Flickering, spilling and diffusing body/knowledge in the posthuman early years

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Abstract

This chapter will work with deleuzeguattarian theories, posthuman and new materialisms to examine how subjectivity becomes an entangled open-ended set of relations in 'process ontology' (Braidotti, 2006: 199). Gathering empirical materials from texts, images and early childhood education, we will attempt to sense their complex ebb and flow that resists an always-already for-ness of the research process that modulates our experiencing of the young child in the posthuman early years. As researchers, we will try to rethink data as words but also as images, movements, politics, molecules, affect, noise, haecceity and pollution, documenting our thoughts, preoccupations, transgressions, detours and distractions in the hope of rethinking our research as movements, openings, new improvisations.

Introduction

Following Deleuze and Whitehead, we begin with a movement from without, a process, never with a 'subject' of a process. This page merely opens onto what Manning and Massumi describe as "a commotion of relational activity, each vying to be written down, to be the conduit of the field's summing up in a determinate expression" (2014: 12):

> …texts are traversed by a movement that comes from without, that does not begin on the page (nor the preceding pages), that is not bounded by the frame of the book; it is entirely different from the imaginary movement of representation or the abstract movement of concepts that habitually take place among words and within the mind of the reader (Deleuze, cited in Blondel, 1985: 145).

Amongst this commotion, the moment of beginning our chapter is defined by what our senses are compelled to attend to (Mukhopadhyay, 2008). Yet even before our pen and paper begin to seduce each other in virtual intimacy, relational activity is already at work across heterogeneous fields of experience: the echoes of an invitation to write; our calling to familiar systems of linguistic symbols; collaborating in the imaginary of the emerging book; awkward relations with deforestation; seductive ecologies of preceding chapters; the ebb and flow across French, Canadian, Italian and American theorists; the shifting terrain and traditions of philosophy; the politics of the printing press and technology; the nourishing workings of the dorsal aorta and a multiplicity of intensely vibrating senses. Caught among the pulsations of such commotion, we are compelled to attend to the most captivating of expressions and orient ourselves toward some text and an image, acknowledging that "There is a politics to how we distribute our attention" (Ahmed, 2008: 30).

Mummy, do you like being human?
No, not really. Do you?
No. I'd like to be something useful, like a door handle.
(Alfred, 2015)

When Mukhopadhyay sees the door he does not immediately see a threshold for passage…He sees qualities in a texture of integral experience… As it becomes determinate, an object form separates out from the dynamic form, an affordance opens, and the tendency for describing makes itself felt, turning to language. The field has pressed on toward expressing itself in language (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 16).

Empirical materials, an image and a quotation - we are struck by their immanent relationality. As the text and image pass between us, a background movement of affordances somehow manoeuvre the image and text to the fore of the aforementioned and ongoing commotion. Unfolding in/onto each other, as generative forces that participate in the production of new subjective possibilities, as "one artwork catches another in its movement of thought" (Manning, 2015, cited in Grusin, 2015: xxiii), they produce ideas of doors, handles and wood; shadows and surfaces; fullness and flatness; voices and vibrations; human bodies, edges, flows and intensities. For Liz and I as researchers and following Guattari (1995), the movement of thought caught not in the presence of passively representative images, but in vectors of subjectivation, bridging the text, absorbs our attention into *'door handle'*, arising from, whilst remaining deeply entangled with the splintering fibres striating the flat surface of the door. The handle somehow modulates our collaborative, differentiated experiencing, busying our disintegrating bodies and creating a panoply of sense (Manning and Massumi, 2014), "When the moment has [door handled] itself into a determinate emergence, consciousness begins to flicker… the singled-out object "[door handle]" bears all the weight of it" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 15).

With consciousness flickering in the movements of the ideas passing between and across us both, we scavenge around the transgressive posthuman spaces evoked by the images and text, already preparing to write about Alfred's imagining of himself as a *door handle*, "already tending toward expressions in use-value" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 8) – an opening, into another space, an escape, solace, place to hide. In this use-value, the handle-ness almost disintegrates, instead figuring as already opening the door to pass through. It's use-full-ness critically apparent to us. However, Mukhopadhyay (2008) has other stories to tell,

> I would remember a wall not by its flatness but because of a nail that had cast its shadow under the overhead light. And because of that nail, I could imagine and grow my probable stories around it… The story behind the object is far more important to me than the object (2008: 35, 54).

This opening paragraph allows us momentarily to 'out', but also to slow down our tendencies to foreground the for-ness and use-value of objects as carriers of sense and meaning-full expression in qualitative research. In slowing down our anthropocentric urgencies, we hope to "find the force that gives a new sense to what …[we]… say, and hang the text upon it" (Deleuze, 1997: 145), where different stories around the door, the door handle (and other empirical materials) will grow. We can question whether the human subject (as researcher) alone is sufficient to account for any field's fuller relational activities. And if not, how can movements in a much richer event effect interruptions to our modulating experiences? How do fields of tensions resist our surrendering of them to recognisable, digestible structures? If, as Manning (2014) proposes, there is never a body, an object, an entity as such, then how do we experience the edgings and contourings, forces and intensities of the field itself, to, "… perceive the relational quality of a welling environment that dynamically appears in a jointness of experience" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 7-8)? What of the shadow, the non/sense, the thing, figures, openings, temporality, abstraction, movements, intervals, immanence and curation that feature jointly in this commotion

of a foreground-background embrace, co-actively producing door handle, nail, bodies and language in the images and empirical materials?

This chapter augments the idea of process ontology as we consider what it means to open ourselves as researchers to fuller relational activities in qualitative inquiry. We will consider what our open approach to post / nonhuman theoretical ideas might offer us as researchers in the field of childhood studies and engage with extracts of empirical materials to examine how the idea of nomadic thought or process ontology produces a complexity that refuses straightforward stories, explanations and deconstructions that occupy anthropocentric resting places. The chapter is organised as three related sections: the first examines how the post- and nonhuman turn in qualitative research affords us moments of methodological improvisation and curation, where our senses might pay attention differently to the relational processes at work in empirical materials and in dismantling the human-form as researcher, "In the wonder of improvisation, the 'I' is effectively left behind" (Manning, 2014: 165). In the second section, we take a closer look at the idea and processes of the nomad in relation to our research writing practices. Taking flight from the captivating expressions drawn to our attention earlier by Woodman, Mukhopadhyay and Alfred, we spend time here interfering with cross-disciplinary fields. Carried by the impulses of art and philosophy as they course through the molecules of door handles, nails, full and flat worlds, across surfaces, into shadows and luminous air, we document our adventures (Whitehead, 1967) felting empirical materials. The third section continues working with nomadic possibilities for posthuman studies of early childhood in the hope of dismantling what Braidotti describes as "hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity" (Braidotti, 1994: 23). We augment the chapter's commotion of relational activity further, drawing in empirical materials from early years practice, literary and technoscientific studies to produce shadow stories as spectral figures that pollute the natural order of the 'proper' child in education.

The post and non-human turn: challenging that which we thought we had already re-thought

> The middle is by no means an average. On the contrary it is
> where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate
> a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back
> again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement
> that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning
> or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the
> middle (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 28).

Given that much of our time is spent mingling in the terrain of early years education, we are entangled, inexplicably, with modernity and Enlightenment logic. Yet, we have also been swept up by theories that have sought to erode the very foundations upon which contemporary early childhood education is founded. Such foundations are secured by salient discourses including liberal humanism and rationality, which together mark the child out as a redemption figure, an emissary of and for salvation. Our past and continuing immersions in, for example, poststructuralism (Brown & Jones, 2001) postmodernism (MacLure, Jones, Holmes & MacRae, 2011), feminism (Jones, MacLure, Holmes & MacRae, 2011), feminist poststructuralism (Holmes & Jones, 2012) and deconstruction (Holmes, 2010; Jones, 2010) butt against and seek to

constantly erode the bastions of Enlightenment logic that Maclure (2011) succinctly summarises as a "belief in reason and progress, unmediated access to truth and the agency of the centred, humanist self" (Maclure, 2011: 997).

As muddlers within the deleuzeguattarian middle, the momentum that gathers within the ebbs and flows of posthumanism, catches and snags transversally moving us into ever more sceptic streams, where the (re)thought always, already needs to be rethought. For us this is particularly imperative where neo-liberalism, government policies and a particular notion of progress ensure, for example, that the decentering of the subject is an unfinished project. 'The child' within neo-liberalism augments, underpins and sustains a confidence that 'human beings are exceptional, autonomous and set above the world that lies at their feet' (Badmington, 2011: 374; see also Cannella and Wolff, 2014). Such anthropocentrism is further sustained by the pervading and persuasive tenacity to cling to the "reassuring familiarity of common sense" (Braidotti, 2013: 1) where narratives of rationality, normality, progress and mastery are secured. As other critical commentators have made clear, much of this common sense in early childhood education is predicated on and reproduced through developmental psychology that legitimizes certain truths (Walkerdine, 1988, Cannella, 1997; Burman, 1995/2008) and in so doing positively privileges some children whilst rendering others as 'other'; that is lacking intellectually, socially, emotionally, linguistically and so on. As a 'technology of the self' (Foucault, 1975), linear narratives of growth and development are directed towards organization and stratification of the body so what is produced is a generalized standard, a 'norm' that stands for "normality, normalcy and normativity" (Braidotti, 2013: 26; see also MacLure et al, 2011). Deleuze and Guattari summarise:

> You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body–otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted–otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement–otherwise you're just a tramp. (1987: 159)

The world, as many have noted, is caught in a maelstrom of eruptions where the escalation of matter, including robotics, reproductive technologies, advanced prosthetics and so on has blurred traditional dyads that have traditionally served to secure 'man' as the subject (Braidotti, 2013). Yet, as we have inferred, much of our academic endeavours are situated where children are constantly encouraged to practice forms of mastery couched in liberal humanist discourses where caring for the class rabbit, the guinea pig, an African snail or tiny tiddlers becomes a practice in caring that has quasi colonial connotations embedded within it. And whilst we recognise that learning to care is quite a reasonable expectation have we not got to the position or a situation where the very notion of 'reasonableness' is readily understood as an 'outcome', an outcome moreover that can be quickly summarised, cross-checked and rendered into a 'fact'? And in so doing, have we not then subtracted care so that it is stripped of complexities and becomes a readily recognised, universal and over generalised singly entity? Care = common-sense.

Caught as we are in the tendrils of modernity where the legacy of the Enlightenment still persistently trails we persist in finding pockets of air. Our own transversal

movements with posthumanism molecularly garners and mingles with previous theoretical movements. Herbrechter and Callus (2013) propose that posthumanism could be understood as a "… theory of 'replenishment' compensating for poststructuralism's theoretical acute focus on language. And whilst this line chimes with Barad's statement that "Language has been given too much power" (Barad, 2003: 801) we want to understand language as molecular where our task is less to do with subtracting language but more to do with sensing its relational activity. This, as Massumi and Manning (2014) forewarn, takes time. "It takes time for the field of experience to actively sort itself out towards its coming to a determinate expression" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 16).

Picking up speed, taking our time

Whilst we agree with Badminton that anthropocentrism - with its assured insistence upon human exceptionalism is "no longer an adequate or convincing account of the way of the world" (Badminton, 2011: 381) - such a situation does raise some tricky question for us. Looking across at our own endeavours, whilst we have tried to remain faithful to the mantra of 'opening- up' so as not to code, box or tie data down (Holmes, 2014; Jones, 2013; Holmes & Jones, 2013) we have also played safe, lacking courage to move beyond the banal, where "bland dialect of mutual regard" worked at "suppressing, idiom, diversity, affect, and conflict" (MacLure, 2011: 998). It is, we think, within the process of data analysis that is exceptionally challenging particularly when one wants to question the status quo but where endemic habits surrounding research predisposes some forms of outputs whilst diminishing others. Nevertheless, as the UK settles down for another five years of Tory government there is an urgency to rethink so as to reconfigure ways of thinking, feeling and writing. As feminist researchers we need to (continue) to invent ways to live and write posthuman research, to re-conceptualise what Braidotti describes as, "… a new politics on the basis of a more adequate understanding of how the contemporary subject functions" (2006: 199).

This contemporary posthuman subject is a fascinatingly controversial figure conceptualized as co-constituted of matter, symbolic, sociological, material, biological, and political forces; she makes cuts, is intra-active, entangled and always becoming. The feminist politics are claimed, the body in "its very materiality plays an *active* role in the workings of power" (Barad, 2003: 809). As Frost proposes, our job is to closely examine "how the forces of matter and the processes of organic life contribute to the play of power or provide elements or modes of resistance to it" (2011: 70). In this endeavour, Braidotti stresses the need for thinking as "a nomadic activity, which takes place in the transitions between potentially contradictory positions" (2006: 199). Treading warily and (re)presenting nomadically at the transversal movements of modernity/postmodernity /posthumanism, we want to eschew the straight, the automatic, the banal and the harmoniously polite. In so doing, we will (re)set our sights and pursue the desire to "acknowledge nature, the body and materiality in the fullness of their becoming" Goaded by Barad, can we resist "resorting to the optics of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority?" Can we refuse "the theorization of the human as either pure cause or pure effect?" (Barad, 2003: 812). Can we, as Manning suggests leave the 'I' behind? And in so doing can we practice and pursue nomadic inquiry, process ontology or what Braidotti refers to as 'as-if' - a "technique of strategic re-location in

order to rescue what we need of the past in order to trace paths of transformation of our lives here and now" (1994:6).

Nomadic (writing) movements: door, handle, shadows and alchemy

This second section of the chapter develops our interest in research as nomadic and trans-situational, an interest that situates the research process as aggressively creative, in continuous flux but always demanding disruption to that flux. Deleuze, whilst refusing to pin the concept of nomad down, does forewarn that "It's not enough simply to say concepts possess movement: you also have to construct intellectually mobile concepts" (1995: 122). Tasked accordingly we move to make trans-situational links which Massumi argues involves "a reconstellation of concepts" (cited in Walter, 2014: 258), where ideas are extracted from their home systems and encounter others from another system. Braidotti (1994) suggests that becoming nomadic entails dissolution of imaginary sites of authentic disciplinary identities. More recently she has argued that a nomadic subject should never be taken as a new metaphor for the human condition, but rather as a cartographic tool that helps us compose materialistic mappings of situated, that is, embedded and embodied, social positions (Braidotti, 2014). She goes on to suggest that cartography should be a theoretically based and politically-informed reading of the present which fulfils the function of providing both analytic and exegetical tools for critical thought and also creative theoretical alternatives. She proposes "a politics of location, or situated knowledges, rests on process ontology to posit the primacy of relations over substances" (2006: 199). Writing in a constant state of 'in-process' necessitates movements including stirring up our own ontological and epistemological (un)certainties.

Taking up the space afforded by Woodman's image and Alfred's words allows us to distribute our selves amongst a fulcrum of writing possibilites, becoming a "streaming, spiralling, zigzagging, sneaking, feverish line" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 550). This line, space and movement assemble the critical and the political in our inquiries, challenging the corrosive effects of habit. As Colebrook reminds us, there is always more than this actual world; "there are also all the potential worlds we might see" (Colebrook, 2002: 6). In our own feverish desires to see other worlds, other possibilities we begin with ordinary things – a door and a door handle. Yet, when caught in Alfred's mouth and in Woodman's image something happens to these ordinary things. Both Alfred and Woodman set us of zigzagging along a stream strewn with speculations. Deleuze (re)reminds us that, "there is an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects, but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations…" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 382). Attending to haecceities means that door and door handle are not understood as a determinable, known object. Rather we are encouraged to contemplate 'doorness' and 'door-handleness', that is their discrete qualities or what Manning and Massumi describe as "qualities in a texture of integral experience" (2014: 16), complex sets of relations or a commotion of relational activity. Manning and Massumi go on to note "that experience does not preclude the efficacy of use; it includes it differently" (ibid, 16).

Whilst doors might typically and habitually be understood as a threshold allowing passage Woodman's image encourages us to defy habit. For us, Woodman's image is an intensive space of affects. It is open-ended, nonlinear, haptic, a nomadic space. It is full of latency, of hidden, implicit, reserved things. It communicates yet "with no immediate need for language" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 10). It works on our

bodies and minds, as we in turn work on it. Stuff resonates, evades and precludes us. The image brings us towards "singularities… turning points and points of inflection… points of … condensation …part of what constitute the virtual proper being of things, their unique being, their haecceity or thisness" (Deleuze, 1990: 63). The wood, the metal hinge, the forces, reflective light, contours and edges constitute fullness, haecceities, and shadows that Barthes paradoxically describes as 'luminous' (1993: 110). Where the stilling of the door as 'a door', casts ghostly movements, hints at other narratives, where dead air breathes uncanny forms of life, making "individuation and relation possible" (Irigaray, 1999: 136). No longer functional, seemingly forgotten, this door escapes 'being a door' yet tilts at other possibilities. Its door-ness is provocatively suggestive of becoming attentive to a field of immediacy rather than being with habit. Woodman's image is excessive where, as a commotion of relational activities, it cast doubts on our typical, habitual, logical and reasonable ways of making sense, including making sense of [a] door.

Manning and Massumi note that, "a mode of existence never preexists an event" (2014: 11). Aptly, they continue, "the mode of existence has to do with the emergent quality of the experience, not with the factually cross-checked identity of the objects featuring in it" (2014: 11) In turning back to Alfred's conversation with his mother we find ourselves caught again in the thick of it. Just as the door, walls, masonry, bricks, shadows, dust, light and air were in a field of experience so too is Alfred. It is a field that, like Woodman's image, confounds us because it refuses to shake down into patterns of predictability. Door handle is put into (com)motion with human. Alfred whilst momentarily claiming 'I' squashes any sort of primacy within the field of experience/relations. He does not set his sights on and/ or assume his Cartesian birthright of mastery. Instead, he offers an alternative relational way of thinking about (him) self where he would *like to be something useful, like a door handle*. Alfred, together with his mother, becomes an event where a virtual door handle together with actual questions triggers something that borders on shock. Alfred has titled the world, where our perceptions of the normal state of things have been skewed.

Nomadic Possibilities: dismantling hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity

Untitled, © Caterina Silenza, private collector

Deleuze proposes, "once you start writing, shadows are more substantial than bodies" (1995: 134). As nomadic meddlers caught in the middle of things we find shadows irritatingly troublesome yet it's an irritation that serves as an incitement to see. We want to turn now to data that stems from ethnographic work undertaken in the very earliest stages of schooling. Our suggestion is that by considering the data as shadows we can begin to contemplate who or what is being shadowed.

When collecting data we began to notice certain phrases that peppered adults' accounts of young children and their behaviour. Words such as 'feral' and 'running wild' were used. On another occasion a girl was described as '*She's just like sap, so slow, dreary*". Whilst we must stress that these terms and descriptions were not regularly used they did nevertheless happen. For us, they resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's "you're just a tramp" (1987: 159) where the child and the system and its organisations are out of kilter. They also interestingly lean to Deleuze's shadow as a "zone of indiscernibility or undecidabilty", opening up an interval, interstices between child and animal, when, for example the shadow in Francis Bacon's Triptych (1973) "… escapes from the body like an animal we had been sheltering" (Deleuze, 2013: 16).

These extracts of data have become a series of striating moments when particular language-forms somehow began bearing all the weight of our consciousness as we encountered the children, the adults, the early years settings. In juxtaposition with one another, the terms create a panoply of (non)sense (Manning and Massumi, 2014). Working in much the same way as Alfred's door handle, terms such as 'feral', 'running wild' and 'sap' stand out as elements that modulate our experiencing of the surface of events, interfering with our rush to document the use-full-ness of the 'proper' (tame/d) child (MacLure, Jones, Holmes & MacRae, 2011). We also recognise how terms such as these are overwhelmed by tendencies-to-form. That is, they become solidified amongst anthropocentric theoretical work around young children's development, including for example Piagetian animistic thinking (Piaget, 1929: 201) and Freudian animality theorising of the dark forces within the human character (1930). Derrida's deconstructive thinking (2002) reduces animality to a figuration of Alterity, outside every horizon, the space-between, in which no one is anything, neither human nor nonhuman but *a*human. We are also mindful of post-anthropocentric animal movements "away from being and towards becoming, away from objectifications and towards process… the Deleuzean goal seems to be directed to this increase of force, of life" (Kubiak, 2012: 53). Similarly, Haraway's figurations of interrelationality (1996) evokes a philosophy of multiple becomings of the nomadic subject, simultaneously materialist and political, interestingly caught up in the idea that "…our … aggressive passions do not in fact "bubble up" from our animal bodies but "trickle down" from our uniquely human minds" (Carveth, 2012: 156).

Seduced yet again by the luminous workings of the shadows cast by these terms as we look across these very different, yet related theoretical fields, we are reminded of Ahmed's caution to resist clearing the ground of what has come before us (2008: 33/36). We sense, as early years educators, how we remain entangled with Piagetian and Freudian modernity as well as Derridean (ir)rationality, whilst being swept up into Haraway's and Deleuze's more-than-human-worlds. So, although we accept that the concepts evoked by these terms do often become fixed over time, alluding to a

child's *in*adequacy, *in*ability, *un*readiness, *im*properness in these early years settings, crucial work requires us to find new ways to escape the contours of the fixed forms they always already seem to inhabit. To do this, we return to the promise and possibilities of the shadow, a glimpse of the threshold between form and formlessness, between knowing and unknowing (Phelan, 2004).

 In turning we encounter a tormented shadow, the '*onco*', from the Greek word 'tumor' - the shadow within/out. According to Shorett (2002), a transgenic mammal called the OncoMouse was named for its possession of an inserted gene sequence conferring susceptibility to cancer. This animal came to be seen as an ideal test subject for toxicology studies and therapeutic developments in cancer research. In 1988, the OncoMouse became the first animal ever given patent protection for its animal technologies. Haraway works with the OncoMouse™ as a composite image, a manipulated creature. For her it embodies questions about the artificiality of dualisms between humans and animals, culture and nature, and science and technology. Weisberg refers to Haraway's analysis of OncoMouse™ as nothing much beyond "frivolous excursions into the limits of discourse" (2009: 60) and Crist suggests OncoMouse™ is "ontologically indeterminate… white noise… an elusive trickster amenable to indefinite registrations, totally reliant on humans to assign it meaning" (Crist, 2004: 8). However our interest in Haraway's use of OncoMouse™ is as composite image, breaking "the purity of lineage… a spectral figure: the never-dead that pollutes the natural order simply by being manufactured and not born…" (Braidotti, 2006: 202).

The accumulation of the limits of discourse, elusive tricksters, white noise, deconstructing boundaries and being 'witness' to, are all importantly captivating thoughts for us as researchers who have registered discomfort with those animalistic language-forms such as 'feral' and, yet not known what to do in those instances with the sensations. What Braidotti might describe as nomadic devices, they unsettle traditional codes and destabilise the subject as they, like the door handle and door, cast dark and tantalizing shadows across the 'proper' child, becoming spectral figures, tramps who pollute the natural order. Staying with the idea of pollution, we are carried into the darkened, noisy space of Kafka's burrow as well as "The Castle".

The Burrow (Kafka, 1971) is a human polluted, diseased body, the various creatures within it are micro-organisms of one sort or another. Deleuze and Guattari musing on Kafka's work write, "It is a rhizome, a burrow," "The Castle" [for example] has many entrances..." They continue, "Among these entrances, none seems privileged; no sign over the entrance announces that this is the way in. The reader of Kafka's work will choose an opening and map the passage he [sic] finds himself following. The map will change if a different entrance is chosen" (Brinkley, 1983, cited in Deleuze, Guattari and Brinkley, 1983: 13).

The idea of multiple doors draws our interest towards the many ways we might "… interpret work which does not offer itself to anything but experimentation" (Brinkley, 1983, cited in Deleuze, Guattari and Brinkley, 1983: 13). There are many ways into thinking about 'feral' and 'sap'. They cast interesting shadows over flat(ened) surfaces, upsetting the 'natural order' of the proper child. We want to explore how they are becoming increasingly polluted, noisy words and move into the burrow where Kafkaesque tormenting sounds of whistling and hissing become too much to

bear. In Kafka's work, the narrator tries to locate their point of origin, to speculate on their possible causes and on possible means of eliminating them. In our writing here, the smooth entangled, felted fibres of disciplines, ideas and empirical materials that are incessantly whispering, humming, gnawing at, and chattering in our ears, ensures our work is becoming increasingly busier, noisier, a maelstrom, a cacophony, "beyond the immediate range of "sound," a kind of tumult or chaos" (Stevenson, 2004: 11).

From the commotion at the outset of the chapter, our violent agitation of ideas continues and is intensifying as we try to stay open to the chaotic, throbbing more-than-human-worlds we find ourselves scrambling around. With moments that modulate our experiencing of the world coming in and out of focus, we are deliberately resisting the urge to clear ground, dispel commotion, find causes, origins and eliminate our tormentors. 'Feral', like 'sap' and 'wild', behave as a conduit of the tumultuous field's "summing up in a determinate expression" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 12). Yet, these language-forms are helping us to pay closer attention to what Deleuze suggests is the out-of-field, that which "refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present… the thicker the thread which links the seen set to other unseen sets the better the out-of-field fulfils its function, the adding of space to space" (1986: 17).

Spilling/Stilling: concluding thoughts

We wrote earlier about our commitment to finding pockets of air within theoretical movements and across the accumulation of empirical materials. The movements of 'feral' and 'sap' behave like a "tenuous umbilical cord" (Barthes, 1993: 110), pulling us back whilst also compelling us forwards. As researchers we are trying to rethink data as words but also as images, movements, politics, molecules, affect, noise, haecceity and pollution. We wonder if our attention was located on just a door or a handle or indeed a child whether our thinking might remain without shadows? If so, would the for-ness and use-value of the subject remain forever visible and fixed rather than in movement, becoming-imperceptible (Bertelsen, 2013)? The importance of researchers attending to the shadows cast by children marked out as 'feral', 'like sap' and 'running wild' is that they always render the subject persistent but in ways which are "…about reconstituting the nature of the perceptual field and changing the 'threshold' of the perceivable world (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 281).

The threshold of the flat perceivable world of the proper child becomes fuller, noisier and more tumultous with 'feral' and 'sap', as they "feature as tonal differences in a field modulating the whole experience at all levels, composing an overall mode of existence that is in a different key" (Manning and Massumi, 2014: 8). They exist here as written representations of what once were spoken words; they gesture towards images of a wild, animal-like child and an oozing thick substance; they conjure wounds, insult, fear, denigration; but they also gesture to movement - energetic, unpredictable and excruciatingly slow. Or as Massumi suggests, "a veritable laboratory of forms of live action" (2014: 12-13). Following Manning (2014), we propose that words such as 'feral' and 'sap' and the schooled concepts that lie behind them such as 'not disciplined' and 'without motivation' never pre-exist their movement, but are always edging into themselves as 'object', shading into themselves as 'figure' (Manning, 2014: 164). Perhaps, like the spectral body, they are "the other

at the edge of life" (Derrida, 1994: 26), as words and concepts, they are merely a brief instantiation or constellation of what those movements have become. However thinking of *"She's just like sap…"* as movement, experiencing it as durational performance, it refuses only to be tethered to its for-ness or use-value, but continues to work across the flat surfaces of the 'proper' child, of the adult, the early years setting, as singularity inferred in and through engagement, lingering to make contact, exchange sensations, pollute, find resonance of hidden things one with another. It produces worlds of pace, noise and radiations, time, vibrations and sensation as it wonders the more-than-human-world in movement (Manning, 2014: 165). As sap gradually oozes out from the flat surfaces and pursues its slow descent, we are taken to *Marina Abramović Presents* at the Whitworth Art Gallery (2009), and in particular Kira O'Reilly's three hour stair falling re-interpretation of Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912).

Kira O'Reilly Stair Falling, Photographs by Marco Anelli © 2009

Reflecting on her falling, O'Reilly writes how it, "allows metric, linear time to collapse into an unexpected topography of proximities and distances where other connections are made and events pulled backwards and forwards in the same time at the same place" (O'Reilly 2008: 100). The idea of slowly flowing sap forces O'Reilly to reconsider linear time, something that ruthlessly striates the early years setting and the lives of the children who inhabit that space.

In the classroom, the movement evoked by, *"She's just like sap…"* modulates the adult's acute pull of gravity to insist on space-time conformity, whilst simultaneously gesturing at many tensions. The complex and entangled vectors of time, space and intensities flow amongst the early years classroom and are suddenly forced into stark relief. It is "as if" components of heterogeneous series are colliding, flickers, clashes and vibrations of different speeds erupt into language that, in this chapter, has bolted through sharp turns and crooked paths, drawing its trajectory as it goes. The adult's

imaginary of a 'proper' classroom speed is drawn and as striated apparatus of the state, is marking out how particular functions secure the child's contribution to the success of the collective. Sap only finds its flow from the tree when a wound gives way to internal pressure. O'Reilly goes on, "the caress of stone and skin, the effect of gravity and gaze burdened and unburdened my body. It was as much a dancing of becomings and molecular shifts as anything" (cited in Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson 2010: 47).

Amongst these classroom, art gallery and forest forces, abrasions and skirmishes, it is the call to pay attention to movements in the process of creating the human body. The movements of this language-form cast shadows that refuse to find, and resist the consolations of form, perhaps offering up greater stories of no-thing-ness as they co-compose with movement's inflexions to stir something in excess of themselves. We come to rest momentarily where we (re)consider what further possibilities might be encountered if we continue to move within the forces of process philosophy. For us, we find degrees of shadowy optimism in the nomadic movements that are materialized in fields for experience that does not begin and end with the human subject.

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