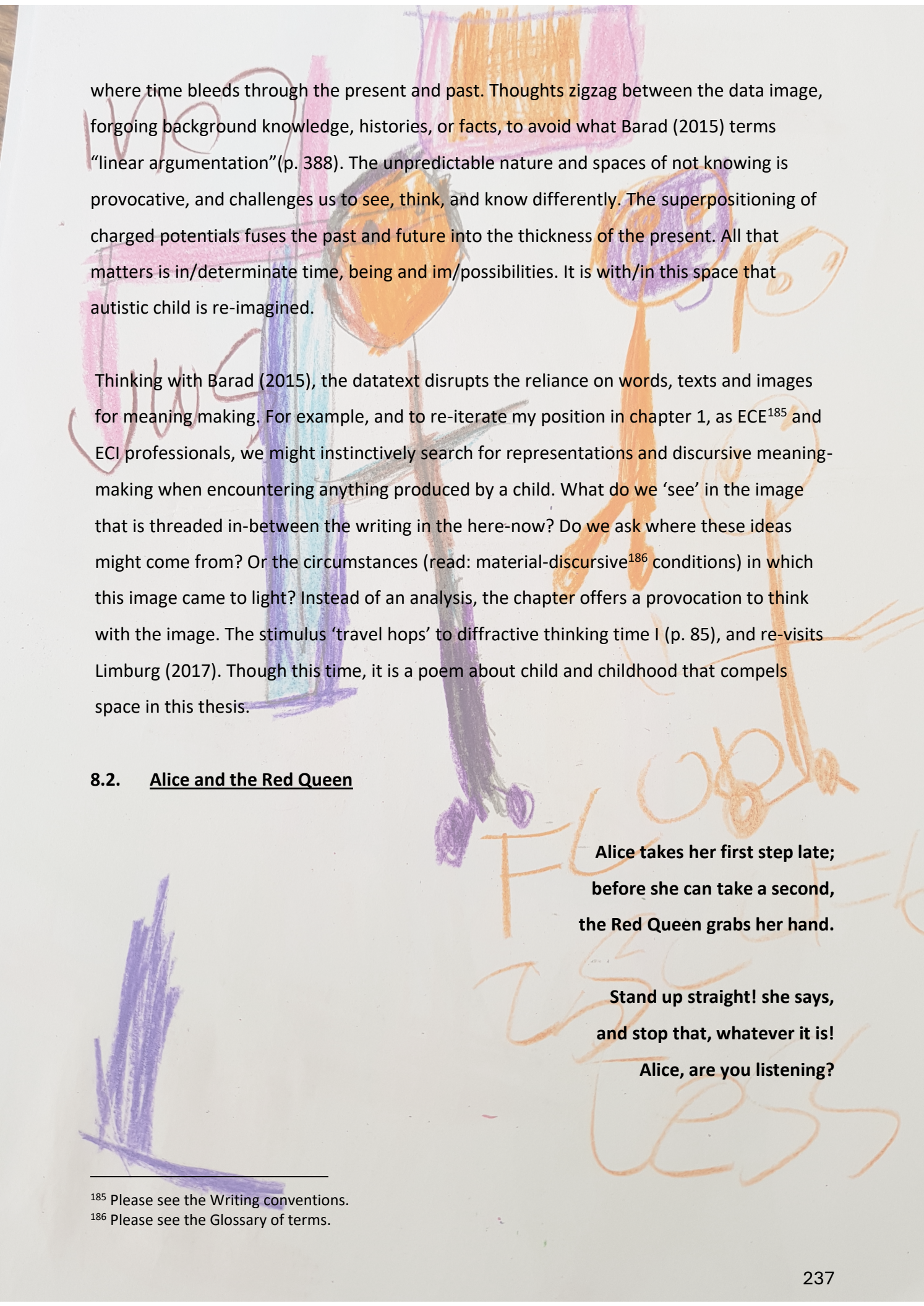
¹⁸⁴ I am grateful to the reader for embarking on what may be a disconcerting and uncomfortable reading experience. It is my hope that the practice of slow scholarship (Fullagar & Bozalek, 2022) foregrounds the affect of the (disruptive) reading-writing experience and opens up spaces for (re)new(ing) doing, thinking, and learning practices.

8.1. Datatext as diffractive potentialities

In her article *Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/realities and Queer Political imaginings* Barad (2015, p. 387) writes the following

A dark sky. Deep darkness, without a glimmer of light to settle the eye. Out of the blue, tenuous electrical sketches scribbled with liquid light appear/ disappear faster than the human eye can detect. Flashes of potential, hints of possible lines of connection alight now and again. Desire builds, as the air crackles with anticipation. Lightning bolts are born of such charged yearnings. Branching expressions of prolonged longing, barely visible filamentary gestures, disjointed tentative luminous doodlings—each faint excitation of this desiring field is a contingent and suggestive inkling of the light show yet to come. No continuous path from sky to ground can satisfy its wild imaginings, its insistence on experimenting with different possible ways to connect, playing at all matter of errant wanderings in a virtual exploration of diverse forms of coupling and dis/connected alliance. Against a dark sky it is possible to catch glimmers of the wild energetics of indeterminacies in action.

For Barad (2015), imaginings are like lightning bolts, testing out in/conceivable pathways, and traversing im/possible boundaries. Here, it is the agential dimensions of matter, sparking off imaginaries, desire, and affective corporeal engagements, that matter. Barad disrupts imaginings and imaginaries as a human-orientated, autonomous, mind-governed phenomenon that is textured by experience and thoughts only. Barad goes on further to state that imaginaries are not limited to science fiction or fantasy about what can matter, should matter, or may matter. My interest in Barad's experimentation with lightning as imaginings is motivated by new political conjuring of autistic child that emerge through a deep understanding of materiality. Knowing is about the dynamism of material entanglements, which together with the discursive, open new spaces for teaching, learning, and doing in education. Lightning generates life, and activates new ways of being in, with and through the world. It folds in the political and material forces that constitute autistic child. Weaving an image drawn from the data through the writing, this enquiry takes place with/in the electrification of flashes, jolts, smoke, and the din of thunderous thoughts,



where time bleeds through the present and past. Thoughts zigzag between the data image, forgoing background knowledge, histories, or facts, to avoid what Barad (2015) terms “linear argumentation” (p. 388). The unpredictable nature and spaces of not knowing is provocative, and challenges us to see, think, and know differently. The superpositioning of charged potentials fuses the past and future into the thickness of the present. All that matters is in/determinate time, being and im/possibilities. It is with/in this space that autistic child is re-imagined.

Thinking with Barad (2015), the datatext disrupts the reliance on words, texts and images for meaning making. For example, and to re-iterate my position in chapter 1, as ECE¹⁸⁵ and ECI professionals, we might instinctively search for representations and discursive meaning-making when encountering anything produced by a child. What do we ‘see’ in the image that is threaded in-between the writing in the here-now? Do we ask where these ideas might come from? Or the circumstances (read: material-discursive¹⁸⁶ conditions) in which this image came to light? Instead of an analysis, the chapter offers a provocation to think with the image. The stimulus ‘travel hops’ to diffractive thinking time I (p. 85), and re-visits Limburg (2017). Though this time, it is a poem about child and childhood that compels space in this thesis.

8.2. Alice and the Red Queen

**Alice takes her first step late;
before she can take a second,
the Red Queen grabs her hand.**

**Stand up straight! she says,
and stop that, whatever it is!**

Alice, are you listening?

¹⁸⁵ Please see the Writing conventions.

¹⁸⁶ Please see the Glossary of terms.



With that, the Red Queen
starts yanking Alice
in and out of rooms.

Say hello! she shrieks.
Say thank you! Say your name!
Don't chew your hair like that!

There are others, keeping pace,
but no one has to yank them.
They can run and speak together.

Smile! coos the Queen,
You won't crack your jaw!
Why are you so serious?

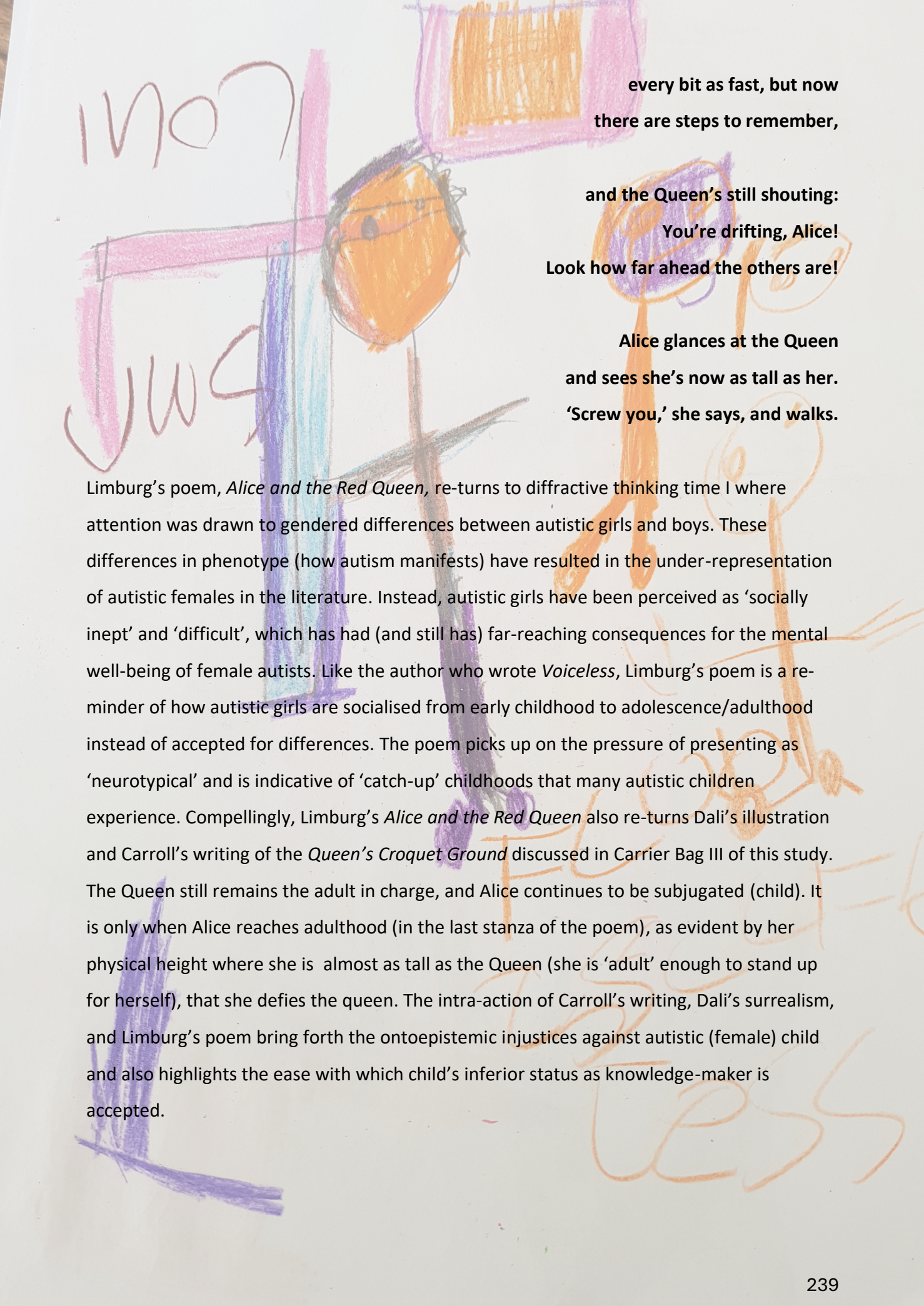
Because it is a serious effort,
this running to keep pace
with all the other ones.

Stop sulking! snaps the Queen.
You need a bra! Some heels!
And sit with your legs together!

Growing up makes running harder
but the Queen is merciless,
dragging Alice far from home.

Have some fun! she orders.
Get a boyfriend! Have a drink!
Dance for me, girl! Dance!

Dancing is worse than running:



**every bit as fast, but now
there are steps to remember,**

**and the Queen's still shouting:
You're drifting, Alice!
Look how far ahead the others are!**

**Alice glances at the Queen
and sees she's now as tall as her.
'Screw you,' she says, and walks.**

Limburg's poem, *Alice and the Red Queen*, re-turns to diffractive thinking time I where attention was drawn to gendered differences between autistic girls and boys. These differences in phenotype (how autism manifests) have resulted in the under-representation of autistic females in the literature. Instead, autistic girls have been perceived as 'socially inept' and 'difficult', which has had (and still has) far-reaching consequences for the mental well-being of female autists. Like the author who wrote *Voiceless*, Limburg's poem is a reminder of how autistic girls are socialised from early childhood to adolescence/adulthood instead of accepted for differences. The poem picks up on the pressure of presenting as 'neurotypical' and is indicative of 'catch-up' childhoods that many autistic children experience. Compellingly, Limburg's *Alice and the Red Queen* also re-turns Dali's illustration and Carroll's writing of the *Queen's Croquet Ground* discussed in Carrier Bag III of this study. The Queen still remains the adult in charge, and Alice continues to be subjugated (child). It is only when Alice reaches adulthood (in the last stanza of the poem), as evident by her physical height where she is almost as tall as the Queen (she is 'adult' enough to stand up for herself), that she defies the queen. The intra-action of Carroll's writing, Dali's surrealism, and Limburg's poem bring forth the ontoepistemic injustices against autistic (female) child and also highlights the ease with which child's inferior status as knowledge-maker is accepted.

For philosophers of childhood¹⁸⁷ the historic marginalisation of children in philosophy is embedded in Western (adult) perspectives of the autonomous, rational subject; hegemonic discourses that outline the progression of logic, and other facets of human life such as biological, social, and psychological growth (see for example Matthews, 1994). Kennedy (2006, p.2) argues that child and childhood are culturally and socially mediated constructions that have strong paternalistic roots in the fields of psychology, sociology, and pedagogy, and in order to understand child, we need to look at the theoretical frameworks which have laid claim to how child and childhood are understood. These discourses have projected 'lineages' (timelines) of human maturity, growth, and intelligence that can be traced back to Darwinian (evolutionary accounts of speciesism), Aristotelian and Platonic perspectives of the human knowing subject (Kennedy, 2006. Murriss, 2016). Such 'paternalistic ideologies' overlook the philosophical relevance of children's lived experiences, especially children's testimonies which are perceived to lack intellectual rigour in relation to adult claims to knowledge (Baumtrog, 2018; Kennedy, 2015; Murriss, 2016).

Burman (2017) states that if we are to understand the *construction* of child and childhood, then at the very least we need to attend to embedded contextual issues such as interpersonal relations, politics, cultural, history and so forth. For Cannella (2000), the construction of child and childhood has emerged from experimental and behavioural methods which have led to categories of performance such as gifted, intelligent, slow, weak. As discussed in chapter 5, these labels have had profound implications on how and where children are educated. How can we disrupt these constructions of child/hood? How can we undo adult claims about the lineages of child/hood?

8.3. Disrupting the nature/culture binary through posthumanist figurations of child

Murriss's (2016, 2018, 2021) concept of ontoepistemic injustice, where children's claims to knowledge are invalidated by adults on account of ontological and epistemic injustices, has been taken up throughout this thesis. Key to her argument is the human-centredness of

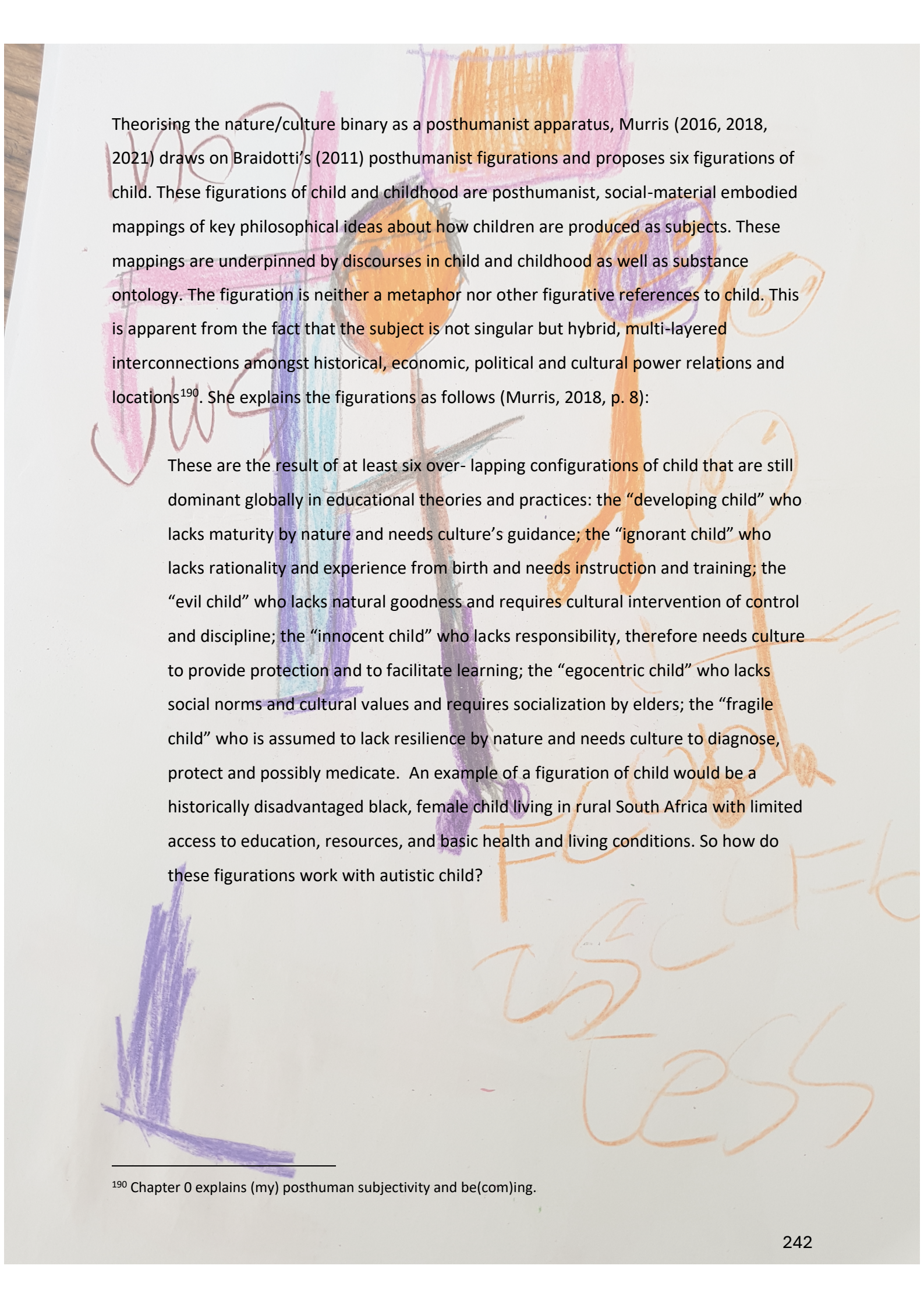
¹⁸⁷ Kennedy (2006) explains that Philosophy of Childhood is a field of enquiry that is concerned with children's knowledges and experiences of childhood in a manner that is philosophically reflective of assumptions, constructs and frameworks that underpin dominant biological, social, pedagogical, and psychological theories.

teaching and learning practices which foreground the logic of representationalism and Cartesian dualism¹⁸⁸.

A significant dichotomy which has emerged is the nature/culture binary. Now what is relevant about this binary? It articulates human exceptionalism by separating nature from culture as evident by the forward slash. This separation has created categories of preference (i.e. culture being superior to nature) and consequently unequal power relations. So, all beings traditionally associated with 'wild' and 'nature', such as animals, children, women, and those who are not white ('savage'), able-bodied, rational, heterosexual are considered lesser beings than their cultivated counterparts. 'Nature', and all associated with the concept, lacks in comparison with culture. This is what Western metaphysics has brought into existence since Plato, with a strong re-turning to dualism during the Enlightenment and Descartes' (in)famous 'cogito ergo sum' – 'I think therefore I am' (see chapter 3 for further discussion). As a result, according to Murriss (2016), child is always seen as 'lacking' by the 'more developed' adult. And as my thesis highlights, also dis/abled child. Individuals/entities that 'lack' in maturity and development are viewed as fragile, innocent, and weak in these development discourses, a position very much reinforced by developmental psychology¹⁸⁹. I argue that dis/abled child is associated with nature and the prejudice is that it needs culture to remedy the 'lack'. Especially relevant is the argument that child is already developmentally inferior. All and any interventions with child are necessary merely on account of child *being* child. Drawing on Matthew's work, Murriss (2016) refers to the recapitulation theory "where the child's intellectual development is compared with ('recapitulates') the development of the species (with the child as nature, as the origin of the species) from 'savage' to 'civilized'" (p. 81). In addition, the adult as 'mature, knowing subject' becomes the means through which 'the lack of' in children is remedied. In education, the nature/culture binary materialises the adult role as guide, instructor, trainer, discipliner, facilitator, protector, diagnoser, and medicator (Murriss, 2018, p. 8).

¹⁸⁸ See chapters 3 and 6 for more detail.

¹⁸⁹ See Erica Burman's important work on deconstructing developmental psychology.



Theorising the nature/culture binary as a posthumanist apparatus, Murriss (2016, 2018, 2021) draws on Braidotti's (2011) posthumanist figurations and proposes six figurations of child. These figurations of child and childhood are posthumanist, social-material embodied mappings of key philosophical ideas about how children are produced as subjects. These mappings are underpinned by discourses in child and childhood as well as substance ontology. The figuration is neither a metaphor nor other figurative references to child. This is apparent from the fact that the subject is not singular but hybrid, multi-layered interconnections amongst historical, economic, political and cultural power relations and locations¹⁹⁰. She explains the figurations as follows (Murriss, 2018, p. 8):

These are the result of at least six overlapping configurations of child that are still dominant globally in educational theories and practices: the "developing child" who lacks maturity by nature and needs culture's guidance; the "ignorant child" who lacks rationality and experience from birth and needs instruction and training; the "evil child" who lacks natural goodness and requires cultural intervention of control and discipline; the "innocent child" who lacks responsibility, therefore needs culture to provide protection and to facilitate learning; the "egocentric child" who lacks social norms and cultural values and requires socialization by elders; the "fragile child" who is assumed to lack resilience by nature and needs culture to diagnose, protect and possibly medicate. An example of a figuration of child would be a historically disadvantaged black, female child living in rural South Africa with limited access to education, resources, and basic health and living conditions. So how do these figurations work with autistic child?

¹⁹⁰ Chapter 0 explains (my) posthuman subjectivity and be(com)ing.

Figurations of child	Theoretical influences	What child lacks by Nature	What Culture needs to provide child
Developing child	Aristotle, Darwin, Piaget, Vygotsky	Maturity	Maturation; guidance
Ignorant child	Plato, Aristotle, Locke	Rationality; experience	Instruction; training
Evil child	Christianity esp. Protestantism	Trustworthiness; natural goodness	Control, discipline inculcation; Drawing in
Innocent child	Romantics (Rousseau)	Responsibility	Protection facilitation
Egocentric child	Piaget	Empathy; social norms and values	Socialization by elders inculcation
Fragile child	Psycho-medical scientific model	Resilience	Protection medication diagnoses; remediation


Figure 8.1. Posthuman figurations of child (Reprinted with permission from Karin Murris)

8.4. Disabled¹⁹¹ childhood studies and the construction of dis/abled child/hood

Disabled child and childhood studies is a complex field of enquiry that by and large considers childhood dis/ability as a socially constructed phenomenon that is produced through social relations and cultural representations of the developing human child (Burman et al., 2017). Inasmuch as dis/ability attends to the physiology and anatomy of bodies, dis/abled childhood studies argue that such bodies are marked with the effects of marginalisation and power, and consequently the realities of living with bodily impairments in relation to 'normal' child/hoods (Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014). Calder and Mullin (2019) state that to depict dis/ability as a social construction is tantamount to a lopsided ontological perspective of human differences. They point out further that the biological constitutions matter (these are material matters) in how social, and worldly relations are enacted. As they state: "... impairments are complex and multidimensional, rather than simply inert features of human life which social circumstances then render 'problematic' or not" (Calder & Mullin, 2019, p. 265). Pain, for example, is real, and cannot be dismissed as mere constructions of social and political powers.

Negotiating rights and justice with/in the materiality of be(com)ing dis/abled are key arguments in Disability Studies (see for example, Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Garland-

¹⁹¹ Please see the Writing conventions.

A background drawing of a child with a purple head, orange body, and purple limbs, standing on a purple base. The drawing is done with thick, expressive strokes of colored markers or crayons. The child's head is a large purple circle with some internal lines, and the body is a vertical orange shape. The limbs are purple, and the feet are also purple. The drawing is positioned behind the text, partially overlapping it.

Thomson, 2005). In addition, these scholars have asserted that the ontology of dis/ability offers critical insights into the workings of capitalism, neoliberalism and process of human 'normalisation'. It is hardly surprising then that Disability theorists have always interrogated, challenged and deconstructed the classical human subject in order to undo the injustices against dis/abled people. However, recently there has been a re-newed interest in dis/ability from a posthumanist perspective (DeShong, 2012; Feely, 2016). In particular, there is an emerging scholarship on dis/abled-autistic child and education from a posthumanist perspective (Allan, 2014; Allan & Youdell, 2015; Douglas et al., 2019; Goodley et al., 2015). Posthumanism opens up new spaces for conceptualising the production of autism as well as the binaries which demarcate autistic child as incapable, unable and undesirable, thus enabling autism to be viewed as an emergent, lively and ongoing configuration of phenomena rather than a static and fixed label (Frigerio et al., 2018).

This thesis argues that dis/abled child/hoods are figurations of how and why early child/hood services and specialised education have come into being. Both child/hood studies and Disabled Studies resist the linear trajectory of human development and the polarity of concepts such as competence/incompetence, mature/immature, able/disable, opening up new areas for research beyond borders in both disciplines. For example, Disability Studies in child/hood foreground a fluid, flexible construction of child along the able/dis/able continuum. Furthermore, the nature of developmental delay disrupts the notion of age-appropriate milestones and works with/in the capability and quality of life approaches. Thus, reading Disabled childhood studies through childhood studies permits an ethics of affirmation (Braidotti, 2013).

But what of the specific injustices against autistic child? Ontoepistemic injustices and ageist prejudices against autistic children are exacerbated on the basis of being dis/abled child. The ontology of dis/ability prejudices the child not only in education but in life overall (Jones & Liddiard, 2018). There are three reasons for this. The first reason is that children with dis/ability and mental health issues have always been constituted on the basis of impairment, vulnerability and service provision (Nadesan, 2005; Sarrett, 2011; Waltz, 2023). In comparison to neurotypical peers, dis/abled children have been portrayed as passive, dependent and incapable. Consequently, these children experience ontological injustice

owing to the fact they are deemed to lack voice¹⁹² and thought, be(com)ing epistemically excluded on the basis of lacking power, agency and autonomy (McClaughlin et al., 2016). A second reason stems from the concomitant injustices which have arisen from deficit-orientated discourses and manifested in the form of systemic and cultural violence. Often this violence has been portrayed through metaphors of imprisonment and fragmentation (Sarrett, 2011). For instance, that autism has been associated with bodymind deficits implies an existence that is not whole (fragmented), and which subsequently breaks down (fragments) families, communities and the broader social contexts. The (burdensome) care required for such children becomes an 'imprisonment' for significant others (McClaughlin et al., 2016; Sarrett, 2011). A third reason relates to the notion of ageist prejudices. Indeed, it is remarkable that even with/in the category of autism, children are afforded less epistemic privilege in comparison to autistic adults. This is evident from the autistic adult/child binary that positions the child as far less capable than the (already) impaired adult. Burman and colleagues (2017) highlight child's position as dis/abled child, whereas dis/abled adults are regarded as the 'eternal child'. Yergeau (2018) attributes this schism to the aetiology/causes of autism perpetuated through research on the developmental nature of autism, early onset of diagnosis and urgency of early childhood interventions. It is also worth noting that the notion of 'outgrowing' or lessening the autism symptomology over time furthers the adult/child binary. Incidentally, the ageist prejudice appears to be pervasive with/in the literature on neurodiversity and critical autism studies. One of my most striking encounters during this study was the (child) participants' inherent assumption of the adult/child binary. They expected that I would *teach* them philosophy and that their role as learners was to accept whatever I was to teach them. Much of the early encounters with the participants was spent trying to deconstruct the adult/child binaries that the participants were accustomed to in education. And often, the provocation to engage, ask questions and present thoughts/opinions was met with anger and resentment. Thinking theory/practice together, I found myself asking what stories were told of *be(com)ing* autistic? Who tells these stories? How are these stories told? And what comes to matter in such stories? Let us pause in the here-now and think with the datatext.

¹⁹² Voice refers to in the capacities of physical, symbolic and activism.

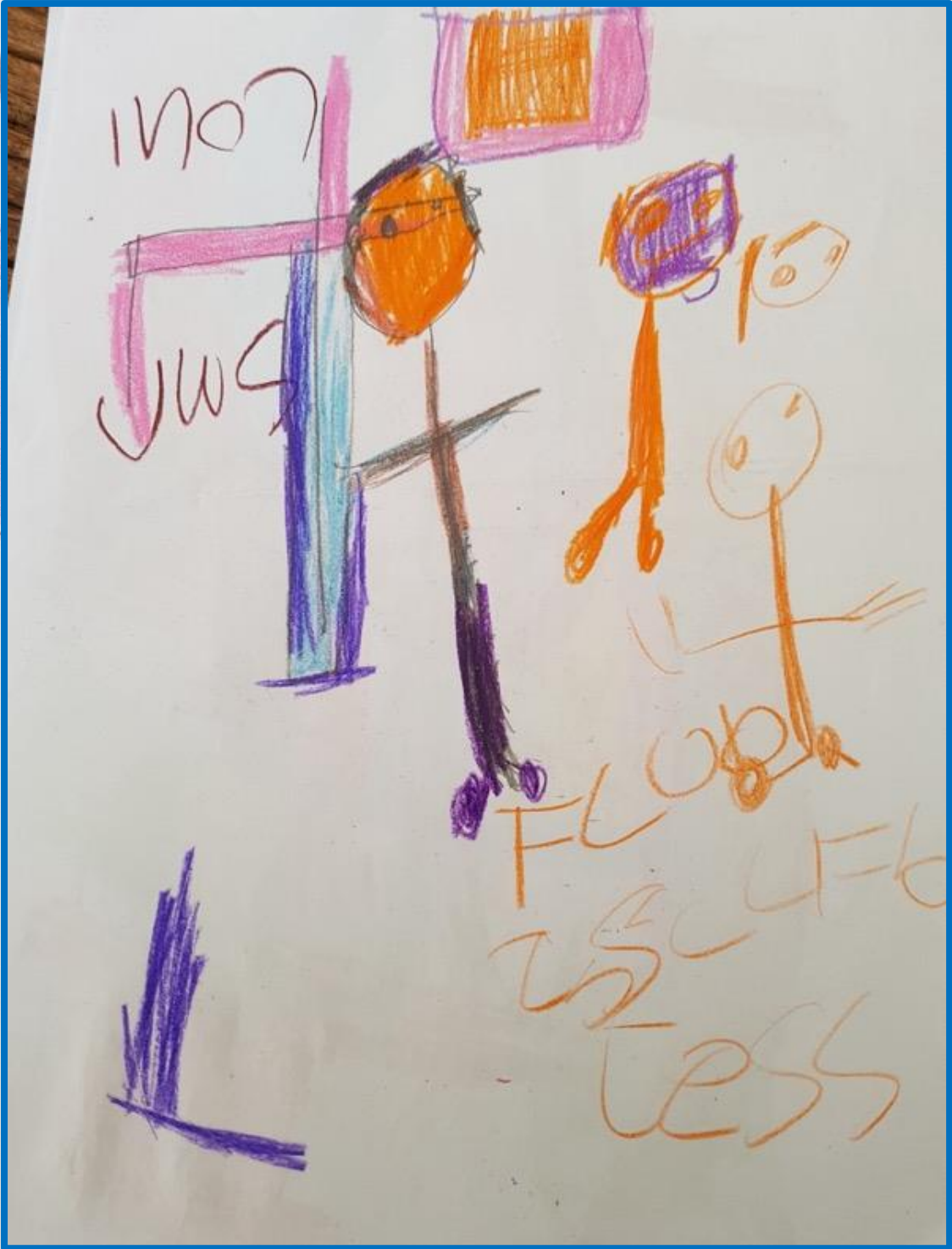
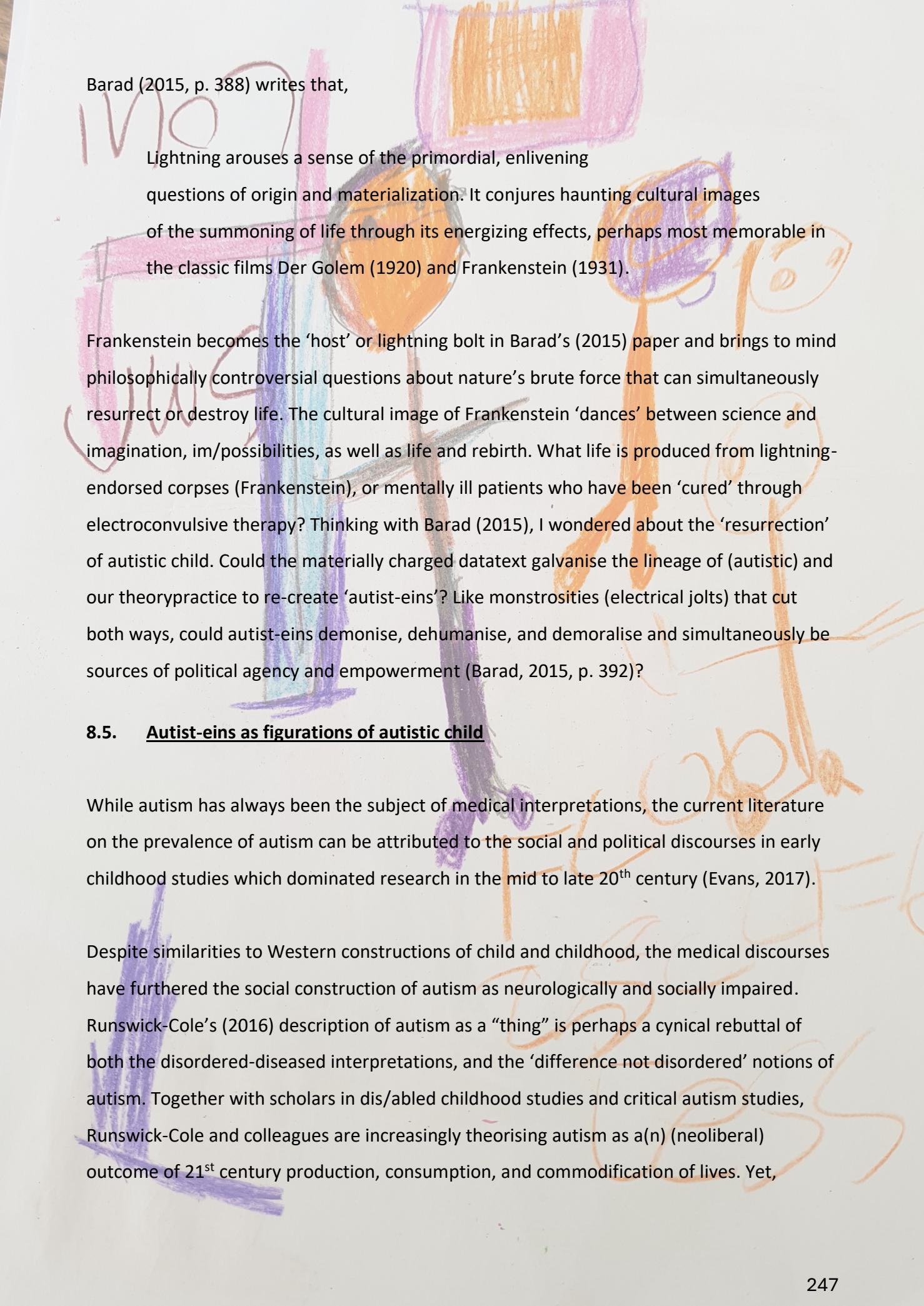


Figure 8.2. Re-turning datatext as autist-ein



Barad (2015, p. 388) writes that,

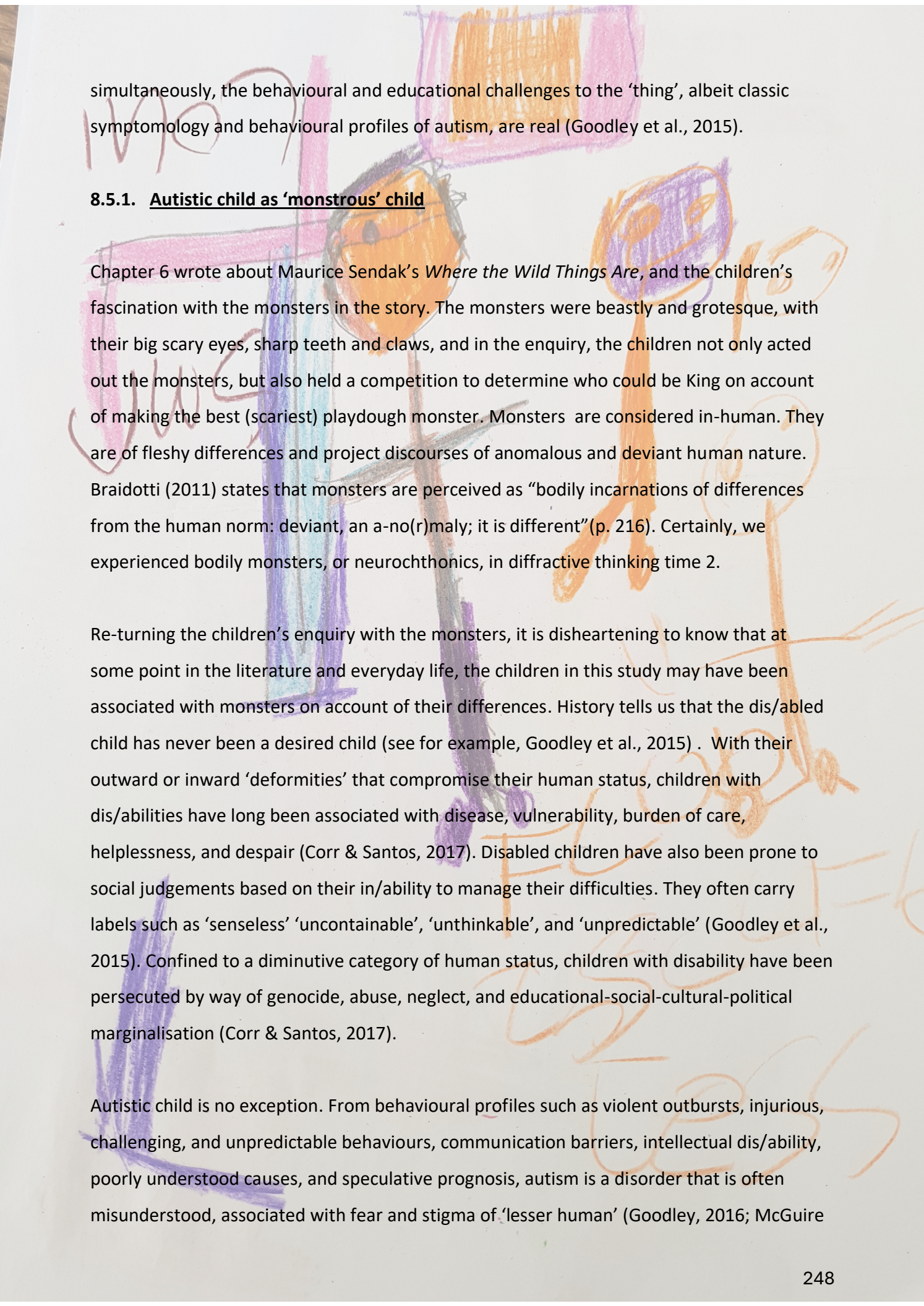
Lightning arouses a sense of the primordial, enlivening questions of origin and materialization. It conjures haunting cultural images of the summoning of life through its energizing effects, perhaps most memorable in the classic films *Der Golem* (1920) and *Frankenstein* (1931).

Frankenstein becomes the 'host' or lightning bolt in Barad's (2015) paper and brings to mind philosophically controversial questions about nature's brute force that can simultaneously resurrect or destroy life. The cultural image of Frankenstein 'dances' between science and imagination, im/possibilities, as well as life and rebirth. What life is produced from lightning-endorsed corpses (Frankenstein), or mentally ill patients who have been 'cured' through electroconvulsive therapy? Thinking with Barad (2015), I wondered about the 'resurrection' of autistic child. Could the materially charged datatext galvanise the lineage of (autistic) and our theorypractice to re-create 'autist-eins'? Like monstrosities (electrical jolts) that cut both ways, could autist-eins demonise, dehumanise, and demoralise and simultaneously be sources of political agency and empowerment (Barad, 2015, p. 392)?

8.5. Autist-eins as figurations of autistic child

While autism has always been the subject of medical interpretations, the current literature on the prevalence of autism can be attributed to the social and political discourses in early childhood studies which dominated research in the mid to late 20th century (Evans, 2017).

Despite similarities to Western constructions of child and childhood, the medical discourses have furthered the social construction of autism as neurologically and socially impaired. Runswick-Cole's (2016) description of autism as a "thing" is perhaps a cynical rebuttal of both the disordered-diseased interpretations, and the 'difference not disordered' notions of autism. Together with scholars in dis/abled childhood studies and critical autism studies, Runswick-Cole and colleagues are increasingly theorising autism as a(n) (neoliberal) outcome of 21st century production, consumption, and commodification of lives. Yet,



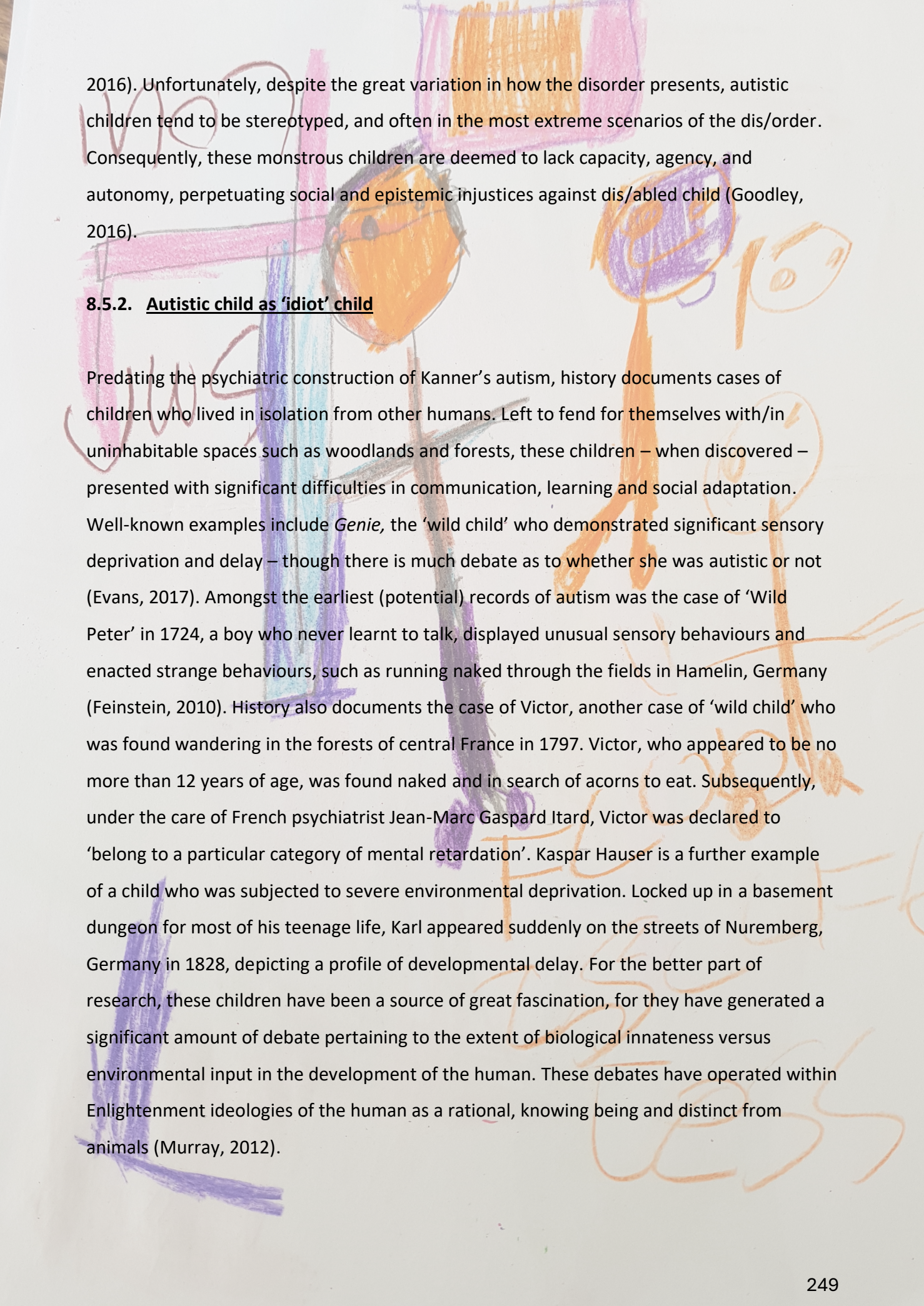
simultaneously, the behavioural and educational challenges to the 'thing', albeit classic symptomology and behavioural profiles of autism, are real (Goodley et al., 2015).

8.5.1. Autistic child as 'monstrous' child

Chapter 6 wrote about Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and the children's fascination with the monsters in the story. The monsters were beastly and grotesque, with their big scary eyes, sharp teeth and claws, and in the enquiry, the children not only acted out the monsters, but also held a competition to determine who could be King on account of making the best (scariest) playdough monster. Monsters are considered in-human. They are of fleshy differences and project discourses of anomalous and deviant human nature. Braidotti (2011) states that monsters are perceived as "bodily incarnations of differences from the human norm: deviant, an a-no(r)maly; it is different" (p. 216). Certainly, we experienced bodily monsters, or neurochthonics, in diffractive thinking time 2.

Re-turning the children's enquiry with the monsters, it is disheartening to know that at some point in the literature and everyday life, the children in this study may have been associated with monsters on account of their differences. History tells us that the dis/abled child has never been a desired child (see for example, Goodley et al., 2015) . With their outward or inward 'deformities' that compromise their human status, children with dis/abilities have long been associated with disease, vulnerability, burden of care, helplessness, and despair (Corr & Santos, 2017). Disabled children have also been prone to social judgements based on their in/ability to manage their difficulties. They often carry labels such as 'senseless' 'uncontainable', 'unthinkable', and 'unpredictable' (Goodley et al., 2015). Confined to a diminutive category of human status, children with disability have been persecuted by way of genocide, abuse, neglect, and educational-social-cultural-political marginalisation (Corr & Santos, 2017).

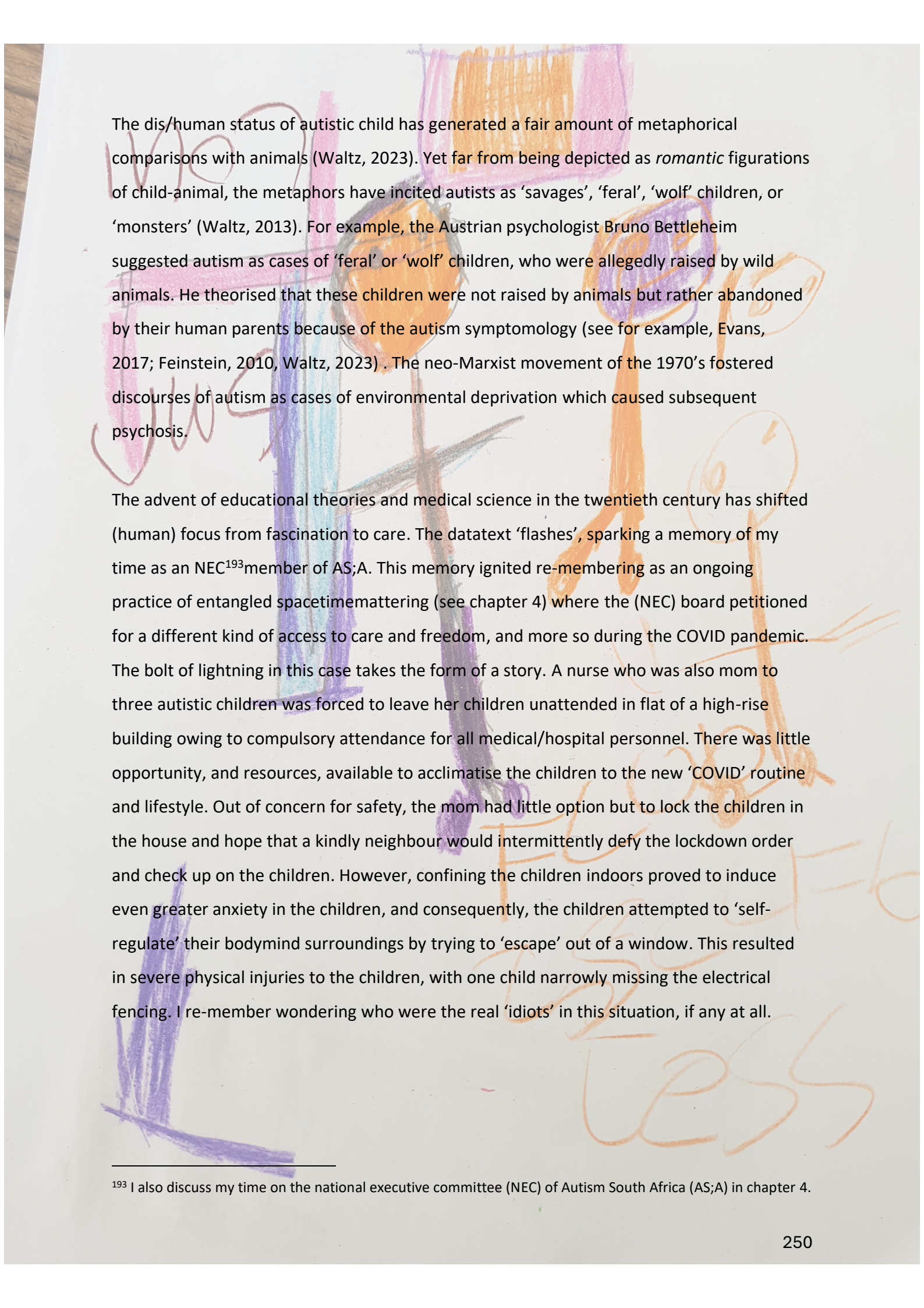
Autistic child is no exception. From behavioural profiles such as violent outbursts, injurious, challenging, and unpredictable behaviours, communication barriers, intellectual dis/ability, poorly understood causes, and speculative prognosis, autism is a disorder that is often misunderstood, associated with fear and stigma of 'lesser human' (Goodley, 2016; McGuire



2016). Unfortunately, despite the great variation in how the disorder presents, autistic children tend to be stereotyped, and often in the most extreme scenarios of the disorder. Consequently, these monstrous children are deemed to lack capacity, agency, and autonomy, perpetuating social and epistemic injustices against disabled children (Goodley, 2016).

8.5.2. Autistic child as 'idiot' child

Predating the psychiatric construction of Kanner's autism, history documents cases of children who lived in isolation from other humans. Left to fend for themselves with/in uninhabitable spaces such as woodlands and forests, these children – when discovered – presented with significant difficulties in communication, learning and social adaptation. Well-known examples include *Genie*, the 'wild child' who demonstrated significant sensory deprivation and delay – though there is much debate as to whether she was autistic or not (Evans, 2017). Amongst the earliest (potential) records of autism was the case of 'Wild Peter' in 1724, a boy who never learnt to talk, displayed unusual sensory behaviours and enacted strange behaviours, such as running naked through the fields in Hamelin, Germany (Feinstein, 2010). History also documents the case of Victor, another case of 'wild child' who was found wandering in the forests of central France in 1797. Victor, who appeared to be no more than 12 years of age, was found naked and in search of acorns to eat. Subsequently, under the care of French psychiatrist Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard, Victor was declared to 'belong to a particular category of mental retardation'. Kaspar Hauser is a further example of a child who was subjected to severe environmental deprivation. Locked up in a basement dungeon for most of his teenage life, Karl appeared suddenly on the streets of Nuremberg, Germany in 1828, depicting a profile of developmental delay. For the better part of research, these children have been a source of great fascination, for they have generated a significant amount of debate pertaining to the extent of biological innateness versus environmental input in the development of the human. These debates have operated within Enlightenment ideologies of the human as a rational, knowing being and distinct from animals (Murray, 2012).



The dis/human status of autistic child has generated a fair amount of metaphorical comparisons with animals (Waltz, 2023). Yet far from being depicted as *romantic* figurations of child-animal, the metaphors have incited autists as ‘savages’, ‘feral’, ‘wolf’ children, or ‘monsters’ (Waltz, 2013). For example, the Austrian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim suggested autism as cases of ‘feral’ or ‘wolf’ children, who were allegedly raised by wild animals. He theorised that these children were not raised by animals but rather abandoned by their human parents because of the autism symptomology (see for example, Evans, 2017; Feinstein, 2010, Waltz, 2023) . The neo-Marxist movement of the 1970’s fostered discourses of autism as cases of environmental deprivation which caused subsequent psychosis.

The advent of educational theories and medical science in the twentieth century has shifted (human) focus from fascination to care. The datatext ‘flashes’, sparking a memory of my time as an NEC¹⁹³ member of AS;A. This memory ignited re-membling as an ongoing practice of entangled spacetimemattering (see chapter 4) where the (NEC) board petitioned for a different kind of access to care and freedom, and more so during the COVID pandemic. The bolt of lightning in this case takes the form of a story. A nurse who was also mom to three autistic children was forced to leave her children unattended in flat of a high-rise building owing to compulsory attendance for all medical/hospital personnel. There was little opportunity, and resources, available to acclimatise the children to the new ‘COVID’ routine and lifestyle. Out of concern for safety, the mom had little option but to lock the children in the house and hope that a kindly neighbour would intermittently defy the lockdown order and check up on the children. However, confining the children indoors proved to induce even greater anxiety in the children, and consequently, the children attempted to ‘self-regulate’ their bodymind surroundings by trying to ‘escape’ out of a window. This resulted in severe physical injuries to the children, with one child narrowly missing the electrical fencing. I re-member wondering who were the real ‘idiots’ in this situation, if any at all.

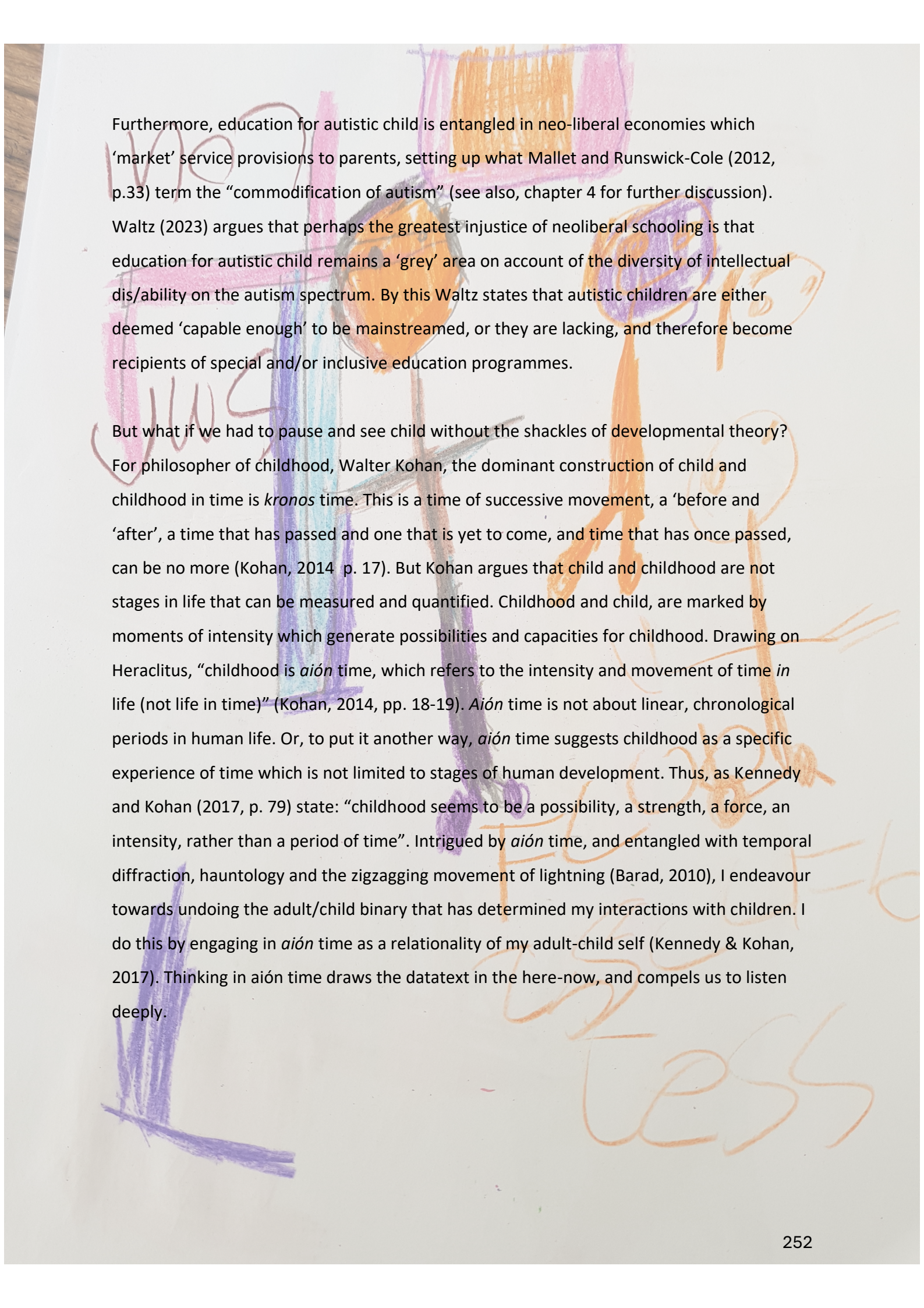
¹⁹³ I also discuss my time on the national executive committee (NEC) of Autism South Africa (AS;A) in chapter 4.

8.5.3. Autistic child and the nature/culture binary

The history of autism indicates a strong biological, if not pathology-orientated perspective on autism. Given the neurobiological underpinnings of autism, many scholars agree that autism has always existed, though most likely incorrectly diagnosed (Bogdashina, 2010; Feinstein, 2010). Yet, comparative studies with children in refugee camps and migrant parents indicate the similarities of trauma, neglect and autism. For McLaughlin and colleagues (2016), disabled childhoods attend to the historic shifts in the lives of children and families. Historically, dis/abled children were institutionalised, abused and abandoned. Thus, it appears that the early diagnosis of autism was embedded with/in nature/culture dichotomies. As Bogdashina (2010) states, autism was either attributed to childhood schizophrenia, or cultural theorisations of 'fools'. However, fragility, developmental delay, social-learning-communicative inadequacies of autistic child do not establish child as adult-in-the-making, creating melancholic impressions of the child. Indeed, even in the present era, dis/abled children are mourned for, if not undesired, for their lack of human competency. It is then hardly surprising that dis/abled children are often contextualised within ethical discussions about abortion or quality of life (Calder & Mullin, 2019).

8.5.4. Autistic child as commodity

In the 21st century, education operates with/in the parameters of the fourth industrial revolution, where advanced capitalism determines how lives are lived, or more importantly, *which lives matter*. Situated with/in neoliberal policies, education is increasingly foregrounding the significance of superior cognitive skills for social-political and economic gains (Braidotti, 2018). Although child is often not spoken about by key posthumanist theorists, such as Braidotti and Barad (Murriss, 2021, 2022), the child with poor language and communication abilities presents as even more of an outlier insofar as thinking is concerned. Autistic child does not fit into a neat category of (language-cognitive) impairment. Nor does the autistic child follow the typical, linear expectations in terms of interventions, education, and support. Often, such children 'fall through the cracks', missing out on learning opportunities because we simply don't know how to enable their unique learning styles outside theoretical frameworks of language, learning and cognition.



Furthermore, education for autistic child is entangled in neo-liberal economies which 'market' service provisions to parents, setting up what Mallet and Runswick-Cole (2012, p.33) term the "commodification of autism" (see also, chapter 4 for further discussion). Waltz (2023) argues that perhaps the greatest injustice of neoliberal schooling is that education for autistic child remains a 'grey' area on account of the diversity of intellectual dis/ability on the autism spectrum. By this Waltz states that autistic children are either deemed 'capable enough' to be mainstreamed, or they are lacking, and therefore become recipients of special and/or inclusive education programmes.

But what if we had to pause and see child without the shackles of developmental theory? For philosopher of childhood, Walter Kohan, the dominant construction of child and childhood in time is *kronos* time. This is a time of successive movement, a 'before and 'after', a time that has passed and one that is yet to come, and time that has once passed, can be no more (Kohan, 2014 p. 17). But Kohan argues that child and childhood are not stages in life that can be measured and quantified. Childhood and child, are marked by moments of intensity which generate possibilities and capacities for childhood. Drawing on Heraclitus, "childhood is *aión* time, which refers to the intensity and movement of time *in* life (not life in time)" (Kohan, 2014, pp. 18-19). *Aión* time is not about linear, chronological periods in human life. Or, to put it another way, *aión* time suggests childhood as a specific experience of time which is not limited to stages of human development. Thus, as Kennedy and Kohan (2017, p. 79) state: "childhood seems to be a possibility, a strength, a force, an intensity, rather than a period of time". Intrigued by *aión* time, and entangled with temporal diffraction, hauntology and the zigzagging movement of lightning (Barad, 2010), I endeavour towards undoing the adult/child binary that has determined my interactions with children. I do this by engaging in *aión* time as a relationality of my adult-child self (Kennedy & Kohan, 2017). Thinking in *aión* time draws the datatext in the here-now, and compels us to listen deeply.

8.6. 'Galvanising' autistic child through datatext

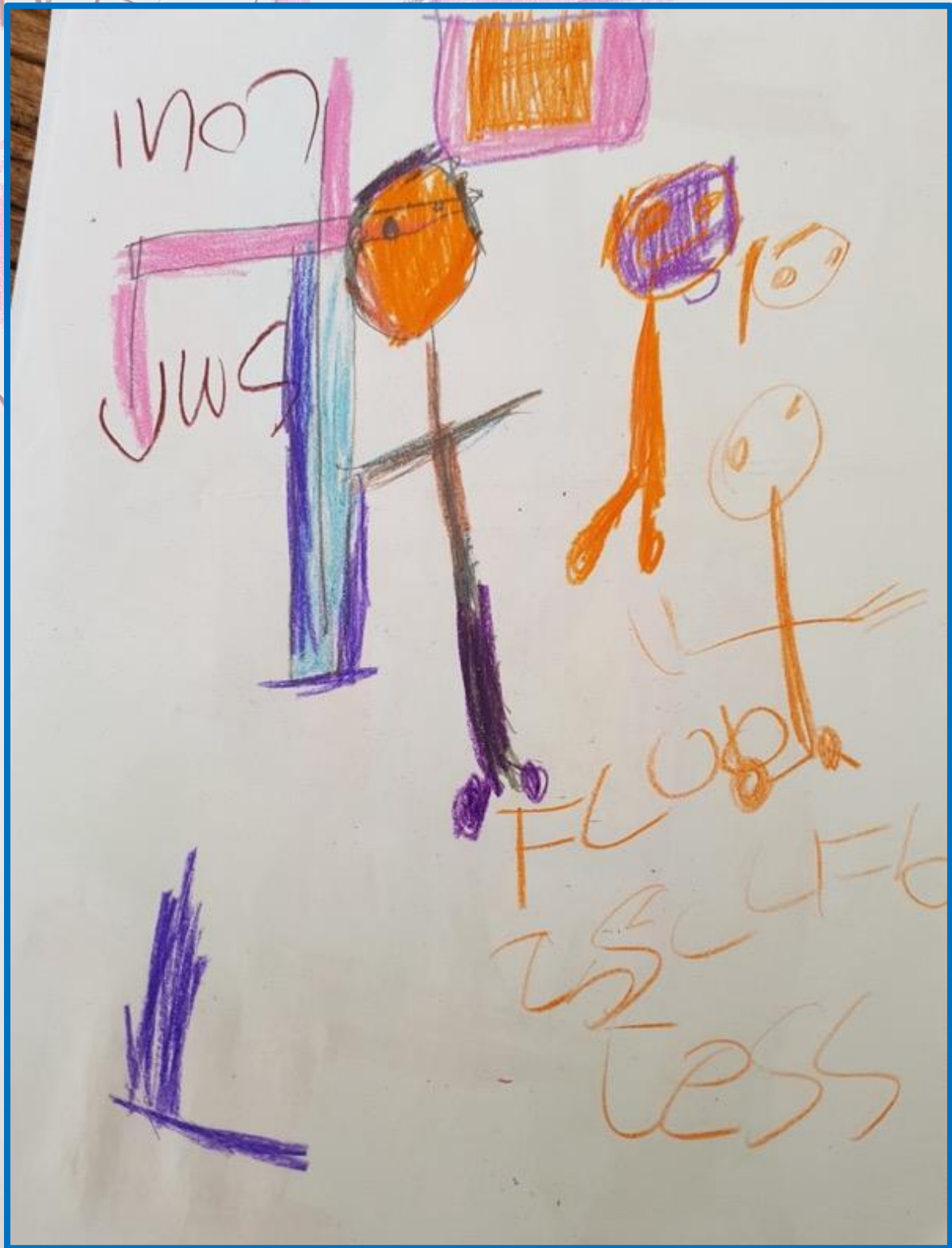
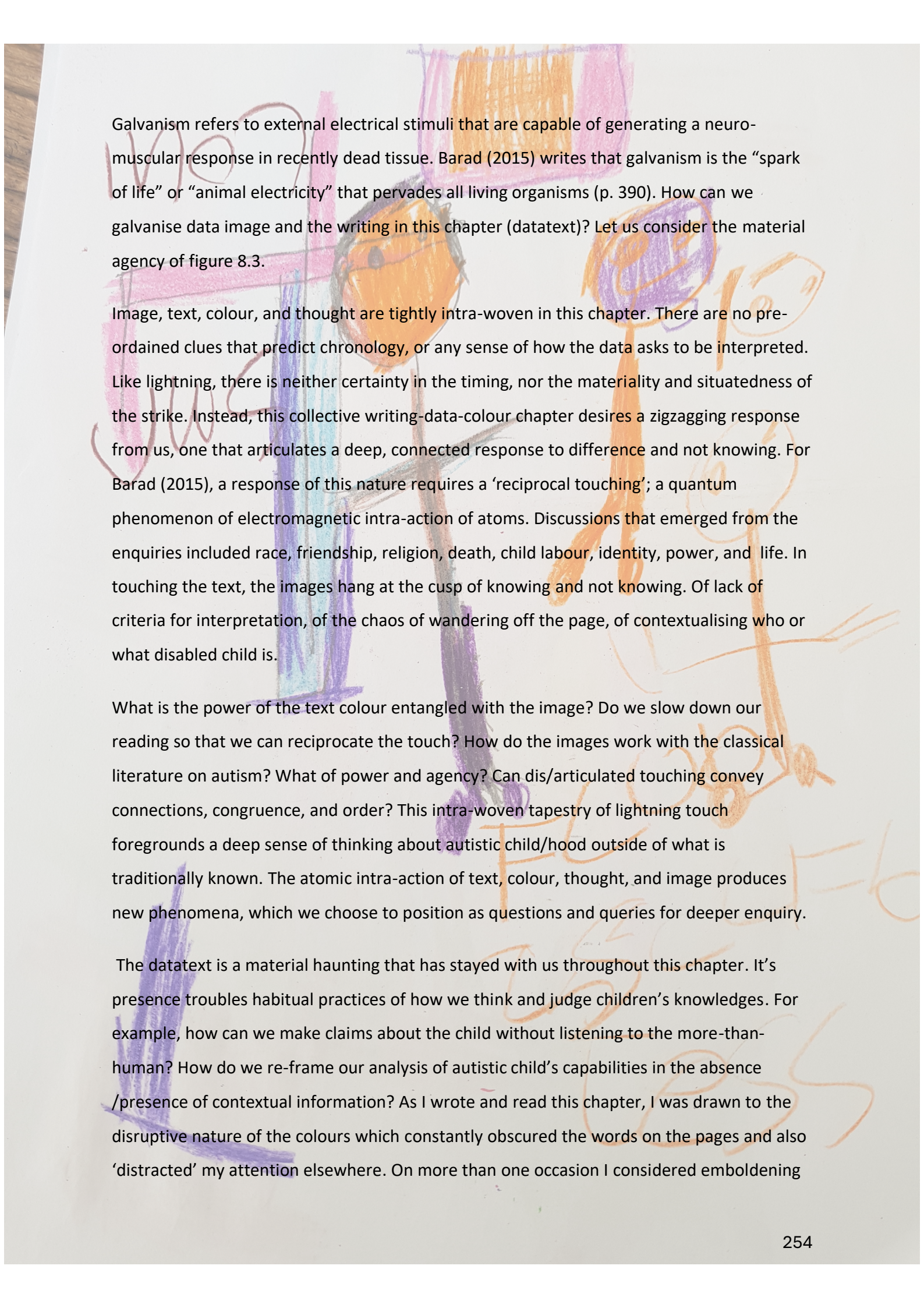


Figure 8.3. Thinking with datatext in aión time

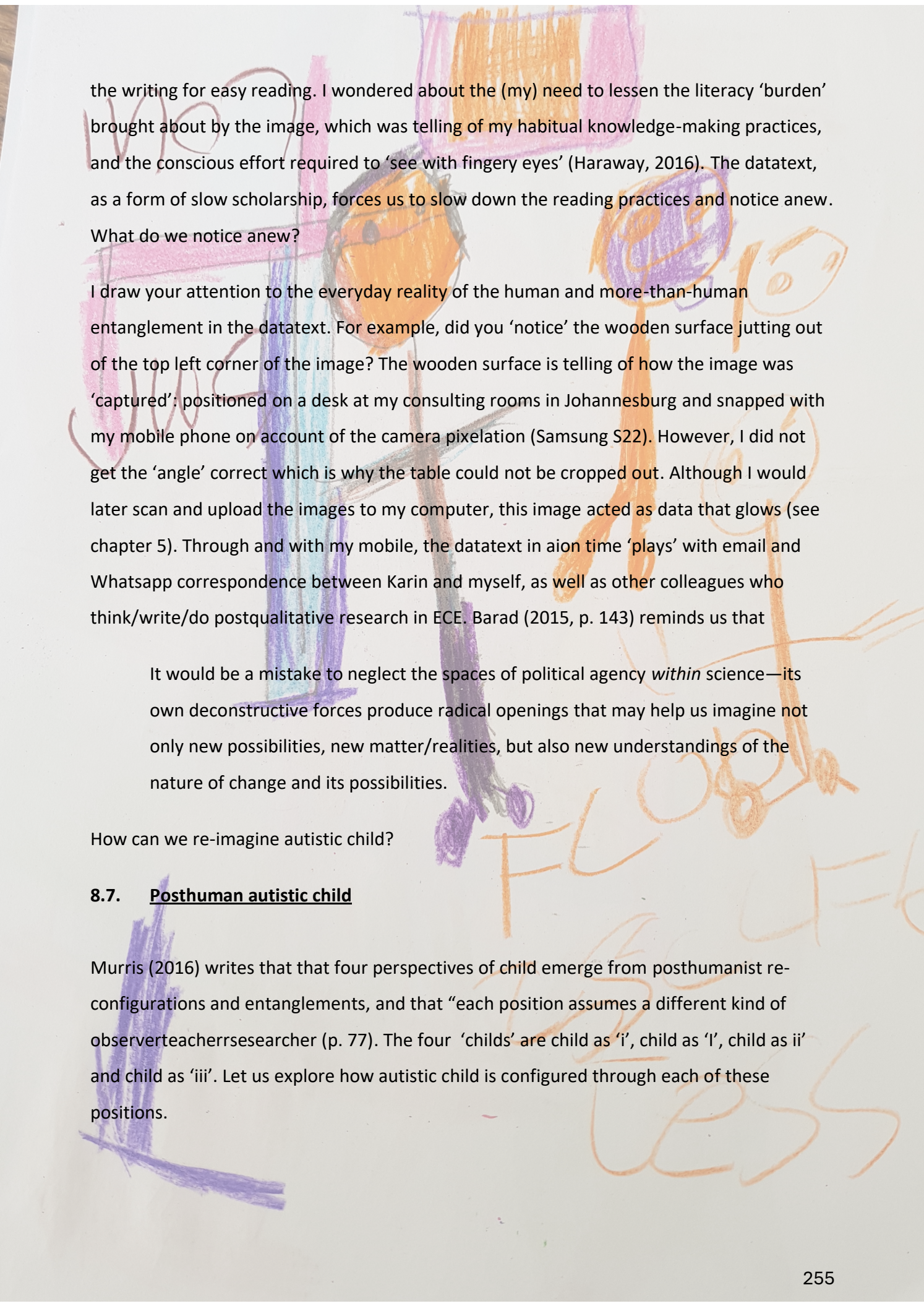


Galvanism refers to external electrical stimuli that are capable of generating a neuro-muscular response in recently dead tissue. Barad (2015) writes that galvanism is the “spark of life” or “animal electricity” that pervades all living organisms (p. 390). How can we galvanise data image and the writing in this chapter (datatext)? Let us consider the material agency of figure 8.3.

Image, text, colour, and thought are tightly intra-woven in this chapter. There are no pre-ordained clues that predict chronology, or any sense of how the data asks to be interpreted. Like lightning, there is neither certainty in the timing, nor the materiality and situatedness of the strike. Instead, this collective writing-data-colour chapter desires a zigzagging response from us, one that articulates a deep, connected response to difference and not knowing. For Barad (2015), a response of this nature requires a ‘reciprocal touching’; a quantum phenomenon of electromagnetic intra-action of atoms. Discussions that emerged from the enquiries included race, friendship, religion, death, child labour, identity, power, and life. In touching the text, the images hang at the cusp of knowing and not knowing. Of lack of criteria for interpretation, of the chaos of wandering off the page, of contextualising who or what disabled child is.

What is the power of the text colour entangled with the image? Do we slow down our reading so that we can reciprocate the touch? How do the images work with the classical literature on autism? What of power and agency? Can dis/articulated touching convey connections, congruence, and order? This intra-woven tapestry of lightning touch foregrounds a deep sense of thinking about autistic child/hood outside of what is traditionally known. The atomic intra-action of text, colour, thought, and image produces new phenomena, which we choose to position as questions and queries for deeper enquiry.

The datatext is a material haunting that has stayed with us throughout this chapter. It’s presence troubles habitual practices of how we think and judge children’s knowledges. For example, how can we make claims about the child without listening to the more-than-human? How do we re-frame our analysis of autistic child’s capabilities in the absence /presence of contextual information? As I wrote and read this chapter, I was drawn to the disruptive nature of the colours which constantly obscured the words on the pages and also ‘distracted’ my attention elsewhere. On more than one occasion I considered emboldening



the writing for easy reading. I wondered about the (my) need to lessen the literacy 'burden' brought about by the image, which was telling of my habitual knowledge-making practices, and the conscious effort required to 'see with fingery eyes' (Haraway, 2016). The datatext, as a form of slow scholarship, forces us to slow down the reading practices and notice anew. What do we notice anew?

I draw your attention to the everyday reality of the human and more-than-human entanglement in the datatext. For example, did you 'notice' the wooden surface jutting out of the top left corner of the image? The wooden surface is telling of how the image was 'captured': positioned on a desk at my consulting rooms in Johannesburg and snapped with my mobile phone on account of the camera pixelation (Samsung S22). However, I did not get the 'angle' correct which is why the table could not be cropped out. Although I would later scan and upload the images to my computer, this image acted as data that glows (see chapter 5). Through and with my mobile, the datatext in aion time 'plays' with email and Whatsapp correspondence between Karin and myself, as well as other colleagues who think/write/do postqualitative research in ECE. Barad (2015, p. 143) reminds us that

It would be a mistake to neglect the spaces of political agency *within* science—its own deconstructive forces produce radical openings that may help us imagine not only new possibilities, new matter/realities, but also new understandings of the nature of change and its possibilities.

How can we re-imagine autistic child?

8.7. Posthuman autistic child

Murris (2016) writes that that four perspectives of child emerge from posthumanist re-configurations and entanglements, and that "each position assumes a different kind of observerteacherrresearcher (p. 77). The four 'childs' are child as 'i', child as 'I', child as ii' and child as 'iii'. Let us explore how autistic child is configured through each of these positions.

8.7.1. Autistic child as 'i'

Child as 'i' is the scientific, cognitive child which is historically rooted in child development and subsequent developmental practices. This is the (autistic) child of intellectual differences and quantitative measurements of human (dis/ordered) mind such as IQ scores. Autistic child as 'i' is a product of diagnosis and criteria (for example, the DSM V, 2013). Of significance are the theories which account for atypical cognitive¹⁹⁴ processing such as Weak Central Coherence (the tendency to focus on detailed information without integrating into a meaningful whole), Executive Dysfunction (the difficulty in co-ordinating and sequencing cognitive processes for implementation of tasks/goals) or MindBlindedness (the inability to perceive the mental states or intentions of others). Consequently, much of the autism literature operates from the premise of *cognition*, which alludes to dominant medical-psychological frameworks, which govern our understanding of autistic mental abilities. Furthermore, access to such knowledge is limited to individuals (notably early childhood practitioners), who understand the significance of a *neurotypical*¹⁹⁵ model of human behaviour-development (Burman, 2017). Burman (2017) writes that the psychological theories of cognition and development, perpetuate longstanding, and often troubling notions of child and development. She argues that the focus on cognition presumes the human mind as the seat of all knowledge and human development, and in doing so, perpetuates the dualist separation of mind and body. Consequently, autistic cognition as theorised and practised by early childhood educators/interventionists perpetuates essentialist perspectives regarding the management of autism, despite vast obscurities regarding the nature of autism (Hall, 2016). The term cognition incites a sequential, discrete, and somewhat mechanical account of the workings of the human mind, *cognition* takes me back to Ingold (2016), who writes that the segmented line creates an illusion of a line that moves. In the process this pseudo-line produces, commodifies, and standardises, which in fact speaks to current practices of diagnosing and documenting autistic interventions.

¹⁹⁴ Cognition refers to the mental activity of acquiring knowledge through thought, experience, or the senses and includes executive functions such as decoding, encoding, storing, memory, planning, reasoning, attention, and retrieving information.

8.7.2. Autistic child as 'I'

Murriss (2016) theorises child as 'I' as the child with human rights and refers to the efforts to validate child's epistemic worthiness in society through policy documents that legitimise child's freedom of speech and thought (see for example the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). In the case of autism, ideas about rights have been advocated by the neurodiversity movement¹⁹⁶ which speaks out against the contentious issues of identity and labelling, as well as petitions for the social-political rights of autistic individuals (see for example, Lester et al., 2017). However, as discussed through this thesis, autism activist projects tend to centralise the experiences of the adult instead of child. Rights for the autistic child are embedded in emancipatory education-intervention in the hope of reducing 'rogue' behaviour for improved (human) quality of life in adult years.

8.7.3. Autistic child as 'ii'

Child as 'ii' is the social child and is premised on ideas of the self and identity as developed by societal influences and interactions. Autistic child as 'ii' is one of social communication¹⁹⁷ impairments, and difficulties with social integration. This is the child of stereotyped identity such as 'lacking empathy, 'machine-like' and 'impaired social skills/brain'. The autistic child 'ii' is one who is subjected to social skills training to 'elasticate' common socially inept behaviours and misunderstandings.

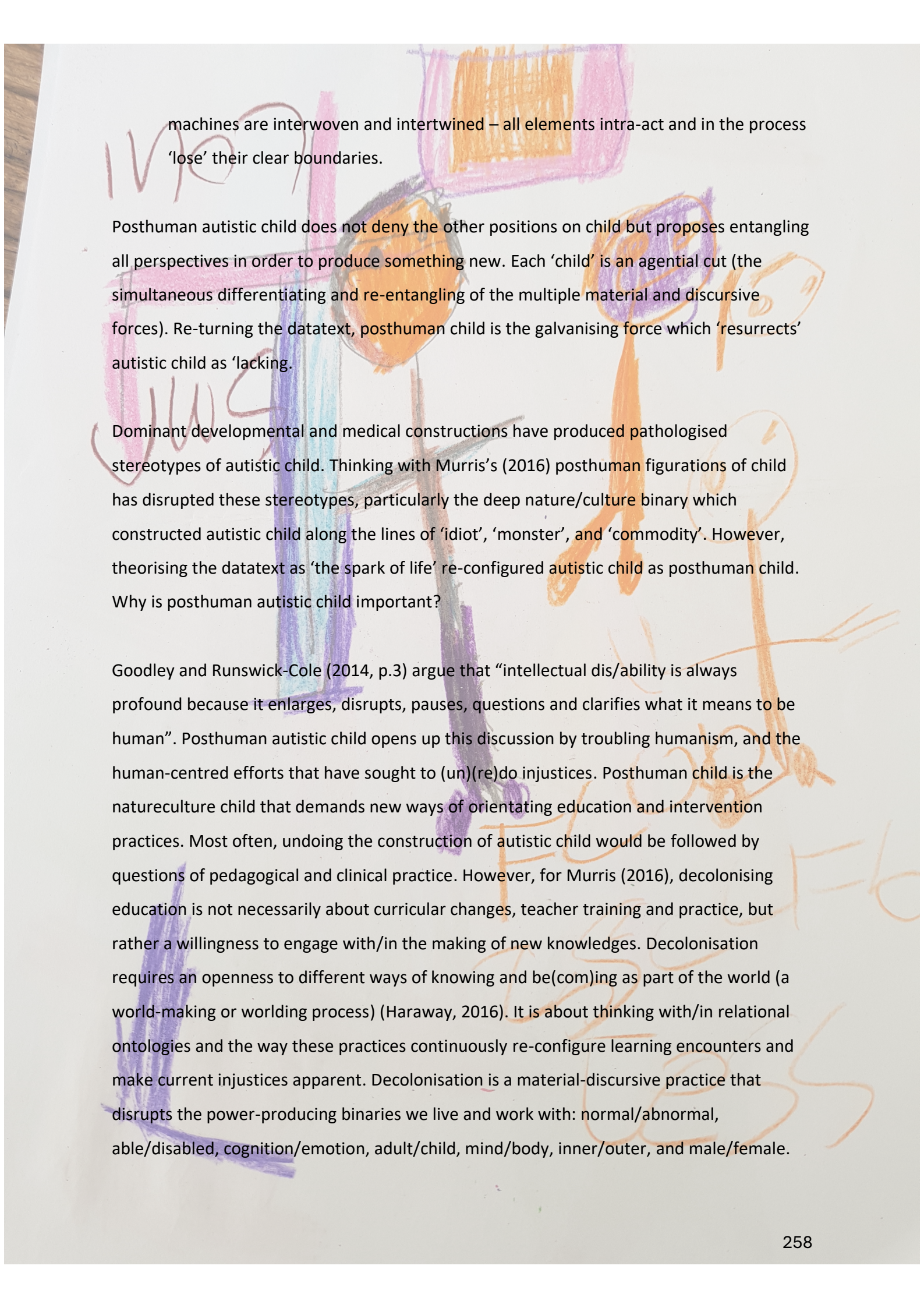
8.7.4. (Posthuman) autistic child as 'iii'

Thinking with posthumanist ontoepistemology, Murriss (2016) writes that

Child is an entanglement: constituted by concepts and material forces, where the social, the political, the biological, and its observing, measuring, and controlling

¹⁹⁶ See the glossary of terms and also chapter 1 for further information.

¹⁹⁷ Social communication refers to the use of language for communication within social contexts. It includes verbal (articulation, voice, and language) and non-verbal (gesture, body language, listener sensitivity) communication, as well as the nuances of taking the perspective of others, conversational skills, and social-emotional reciprocity (Müller et al., 2016)



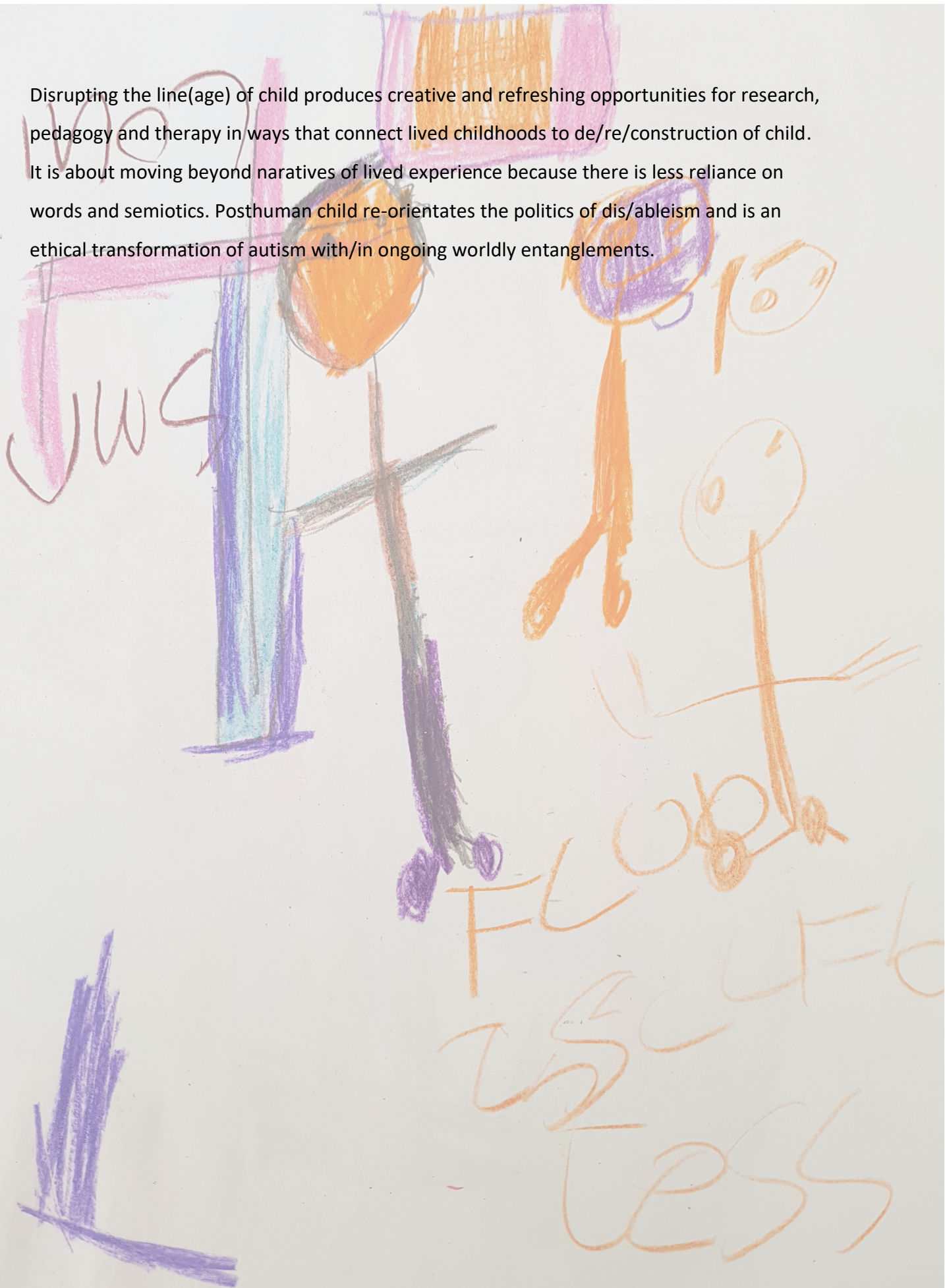
machines are interwoven and intertwined – all elements intra-act and in the process 'lose' their clear boundaries.

Posthuman autistic child does not deny the other positions on child but proposes entangling all perspectives in order to produce something new. Each 'child' is an agential cut (the simultaneous differentiating and re-entangling of the multiple material and discursive forces). Re-turning the datatext, posthuman child is the galvanising force which 'resurrects' autistic child as 'lacking'.

Dominant developmental and medical constructions have produced pathologised stereotypes of autistic child. Thinking with Murriss's (2016) posthuman figurations of child has disrupted these stereotypes, particularly the deep nature/culture binary which constructed autistic child along the lines of 'idiot', 'monster', and 'commodity'. However, theorising the datatext as 'the spark of life' re-configured autistic child as posthuman child. Why is posthuman autistic child important?

Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2014, p.3) argue that "intellectual dis/ability is always profound because it enlarges, disrupts, pauses, questions and clarifies what it means to be human". Posthuman autistic child opens up this discussion by troubling humanism, and the human-centred efforts that have sought to (un)(re)do injustices. Posthuman child is the natureculture child that demands new ways of orientating education and intervention practices. Most often, undoing the construction of autistic child would be followed by questions of pedagogical and clinical practice. However, for Murriss (2016), decolonising education is not necessarily about curricular changes, teacher training and practice, but rather a willingness to engage with/in the making of new knowledges. Decolonisation requires an openness to different ways of knowing and be(com)ing as part of the world (a world-making or worlding process) (Haraway, 2016). It is about thinking with/in relational ontologies and the way these practices continuously re-configure learning encounters and make current injustices apparent. Decolonisation is a material-discursive practice that disrupts the power-producing binaries we live and work with: normal/abnormal, able/disabled, cognition/emotion, adult/child, mind/body, inner/outer, and male/female.

Disrupting the line(age) of child produces creative and refreshing opportunities for research, pedagogy and therapy in ways that connect lived childhoods to de/re/construction of child. It is about moving beyond naratives of lived experience because there is less reliance on words and semiotics. Posthuman child re-orientates the politics of dis/ableism and is an ethical transformation of autism with/in ongoing worldly entanglements.



Diffractive Thinking Time 3¹⁹⁸

Listening With/In The Void

The nature of the wayfaring line is such that it is always on the move (Ingold, 2016). Even during periods of rest, the line is active. But the activity “barely skims the surfaces of the world” (Ingold, 2016, p. 81). In other words, the nomadic nature of the wayfaring line does not settle down long enough to theorise or reflect upon its storied non-linear journey. Yet this is not to say that it does not leave storied trails and pathways. Coming to know the stories of trails and pathways is about listening *differently*, or perhaps what Le Guin (1989) refers to as the logic of attunement. Diffractive time 3 puts this logic to work by storying an odd and unanticipated childhood memory. Etched deep with/in (my) bodymind this memory continues to flicker in and out of (my) be(com)ing, like a cheeky game of peek-a-boo. Flashing up in the present (Barad, 2017a), the re-memory troubles individualised accounts of memory as closed and unchangeable. It swirls like colours, dancing to the music of affect. Bodymind re-members and re-turns childhood games, all of which spill over into the research writing and invoke a long-forgotten curiousness that seeks no answers. Why this particular re-memory, at this time in (my) life and in this (research) space? Might it be the wrong question to ask? Yet the memory-body-writing-thought-daydream encounter is mesmerising.

IT DEMANDS TO BE HEARD.

At the end of the much-loved book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1964), Charlie, Granpa Joe, and Willie Wonka go on the ultimate ride in the great glass elevator. After blitzing away in im/possible directions and in/conceivable places, Willy Wonka presses the floor button that has never before engaged. As a result, they burst through the factory roof and drift towards Charlie’s house to tell his family that he has won the mysterious chocolate factory. The elevator was always my favourite part in the story, and it was my heartfelt wish

¹⁹⁸ The thinking that takes place here is a diffraction of posthumanism and P4C practice that where community of enquirers are encouraged to introspect and share thoughts about the events that have transpired during the enquiry. Please refer to the Writing conventions.

to have experienced be(com)ing in this elevator. Except I didn't have a care for the elevator buttons. These buttons were somewhat disappointing, because it marked one's arrival at a destination, and the end of the journey, even if just temporarily. As a child, my greatest wish was to be able to look out through each glass pane at the same time. I would spend hours practising ballerina twirls, trying to see as much as I could in one spin. Of course, I practised wherever I was – playgrounds, home, visits to my grandparents, school and so forth. I created competitions amongst my siblings, cousins, and friends as to who could see the most in one spin. These competitions morphed into spinning games to see who could remain standing the longest. Such games fuelled my curiosity about how much of the world could be seen in one view. Like a cutting together-apart. What could emerge through the different glass panes while moving in new and different directions? What imaginaries would be conjured by taking in such views, opportunities and thought? And what would that feelthink like? I read and re-read the trajectory of the elevator so that I could conjure up scenarios in my mind where I could greedily see out of all the glass panes at more or less the same time without missing any details. I wished I had eyes all over my body like a brittlestar. Importantly, brittlestars do not have eyes, they are eyes and have no brains (Barad, 2007, p. 375). What would that be like? Perhaps quite monstrous! Questions cascade. The brittlestar is also 'othered' – associated with nature and relegated as a less complex and nonintelligent being. But as Peter (2011) argues:

The brittlestar cannot be conceived as a non-thinking or less intelligent animal because its way of knowing and being in the world has little to do with our understanding of intelligence. We literally cannot think/understand the brittlestar. Our descriptions fall short and are riddled with endless quotation marks around "eyes," "seeing," "knowing," "individual," and "action." Barad makes the point that this struggle to understand the brittlestar is the very same struggle we face with quantum physics: We literally cannot think/understand quantum physics because it also does not coincide with the Cartesian human subject or Newtonian physics.

Using intelligence as a concept like we tend to do, does not only 'otherise' the brittlestar, but also autistic child. If I were all eyes, like a brittlestar, would I be 'that weird kid'?

Trying to make sense of ‘this’ re-memory, I wondered about its relevance to this study. Some might argue that it was a metaphor which explained the writing of this thesis. Indeed, the nature of a doctoral degree is such that it could easily pass for a ride in the great glass elevator! Especially if one thinks of the intensity of scholarly engagement as (a) re-search for ideas and thoughts that takes place through multiple p(l)anes (theoretical standpoints) which move in strange directions, twisting and turning in order to produce new knowledge and ways of knowing. But I also wondered about the human-more-than-human relationalities that *are* this memory. The ‘childlike’ experiences diffracted through (adult) academic writing practices (see also Murriss & Kohan, 2021), which challenge the child/adult dichotomy. The memory also troubles the intellectual/imaginary binary and the notion of ‘conscious knowledge-making’ practices, which re-turns Dali’s artwork in Alice in Wonderland. Le Guin (1989) writes that ideas and thoughts are events of visions, dreams, mood and resonances. Flickering in-between layers of consciousness, the memory breaks linear patterns of writing thought, challenging me to attend to weightiness of what is not always apparent. Heeding the call to ‘hear’ the memory, was more about attending to the ‘here-now’ of the entanglements. The memory was not about the tangibility of knowledge in the here *and* now. In other words, the memory itself was a sedimented tracing of the past that re-configured the present moment. In an interview with Kleinman (2012), Barad states that “presence is not a matter of a thin slice of now, but rather the hauntology of inheritance, inheriting the future as well as the past” (p. 81). The re-memory here is a haunting of childlike inheritances (Murriss, 2022) that thread through the spaces and times of relations with books, movies, monsters, (my) childhood, this study, and you as the reader. In fact, the inheritances call to account research practices which repudiate the engagement of *spacetime mattering*. Thus, to share the re-memory is not to engage in a reflective personal account of a doctoral journey but rather to draw attention to the productive articulations of unexpected human and more-than-human partnerships including the elevator in all its materiality.

What do partnerships in-between memories – writing – thoughts – (in)visible forces – lightning – glass elevator – childhood – monstrous eyeball creature – brittlestar – research

writing – curiosity – metaphor – *aion*¹⁹⁹, produce? Quite simply, the memory invites practices of response-ability. Barad (2007) states that response-ability is not about the right responses, but about rendering the *other* – in this case the materiality of the re-memory – capable.

Response-ability is about engendering ontoepistemic humility by attending to the complexities of power. As apparent in this thesis, the dynamics of power are threaded through relationalities of materials in the world. If we are to render capable, then we must become aware of power with/in unexpected and inconspicuous places. Like places such as voids that are no/thingness but not empty. It is true that the notion of power with/in so-called empty spaces is a bit of mind-stretch. Especially considering that Newtonian physics has theorised emptiness as spaces that are void of matter. But Barad (2012, p. 4) asks us: “How can anything be said about nothing without violating its very nature, perhaps even its conditions of possibility?” In other words, how can we theorise emptiness without knowing what it is? Barad (2012) questions the logic of making assumptions about an entity, or space, of which we have no knowledge. Furthermore, even our attempts to understand the nature of the void are counter-productive to understanding this space that is known as nothing. Whatever we use to theorise the void, including apparatuses and measurements, inevitably introduce phenomena into the space of emptiness, thereby changing the conditions of nothingness (Barad, 2012). Not letting the void speak is a form of ‘colonial violence’. As Barad and Gandorfer (2021, p. 31) write:

the irrepressible question/ing of the void is far from immaterial and it speaks (and does not speak!)—it yearns to express the in/expressible—(to) the very im/possibility for non/existence

Barad (2012, p. 5) suggests a particular kind of listening with/in the void with apparatuses tuned in to ‘every subtle detail’ – a transindividual ‘fleshy, leaking and opening-up to others’ – a being attuned to what is not ‘there’, yet still has the potential to be articulated (the virtual). But how do we come to know the power of things that appear to be ‘empty’?

¹⁹⁹ Please see the entry on time in the Glossary of terms.

For Murriss (2016), justice entails working towards ontoepistemic equality in teaching and learning practices where children's knowledges are valued in relation to adult practices of what counts as 'worthwhile' knowledge. In order to achieve such equality, it is necessary for adults to re-attune the manner in which children are heard. With Murriss, the writing returns this listening as *Listening without Organs* as discussed in chapter 1. Such listening is transformative for it interrupts the linguistic transmission of knowledge (which favours evaluation and interpretation of knowledge) in order to seek out the effects of differences and experimentations with/in the world and without the intention to judge, interpret, or confirm what is known (Murriss, 2016, p. 144).

Listening-without-organs is in itself a concept in the making. It disrupts the linguistic representation of the neuro-anatomical-physiological response to external stimuli – sound. Listening is a concept that becomes the apparatus of entangled knowledges. It is a material discursive practice that is wound up in the materiality of the hearing organs (pinnae, tympanic membrane, middle ear cavity, and intricacies of the cochlear, basilar membrane, inner and outer hair cells, neural pathway), and the discursiveness of auditory processing. For Lipman (2003), listening is integral to the fine-tuning of philosophical thinking. Haynes and Murriss (2013) theorise listening as a pedagogical apparatus that enables a deep engagement with the thoughts and ideas of others. Listening without organs disrupts adult-child power relations and inculcates fairness, providing a platform for engaging the (marginalised) thoughts of child. Caring listening, as theorised in P4wC, evokes listening that proffers democratic practices such as respectful engagement with/in spaces of diverse and conflicting opinions. Listening also signals silences, limited gestural movements, steady eye gazes, and so forth. Bodies that 'fidget' and 'disrupt' are often admonished for the negative *differences* to teaching and learning (see for example, Murriss & Babamia, 2018). But for posthumanists, listening extends beyond human communication. Listening does not occur with/in human mind and body, nor does it depend on the environment. Rather it occurs with and beyond the human as worlding practices.

Manning and Masumi (2014) explain discrepancies to human-centred listening by drawing attention to autists who 'hear rocks and trees' along the same lines of human voice. For these individuals, listening is non-discriminatory, all sounds are perceived and processed

with the same degree of importance. It may be a somewhat strange thought for neuro-typical humans to conceptualise, for we have not perceived the world in this way. Given that autistic experiences are an emerging phenomenon, we have had little insight into alternate ways of listening *with* the world. Nevertheless, Manning and Masumi (2014), together with autistic narratives, provide an intriguing account of autistic listening and attentiveness, as a textured, relational experience with the world. These listening experiences gesture towards relational *practices with* the world.

Listening with/in the void is about practices of response-ability that render 'empty spaces' capable – thoughts, which manifest as fleeting and whispered moments, that are perhaps inconclusive, difficult to trace, link or follow. It is perhaps the most significant interference pattern (a pattern that marks difference) which has emerged from the quantum entanglements in this thesis. A key 'finding', one would call it in qualitative research.

Carrier Bag IV

Keeping The Stories Going

Re-turning Alice



Figure CB IV. Frontispiece for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015)

The image above is an iconic image of Alice²⁰⁰. Banchoff (2015) explains that Dali first sketched Alice in 1935 in *Nostalgic Echo* and later the same year in *Landscape of a Girl*. The image depicts a young girl with a rope/halo/etc in her hand. What remains a mystery is whether or not she is skipping, tripping or falling down the rabbit hole (Banchoff, 2015). Yet, these images of girl(s) are pervasive in all the heliogravures related to Alice. In fact, Dali would continue to work with this image of girl, and at a later stage portray her with braided hair and a developing bust. Banchoff (2015) writes that the latter image of Alice raised questions about whether or not Alice 'grew' up. However, what is evident from Dali's work are the ongoing patterns of movement and transformation that continue to haunt this mysterious depiction of Alice from Wonderland. Certainly, throughout this study, Dali's heliogravures have exerted a material ghostliness through the carrier bags that have produced stories of unexpected partnerships. These stories have travel-hopped across the spacetime matter of this thesis. Here, carrier bag IV re-turns the unpredictable relation amongst material-discursive encounters during the philosophical enquiries with the children, and the question related to ontoepistemic injustices against autistic child in learning spaces. With Dali, the questions, thoughts, times, spaces remain open to re-configurings along tentacular lines²⁰¹.

²⁰⁰See the appendix of this study for the twelve heliogravures.

²⁰¹ Tentacular lines is discussed in chapter 9.



9

TENTACULAR LINES

Posthumanist transdisciplinary practices for autistic child

For Haraway (2016, p. 32), the tentacular are nets and networks of spidery critters and finery beings, roots, tendrils, neural extravaganzas and fungal tangles that creep, reach and climb with, though, over, under and above each other. Human and more-than-human connections 'compost' in complex and messy interconnected experiences and provide opportunities for (re)new(ed) (tentacular) thinking and practices. Tentacular thinking are thus knowledge-making practices that honour multi-species relationships. Of significance to the storying of this study, Haraway (2016, p.32) writes that "Tentacularity is about life lived along lines —and such a wealth of lines—not at points, not in spheres". Might Haraway return us to Ingold's life of lines?

This chapter strings together Haraway's tentacular thinking with Ingold's (2016) notion of threads. He describes threads as "...a filament of some kind which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space" (Ingold, 2016, p. 42). Threads exist in multiple forms. Most often, threads are conceptualised as human creations such as string, wool, a fishing net, telephone wires and violin strings to name but a few. Threads are pervasive in nature. Some examples include roots of a tree, rhizomes, the veins in leaves, and pine needles. Threads also occur as whiskers, antennae, hair, webs, neurons and blood vessels in humans and animals. In all of the above, threads perform specific functions. Think of life-sustaining connections such as blood vessels to organs, muscles, tissues and cells in the body. Threads are connectors that link different aspects of organisms with/in larger assemblages of human and more-than-human entities, like the whisker of a cat and her ability to navigate the world.

But threads do more than just connect. Threads are complex entanglements that create things in as much as they are created. They are also multi-directional, extensive and exhibit vast differences in terms of size, shape, texture, surfaces, and functions. In this way, threads are relational and performative, and importantly, they are not linear. They are relational as they connect, stitch, or put into partnership different entities that produce something new. In the case of a tapestry, the threads not only form the fabric but also the in/visible stitching that produces a (re)new(ed) product. Ingold (2016) argues that the relational aspect of threads is a *doing* for it actively reconfigures how things come into being. Not only do threads do but they also leave traces, cuts and creases which mark their agential capacity. Think of stitching that comes undone, cuts and creases on human hands through activities such as weaving ropes, the impact of dead roots on the lifespan of a tree, and the effect of damaged neurons on quality of life. Ingold proposes threads as agents of transformation that stitch, extend, build, connect, link, and create larger consortiums of 'things' (such as tapestries and knowledge practices).

This thesis-tapestry has emerged along lines, knots and string figures, all of which are threaded 'together-apart'²⁰² by Murriss's (2016) ontoepistemic injustice, a concept which story/ies the (un)(re)making of autistic child in autism-education-intervention. Murriss (2016) writes that the purpose of ontoepistemic injustice is decolonising education per se, and knowledge of how learning and thinking happens. This requires us to "interrogate what counts as knowledge" (Murriss, 2016, p. 131). Questioning the nature of knowledge is an ethico-ontoepistemic move that affirms human and more-than-human relations and the phenomena that are produced with/in entanglements. Let us re-map the questioning and wandering of this thesis journey

9.1. Re-turning the thesis

This study asks: how might the community of philosophical enquiry be put to work with autistic children given their communication and learning differences? How can subjectivity

²⁰² The 'together apart' is theorised as an agential cut that simultaneously differentiates and entangles in one move.

for autistic children be re-configured outside of humanist narratives of mastery, skill and performance? These questions were born out of (my) posthuman subjectivity as m/otherscholar. Be(com)ing with my children, especially my son Bowser Junior in chapter 0 highlighted the complexities of living theorypractice that troubled dominant ideas about researching autism, and autistic child. Spilling over into chapter 1, (my) posthumanist be(com)ing proposed postqualitative storying practices as research navigator, and drew on Barad (2007), Dali (Carroll & Dali, 1969/2015), Ingold (2016), and Le Guin (1989). Each chapter in this study was theorised as wayfaring lines of intra-connectivity that threaded together material questions and thoughts that emerged from posthumanist entanglements. Chapter 1 put to work the strongest agential cut: mitigating ontoepistemic injustice for autistic children through a posthumanist approach to philosophical enquiries. Wandering into carrier bag II, the thesis interrogated knowledge-making practices that were embedded with/in substance ontologies, and the consequent erasure of 'otherised' materials (including autistic child). Thinking with slow scholarship, chapter 3 journeyed (disrupted) the path from QR to PQR by questioning the how, what, and why of this journey. The methodological un-ease continued into chapters 4 and 5. Here, QR was problematised in terms of the container metaphor which situates research participants in fixed space, time, matter (chapter 4) and the injustices against data when situated with/in a paradigm that does not consider the agency and complexity of the more than human. What emerged in diffractive thinking 2 was neurochthonic as 'concept as method' that en/abled us re-imagine autistic child as research participant and knowledge co-creator. Carrier bag III dived into the entangled practices of doing posthumanist philosophical enquiries and produced three phenomena from the unexpected partnerships. The first phenomenon here was chapter 6 which problematised the role of dialogue 'with children who cannot do dialogue'. Guided by posthuman ethics, the writing suggested that dialogue be re-configured to make space for the silent, leaky spaces in which thought dwelt. As Le Guin (1989) points out, the everyday practices matter in the stories of the world, and the erasure of such practices denotes a violence against the lives lived in the shadows of heroic narratives. Chapter 7 engaged with the concept of progress, and travel-hopped back to a disruptive moment re-corded in chapter 2 regarding the capabilities of the autistic child to make philosophical progress. This moment haunts the writing in the chapter and re-turns the first philosophical enquiry with learners at Centre B to show that even under 'circumstances' where 'progress' could not be

easily discerned owing to the novelty of the situation, there were many thinking moments which defied the linear and outcomes-based conception of progress. These material ponderings brought us back to autistic child. Thinking with datatext, Chapter 8 thinks with Murriss's (2016) figurations of child to re-configure autistic child as posthumanist child where child is not limited to nature/culture but becomes a phenomenon of natureculture.

We are in the here-now. Pausing to think about what has been, what is, and what will be. Except that time is neither fixed nor located. As iterated throughout this study, spacetime matter does not subscribe to 'unilinearity'. Times are material-spatial configurations that are ongoing and on the move. So, it is not possible to reflect on the past nor the future in isolation of where we are right now at this point – which is constantly changing.

9.2. Re-thinking (with) the thesis

How do we interrogate knowledge in a manner that explains how decolonising hierarchical relations in education is put to work? For Barad (2007, p. 24), interrogating knowledge requires a re-assessment of the physical and metaphysical notions of (old) ideas in the world. Thinking with Barad, I understand the interrogation of knowledge to be a de(con)struction of the ontological and epistemological claims that underscore dominant discourses, and in the case of my research, on child/hood, autism and education. Such practices demand a reconfiguration of theory and practices as *theorypractice*, where the dichotomy between thinking and doing are collapsed into 'one' entanglement. Theorypractice enacts the *how* of human and more-than-human relations which enact new knowledge (Barad, 2007, p. 25). It requires thinking through differences and details in their specificity that exceed linguistic propositions and meaning making that tends to move along abstractions and generalisations about (autistic) child. It also involves a critical de-construction of the human knowledge project.

The posthumanist analysis in this thesis disrupts the culture/nature binary which positions autistic child as being of dis/ordered mind. Diffractive engagement with the co-created data of videotapes, photographs, drawings, and fieldnotes troubles normative theories of child

development in early childhood education and early intervention that still rely heavily on language and cognition. Of significance in this study is the reconfiguration of child subjectivity 'outside' of the adult human-centred privileges of language, power and agency. Posthumanist research methods bring in the agency of the material-discursive and trouble the ontoepistemic status of autistic child as 'lacking' and 'less-than'.

The posthumanist encounters in this study have disrupted the abstraction of ideas, or concepts. Indeed, this thesis has moved away from concepts with fixed meanings (through definitions), to concepts/ideas as movements of thought that are produced, re-configured and always on the move as non-representational 'doings'. With Ingold (2016), Le Guin (1989) and Haraway (2016), this thesis has sought to enact research as creation by engaging with porous bags of seemingly mundane things. Attending to the unexpected relationalities of human-and-more-than-human encounters what has been foregrounded are critters of data that occupy liminal spaces in the autism, education and disabled childhood literature. These critters told stories of unexpected partners and leaky conversations that engaged in response-able listening practices. It journeyed with orphan thoughts that were saddled with/in unruly data. These thoughts disrupted obedient theoretical dispositions by engaging with but also sidestepping the dominant literature on autism and attending to the ontology of autism. By doing so, the species' logic of human subjectivity was ruptured. The participants' thoughts were infused with history, life experience, fantasy, desire and materiality, all of which queried the ontoepistemological assumptions that position autistic child as inferior and lacking, including claims about how autistic child should be educated. More often than not, their thinking remains obscure, hidden and never really accessible due to communication difficulties. Consequently, it would appear that even special education, despite its altruistic aims, foregrounds, and indeed perpetuates, conformist or developmental notions of what constitutes child-thinking-being.

Theorising philosophical enquiry as a pedagogical effort towards what may become if thought is theorised/practised as more free-spirited, cannot be contained, described or pegged down with words. Entangling philosophical enquiry with posthumanism opens up new spaces for thought to flourish. Enquiry was undone and redone, it knotted, threaded and wove the discursive and the material, always working with/in a non-hierarchical

ontology and in conjunction with matter. Thinking with agential realism, the study storied, diffracted, and disrupted linear time so that all could witness the be(com)ing of thought as a material-discursive practice. Writings, test, bodies, matter, produced liveliness that pattern the colours of autistic thought. The study unpacked, explored, felt the emotion of matter, the intensity of stumbled moments and the anxiety of not knowing and in/determinacy.

The analysis was embedded with/in spacetime mattering, where brief encounters opened up entanglements of meaning and matter, producing new patterns of knowledge and marking patterns of difference. The stories produced draw attention to just how much we don't know about autistic child and force (my) encounters with the unpleasantness of (my) assumptions about learning, knowing and being in the world. What are 'empty spaces' – how do we know these, and to what extent are we prepared to interrogate our claims of such spaces? How do we as adults listen without organs? However, as this thesis has come to know, 'empty spaces' are always alive with the material cacophony of cries, thoughts, laughs, indignation, squeals, demands and whimpers, dispersed by silences (Barad, 2012). How we come to know-be in the emptiness is really about attending to the specificities of measurement apparatuses, or the conditions which render material im/possibilities (Barad, 2007).

Quite fortuitously, this study has become quite comfortable within the liveliness and colourfulness, albeit troubles, of strange spaces. These spaces affirmed the ontoepistemic status of child in the presence of un-voiced and un-language-able thoughts. The thoughts became re-creations of material-discursive intra-actions. As mum, educator, speech-language therapist, scholar, researcher, dis/ability activist, posthumanist, childhood dis/ability is diffracted through every moment in (my) life. Each thread reconfigures the other. While other discourses/fields approach differences, critical posthumanism engulfs, enmeshes, and folds in different realities. It is a temporal diffraction of multiple phenomena.

9.3. Re-situating the thesis

This study contributes to neurodiversity literature pertaining to autism-education-intervention for children by arguing for teaching and learning approaches that make visible more-than-human existences in the world. Such approaches require us to decolonise our thinking and positioning of autistic child with/in 'catch-up' interventions that continue to foreground humanism through 'intellectual and communicative' aptness.

The study argues that making a change in the lives of autistic children requires that we re-orientate research practices, particularly the metaphysical arrangement which has historically guided our claims to knowledge. This requires experimentation in the now, while acknowledging the past and present are always connected. As researchers, we cannot observe the world from a distance. Neither can we make claims about the world when the world plays a substantial role in re-configuring us. We need to be aware of the forces that re-invent and re-fold material matters into our lives, particularly that which is hidden and taken for granted. Otherwise, we risk our research be(com)ing little more than repetitive 'data mining' exercises with/in the machinery of cognitive capitalism (Braidotti, 2013). The current trend towards epistemic injustice in autism research 'requires' us as scholars to move into border spaces, or the colour of boundaries (see chapter 3) where the field is increasingly marked by autistic presence/absence. I argue that a critical posthumanist approach to P4C makes visible the more than phenomenology of being autistic.

Ontoepistemic injustice authenticates being autism despite differences in communication, dialogical, language, learning, and social-cultural barriers. It is not so much about developing reasoning as diving into being in the world without barriers. It is about working with what is not known and often cannot be subjected to criteria. A posthumanist approach rejects singular identities through diagnosis and labels, which constrains the phenomena of being autistic child.

Inspired by philosophy, which is a love of wisdom, and Barad's agential realism, this study hopes to nurture practices of ethical living in a world beyond human-centrism by inviting emancipatory approaches for autistic children in education and therapy. This study shows how P4wC, when theorised as a posthumanist transdisciplinary theorypractice of deep,

attentive listening without organs to children's questions and ideas contributes and innovates the fields of autism studies, early childhood education and early intervention.

APPENDIX "A"

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APPENDIX "B"

Salvador Dali's twelve heliogravures of Alice in Wonderland

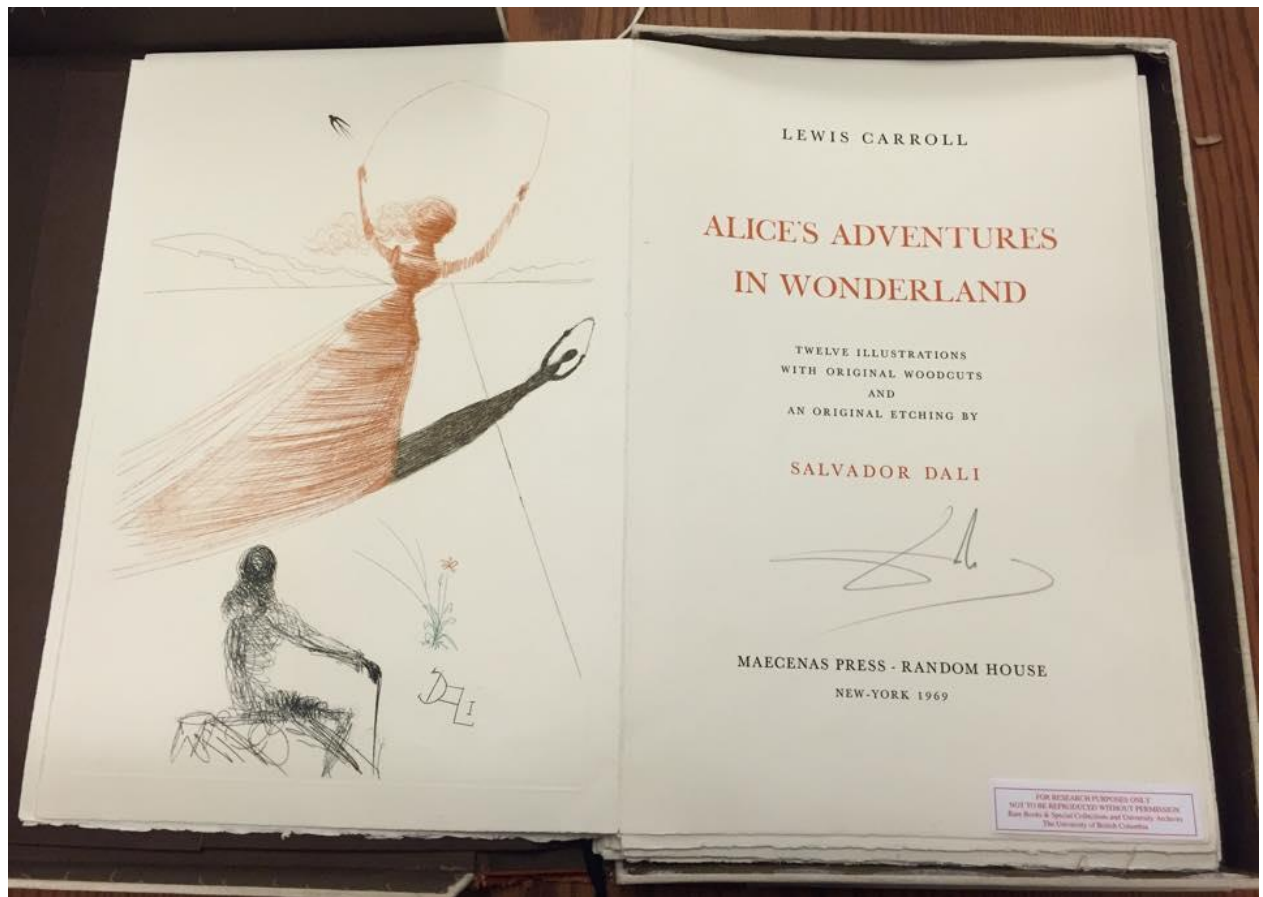
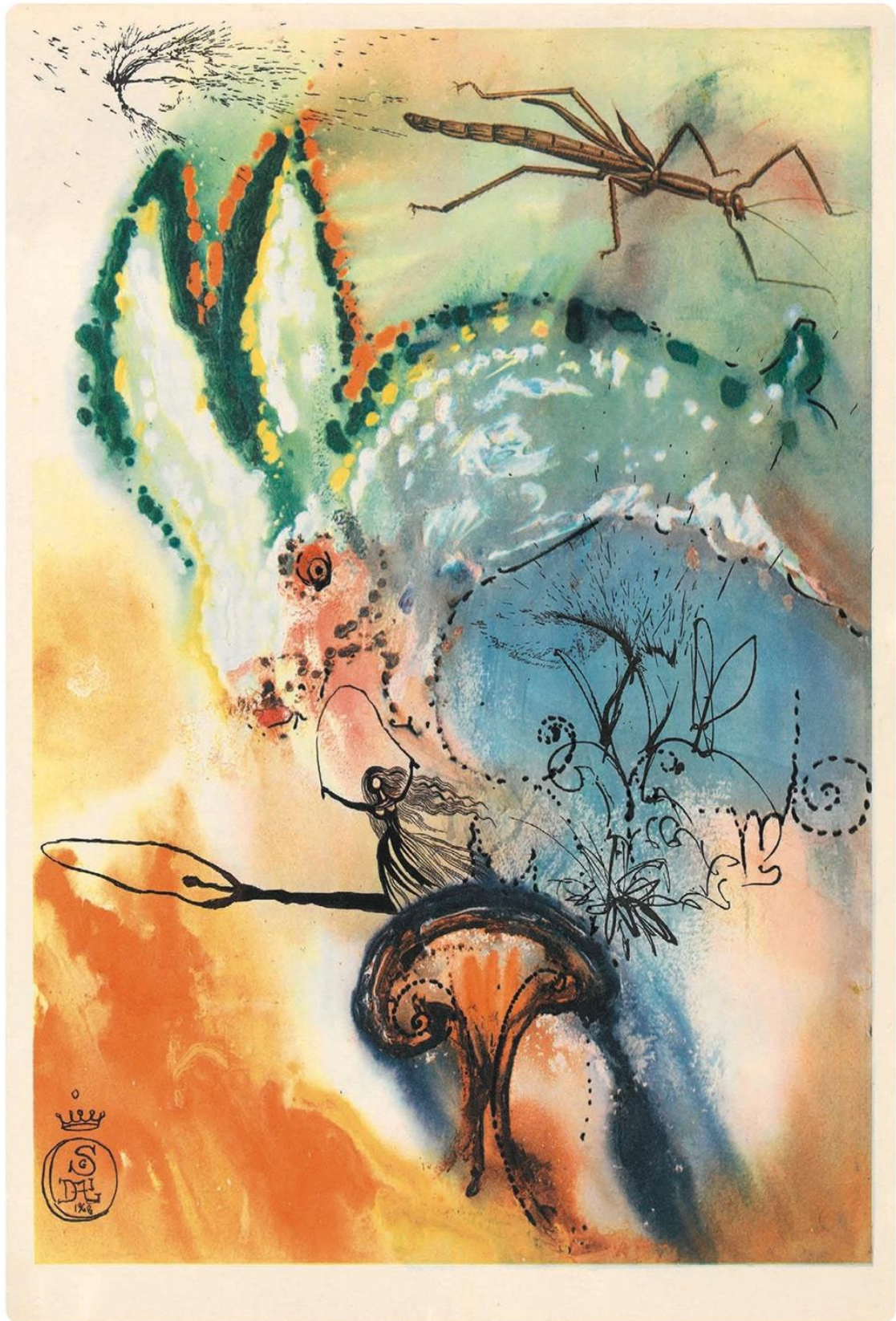


Figure 1: The frontispiece to Salvador Dali's 1969 edition of "Alice in Wonderland" (Kay, 2015)

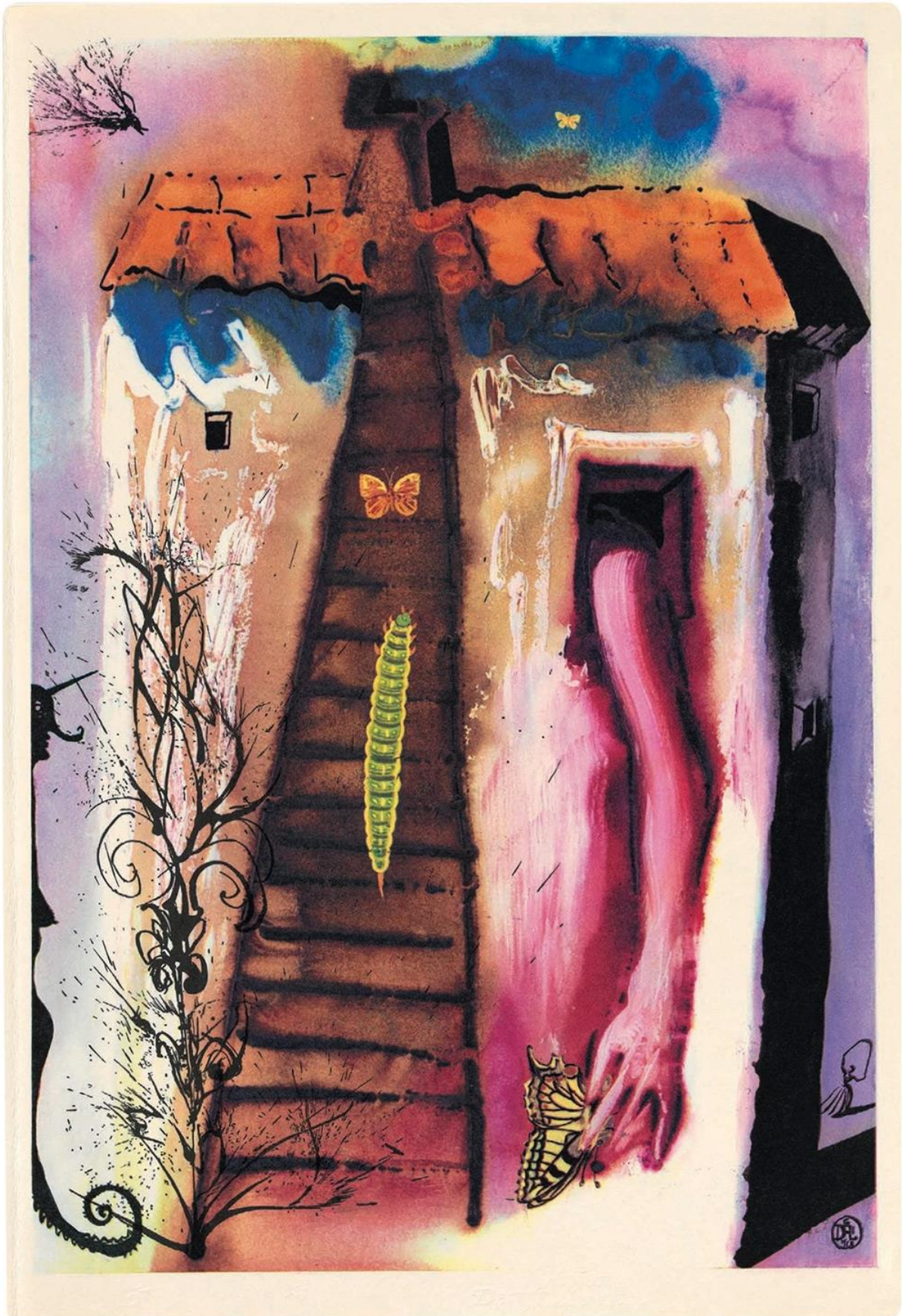
Heliogravure 1 – Down The Rabbit Hole



Heliogravure 2 – The Pool Of Tears



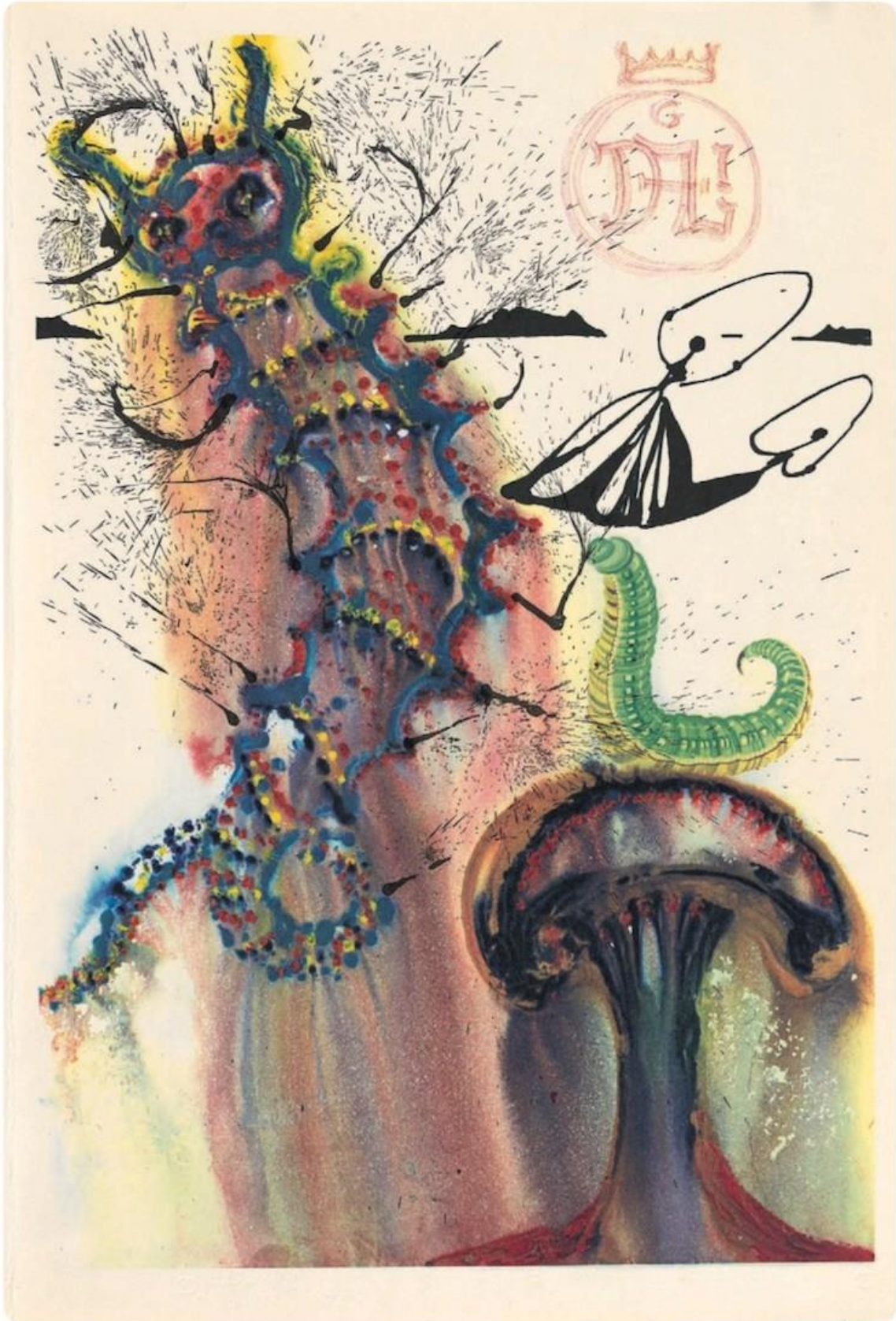
Heliogravure 3 – A Caucus Race And A Long Tale



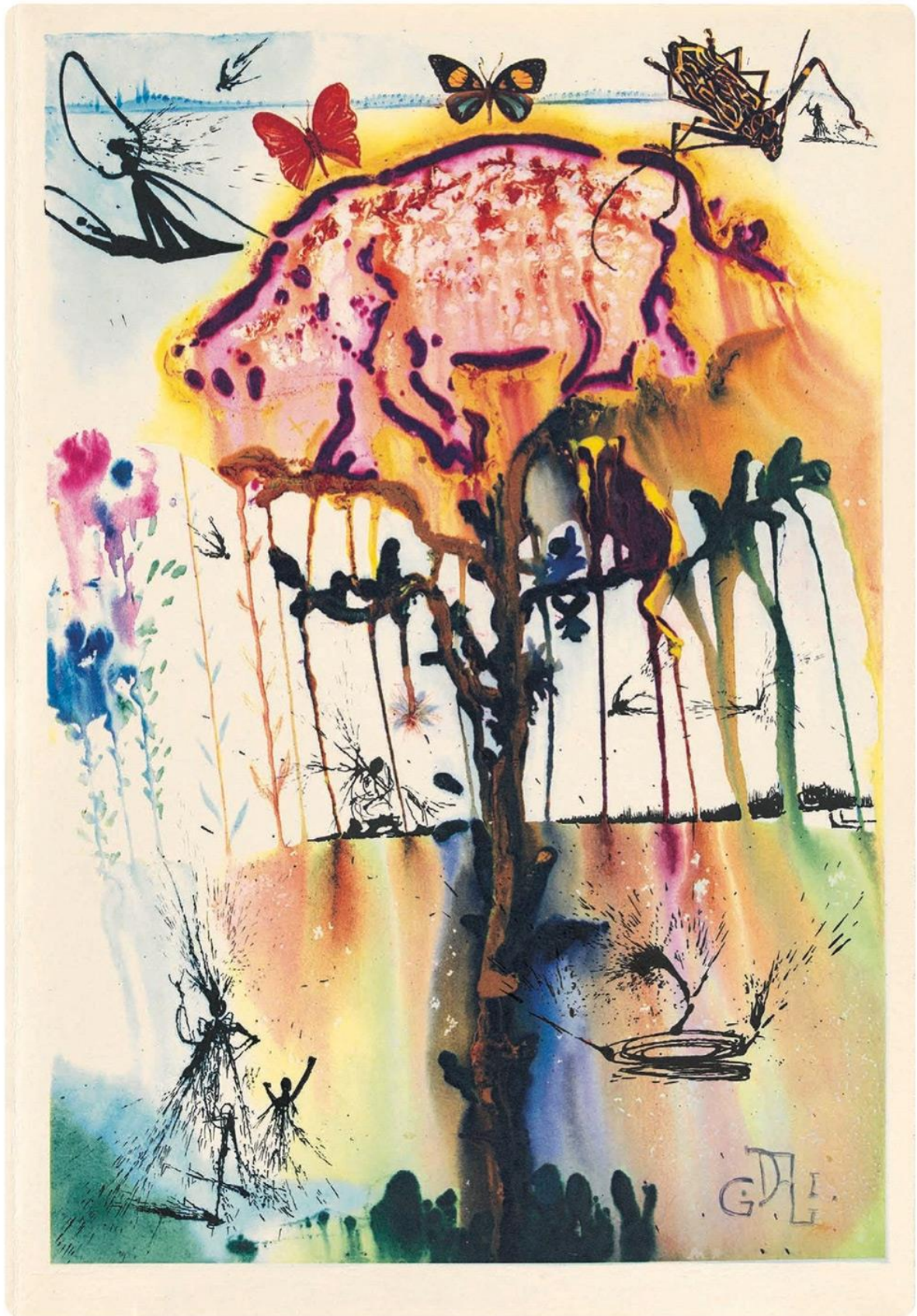
Heliogravure 4 – The Rabbit Sends In A Little Bill



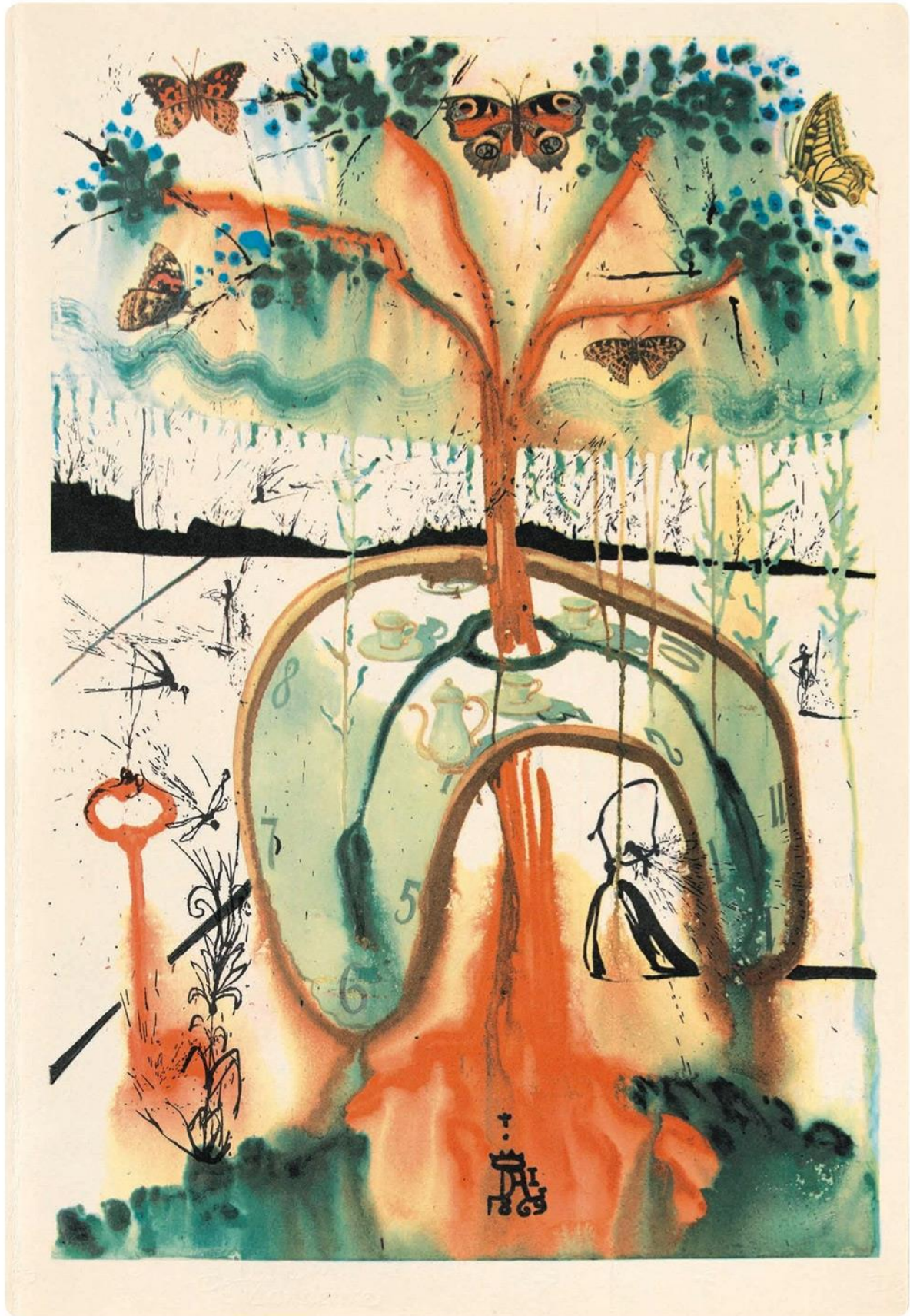
Heliogravure 5 – Advice From A Caterpillar



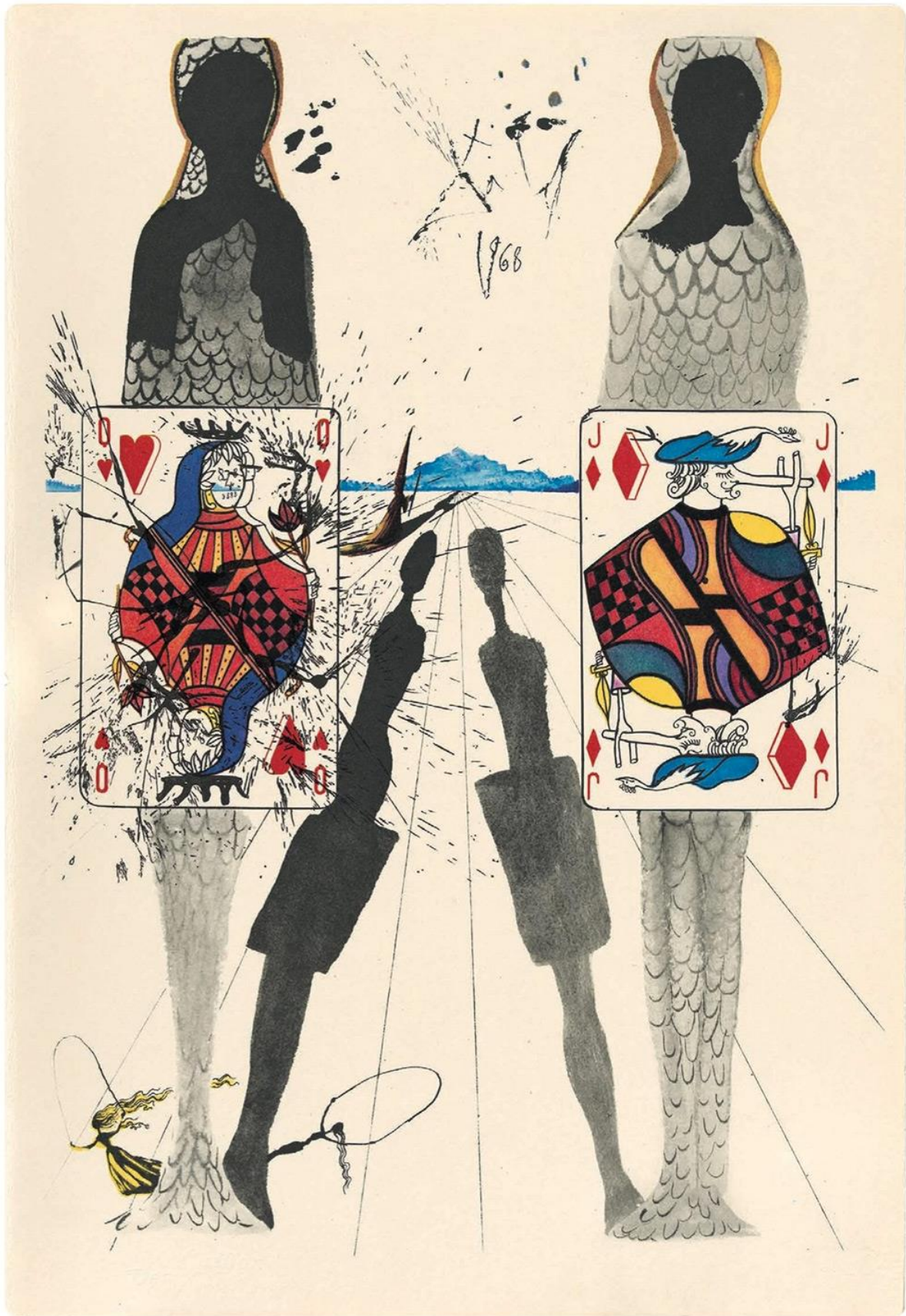
Heliogravure 6 – Pig And Pepper



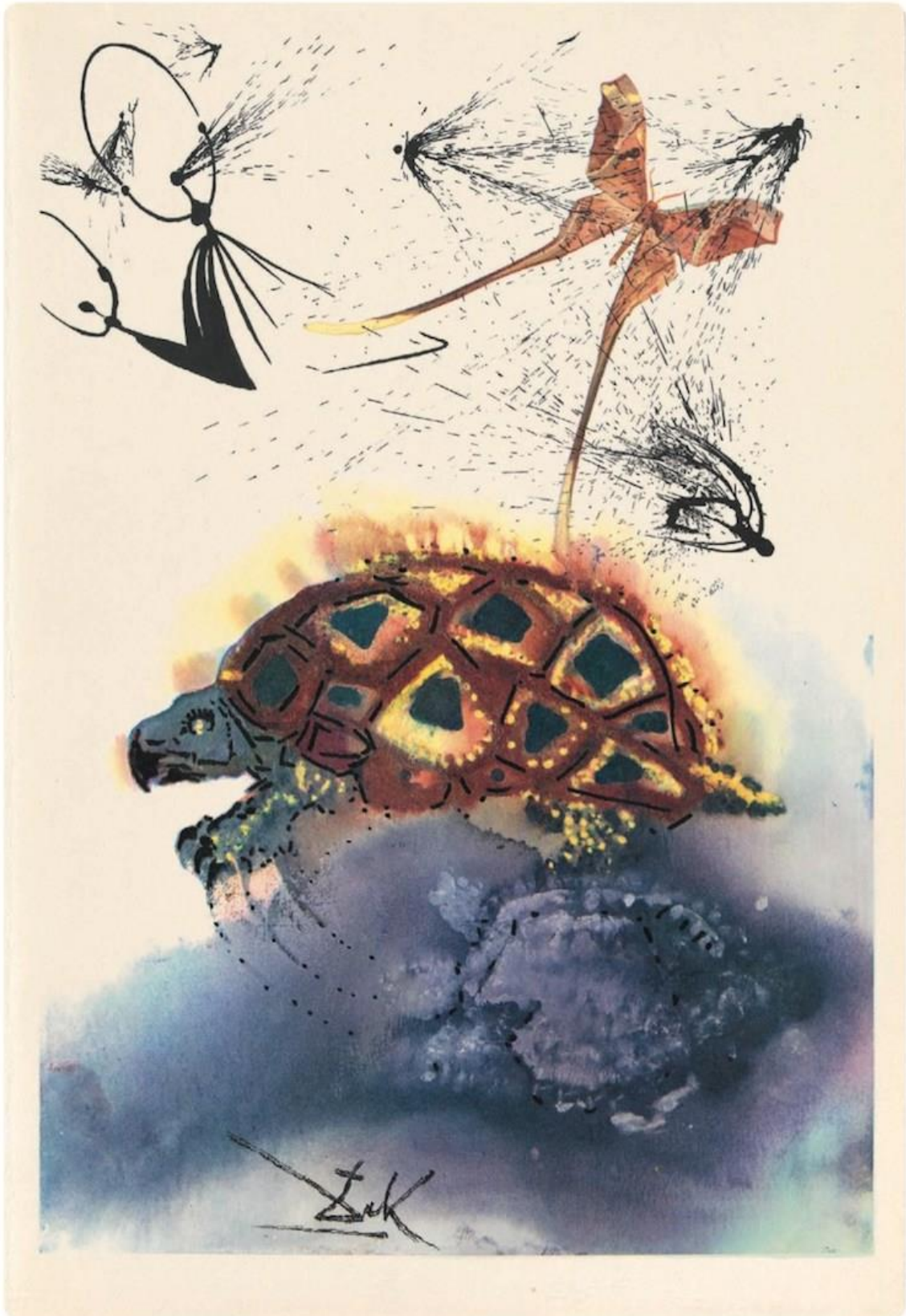
Heliogravure 7 – A Mad Tea-Party



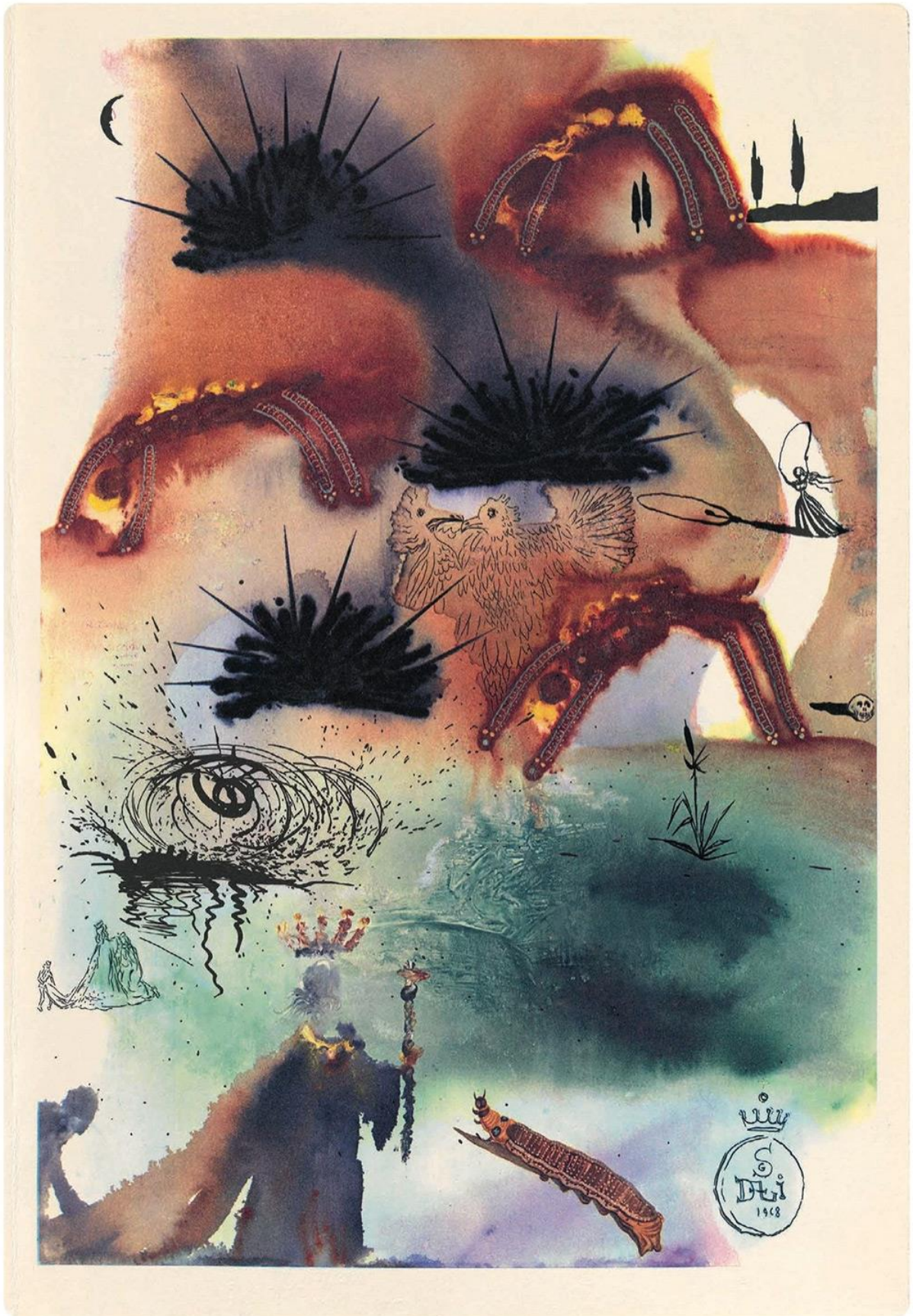
Heliogravure 8 – The Queen’s Croquet Ground



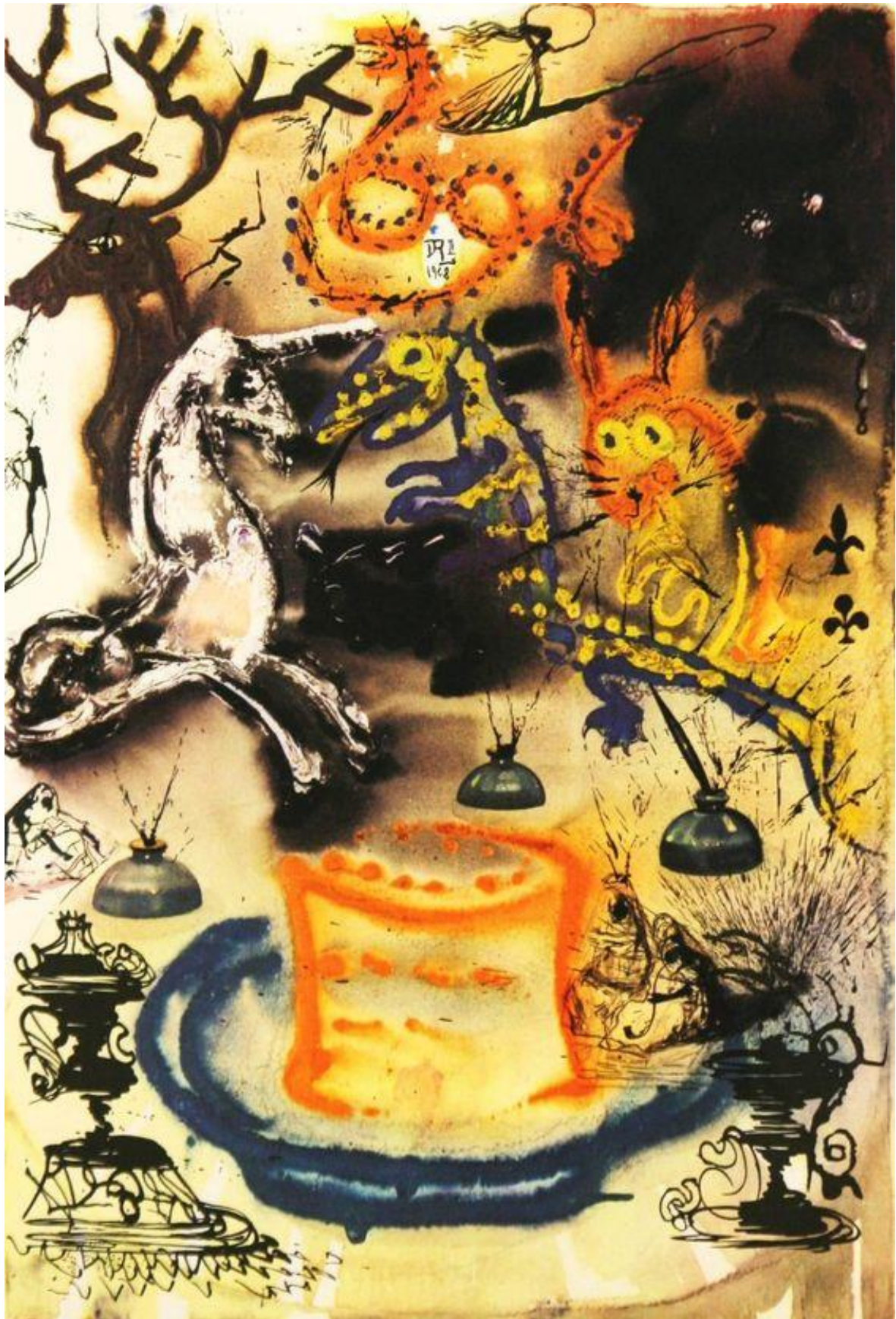
Heliogravure 9 – The Mock Turtle’s Story



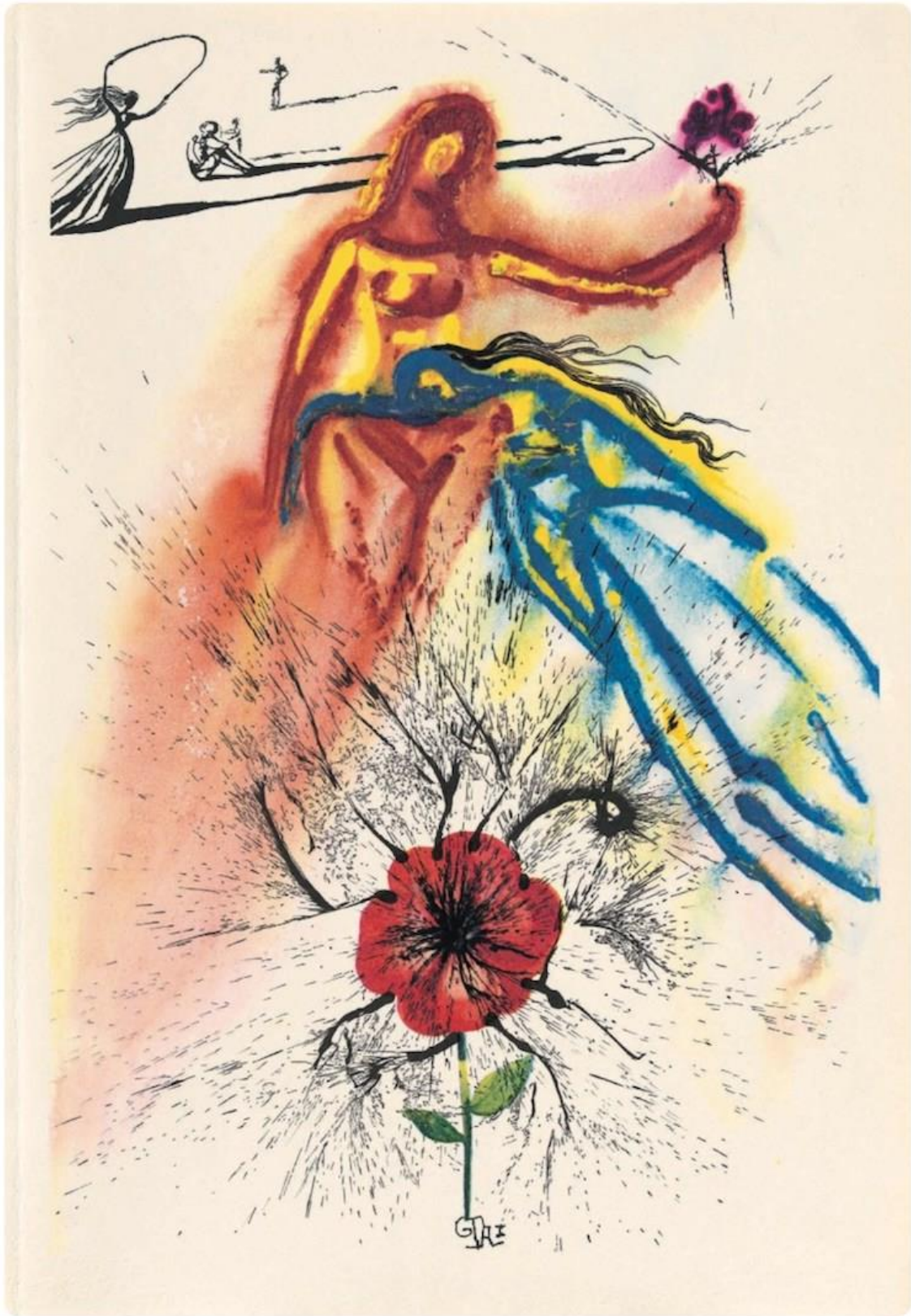
Heliogravure 10 – The Lobster Quadrille



Heliogravure 11 – Who Stole The Tarts?



Heliogravure 12 – Alice's Evidence





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EDNREC20230204

14 February 2023

Sumaya Babamia PCKSUM001

Dear Ms Babamia

Re: Confirmation of Ethical Clearance for Research Project granted in 2015

This letter serves to confirm that PhD candidate Sumaya Babamia's research project entitled '*Philosophical enquiry and autism: story/ing/ied bags of unexpected human and more-than-human encounters in speech-language therapy and classroom spaces*' was reviewed by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities in 2015 and received ethical clearance. At the time, applications were not given clearance numbers; thus a new reference number of EDNREC20230204.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn McKinney".

Professor Carolyn McKinney
Chair - School of Education Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX "D"

Sumaya Babamia

PCKSUM001

PhD, School of Education, UCT

Information sheet and consent form (child)

Information letter to read out to the children

Date:

Dear children

My name is Sumaya. I am part of the Reading Friends book club. I am going to come to your school one morning in the week to read the stories to you and then we will talk about the story. I am really interested in your ideas and questions about the story and how we can think about the story together.

Sometimes we will draw or write about what we think about the stories to understand our ideas better.

Our Reading Friends group will make some rules together so that we can all have a turn to share our ideas and to listen to each other.

The Reading Friends is important to me because I want to write a book about it for my school in Cape Town. My school is called the University of Cape Town. I would like to put your ideas and questions and drawings or pictures in my book so that other people like teachers and therapists can learn more about how children think. It will help them to think about stories and ideas with other children. I would also like to take some videos and photographs of you for my book. And I will write down what is happening in the group and what you are saying.

But you don't have to have your ideas, questions, writing or drawings in the book if you don't want to. And you can choose to be part of the group or leave the Reading Friends club if you want to. You can decide.

APPENDIX "D"

Sumaya Babamia

PCKSUM001

PhD, School of Education, UCT

Information sheet and consent form (child)

Information sheet for children to keep

My name is

I know Sumaya.

We are in a reading club with her and its called The Reading Friends.

We will read stories and think about the story together.

Sometimes we draw our ideas about the story. Sometimes we tell each other about the story by making things.

My ideas and questions can go in her book.

Sumaya can take pictures or videos of me in the Reading Friends for her book.

APPENDIX "D"

Sumaya Babamia

PCKSUM001



PhD, School of Education, UCT

Information sheet and consent form (child)

Assent

Date:

My name is

I don't want to be in Sumaya's book	I want to be in Sumaya's book
	

A picture of me (signature):

APPENDIX "E"

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

DATE

Dear

My name is Sumaya Babamia and am currently completing doctoral studies in the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. The research topic explores Philosophy with Children and children on the autism spectrum.

The field work involves conducting philosophical enquiries with some of the children diagnosed as autistic yet capable of participating within dialogue and discussions. The sessions entail reading and discussing a picturebook or other material in order to encourage the children to think about ideas and questions from the books/material which relate to their own experiences in the world. The books and materials purposefully target concepts such as friendship, love, fairness, kindness and emotions such as happiness, sadness or anger. The children will be encouraged to depict their questions and ideas visually or through the use of artwork or objects which will then be used to stimulate discussions. I will be documenting their ideas and work by videotaping and collecting materials where possible. A time frame of 30-60 minutes is allocated for the sessions, depending on the children's level of engagement and attention spans.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because of the language and communicative profiles of the learners which fit the criteria for participation in the study. I would be grateful if you would assent to your learners' participation in the philosophical enquiries.

Please note that the research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be archived as per UCT's policies on data storage and management.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sumaya Babamia
sumaya.babamia@gmail.com

APPENDIX "E"

0826288138

I, in my capacity as principal/director of
..... acknowledge that:

- I have been informed about the nature of Sumaya Babamia's PhD study.
- I am aware of how the philosophical sessions are to be conducted
- I understand that there are no risks to the learners participating in the enquiries
- Participation is voluntary and the learners are free to withdraw at any point in time
- The sessions are to be video recorded and possibly photographed and used for research purposes only
- Confidentiality and anonymity of the school and the learners will be maintained at all times.

I hereby assent to Sumaya Babamia's research study.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

APPENDIX "F"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (teachers)

Date:

Dear

I am Sumaya Babamia and am currently registered towards a PhD degree in Education at the University of Cape Town. My study looks at the use of philosophical enquiry with children on the autism spectrum and I would like to inform you of what the study entails.

The study involves small, group based philosophical sessions with (autistic) children which will be facilitated by myself. The aim of the sessions is to explore the children's philosophical ideas and concepts which relate to their experiences in the world. Picturebooks and or other material which stimulates thinking will be brought into the sessions. The books and or materials purposefully target philosophical concepts such as friendship, love, fairness, kindness or emotions (happiness, sadness or anger). The discussion that follows will explore the meaning that these concepts hold for the children. The children are encouraged to take responsibility for the structure and maintenance of the group and their decisions will be respected. This includes the nature of the topics discussed, group rules, permission to enter the group and sharing of group content.

The reason I have chosen some of the children in your class is because the learners present with autism/developmental concerns and are able to engage in dialogue, participate in group activities and discussions as well as attend sufficiently to the stimulus material in order to be part of the study.

The study will be conducted once a week during school hours at a time which is suitable to your teaching schedule. The sessions will range from 30-60 minutes depending on what the children can manage. The study has considered a time period of 3-6 months bearing in mind that the children would need some time to familiarize themselves with the new project as well as myself. The study requires minimal preparation or involvement from you except for making some (physical) space in the class for the children to post their philosophical works, ideas or questions. You may find that the children share information with yourself or other staff members though you are not obliged to disclose information in any way. However, your feedback and collaboration in this project is most welcome.

APPENDIX "F"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (teachers)

Important information regarding your and the children's protection and rights

1. The study involves the children primarily. You are not required to be part of the philosophical sessions.
2. Please be aware that the children's participation in the study is completely voluntary and that the child can withdraw or decline to participate in the study at any point.
3. There are no negative outcomes to the children withdrawing or declining to participate in the study.
4. In creating opportunities for critical thinking skills, philosophical thinking may evoke questions that challenge traditional and normative cultural or even religious values or beliefs. While the aim is not to purposefully raise controversial topics, it is important that children take the decision to discuss what they feel to be important. (Please note that my role is merely to facilitate discussions which are raised by the children and not to contribute to the topics raised). Please be aware of this and note that you are welcome to discuss with me any issues that arise that you may be concerned about.
5. All the enquiries will be confidential as determined by the group.
6. As the group enquiries are part of research, the information will be shared within academic publications and conferences.
7. I endeavour not to share any information which may identify the children or yourself. Artwork, constructions and other materials which emerge from the sessions will be shared at the discretion of the children and under pseudonyms so as not to reveal their identity.
8. The sessions will be recorded digitally on video equipment for PhD research purposes. Should the material be necessary for conferences or publications, identity will be concealed by blurring of faces.
9. All research material will be safely archived with the researcher only.

I thank you for taking the time to read this information letter. You are welcome to contact me on 082 6288138 or email sumaya.babamia@gmail.com.

Best wishes,

Sumaya Babamia

APPENDIX "F"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (teachers)

Speech-language therapist and audiologist

Date:

I, _____ in my capacity as a teacher/facilitator at _____ acknowledge that the learners in my class will be participating in Sumaya Babamia's PhD study and acknowledge that:

- I understand the nature of the study;
- I do not participate directly in the study;
- I can share information about the learners' feedback about the philosophical sessions at my discretion;
- I have been informed of the criteria for learner participation in the study;
- The children's participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any point of the study;
- There are no negative consequences to not participating in the study;
- Confidentiality is assured at all times;
- Pseudonyms will be used to protect children's identity and mine if necessary;
- The children are to be respected for their decisions on how the group is structured, maintained and directed as well as the topics of discussion;
- The information from this study will be used for academic publications and conferences;
- The sessions will be captured on video recordings will be used for research purposes. Identity will be concealed if the material is used for conference presentations or publications.

Teacher

Email and contact number

APPENDIX "G"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (parents)

Date:

Dear

I am Sumaya Babamia and am currently registered towards PhD (Education) at the University of Cape Town. My study looks at the use of philosophical enquiry with children presenting with barriers to learning. I would like to invite you and your child to participate in this study.

(Insert name of the school) is optimum setting for the study as all the prerequisites for the study are met. This includes the students who are able to engage in philosophical dialogue and thinking despite unique learning styles.

The study involves small, group based philosophical sessions with the children, which will be facilitated by myself. The aim of the sessions is to explore philosophical ideas and concepts which relate to children's own experiences in the world. Picturebooks and or other material which stimulates thinking will be brought into the sessions. The books and or materials purposefully target philosophical concepts such as friendship, love, fairness, kindness or emotions (happiness, sadness or anger). The discussion that follows will explore the meaning that these concepts hold for the children.

Should you choose to consent to your child's participation in the study, note that the sessions will be conducted once a week during school hours at a time which is convenient to the staff and children alike. The sessions will range from 30-60 minutes depending on what the children can manage. The study has considered a time period of 3-6 months bearing in mind that the children would need some time to familiarize themselves with the new project as well as myself. Please note in mind that the sessions are for research purposes only and are offered free of charge. There is no compensation offered for participating in the study.

Important information regarding your and your child's protection and rights

1. Please note that participation in the study is completely voluntary and that you or your child can withdraw or decline to participate in the study at any point.
2. There are no negative outcomes to withdrawing or declining to participate in the study.

APPENDIX "G"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (parents)

3. In creating opportunities for critical thinking skills, philosophical thinking may evoke questions that challenge traditional and normative cultural or even religious values or beliefs. While the aim is not to purposefully raise controversial topics, it is important that children take the decision to discuss what they feel to be important. (Please note that my role is merely to facilitate discussions which are raised by the children and not to contribute to the topics raised). Please be aware of this and note that you are welcome to discuss with me any issues that arise that you may be concerned about.
4. All the enquiries will be confidential as determined by the group.
5. As the group enquiries are part of the PhD research, the information will be shared within academic related activities such as published work in journals/books or conferences.
6. The sessions will be videotaped or photographed for PhD research purposes such as data analysis. Should the material be necessary for conference presentation or publications, measures will be taken to conceal identity (e.g. blurring of faces).
7. I endeavour not to share any information which may identify the children. Artwork, constructions and other materials which emerge from the sessions will be shared at the discretion of the children and under pseudonyms so as not to reveal their identity.
8. All research material will be safely archived with the researcher only.
9. All philosophy sessions for research purposes only are offered free of charge. There is no incentives offered for participation in the study.
10. Please note that the study may require collaboration with autism spectrum team members such as psychologists or therapists, and specialist doctors (psychiatrists, developmental paediatricians) where and if necessary and for the benefit of your child's health, but you and your child will be informed beforehand.

I thank you for taking the time to read this information letter. You are welcome to contact me on 082 6288138 or email sumaya.babamia@gmail.com.

Best wishes,

Sumaya Babamia
Speech-language therapist and Audiologist

APPENDIX "G"

Sumaya Babamia
PCKSUM001
PhD, School of Education, UCT
Information sheet and consent form (parents)

Date:

I, _____ in my capacity as a parent at
_____ acknowledge that my child will be
participating in Sumaya Babamia's PhD study and acknowledge that:

- I understand the nature of the study;
- I have been informed of why my child is a suitable participant in the study;
- Participation is voluntary and I can withdraw my child at any point from the study;
- There are no negative consequences to not participating in the study;
- Confidentiality is assured at all times;
- Pseudonyms will be used to protect me and my child's identity;
- The children are to be respected for their decisions on how the group is structured, maintained and directed as well as the contents of the discussion;
- The information from this study will be used for academic publications and conferences only;
- Video recordings and photographs will be used for research purposes. Material for conference and or publications will be used in a manner that conceals identity (e.g. blurring of faces);
- Sumaya will inform me timeously should collaboration with other professionals be necessary. I will be informed as to the nature of such meetings. All meetings will occur within the scope of the research project only.

Parent signature

Child's name and surname:

Email and contact number