



You Blew Me Away by Penny Hardy

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**Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry:
Special Issue, Winter 2023**

**Posthumanism:
A Desire for a New Humanity
(Part 2)**

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Introduction: Crafting Posthuman Kindness and Care

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As the song says, we live in a material world (Harrison, 1973). Yet, so much about education, teaching, theory, and research, is non-material. Knowledge itself, while firmly attached to the material, can't be touched. The same is true of relationships. Whether they are between colleagues, between teacher and students, between human and more-than-human beings, or between beings and knowledge, relationships matter even though they are intangible. So, what is this mattering that touches and connects us yet cannot be touched with our senses? Barad (2017) conceptualizes it through quantum physics, explaining how even in vacuum conditions when there appears to be nothing at all, virtual particles exist and are entangled in a state of indeterminacy. By this she means, "They do not exist in space and time. They are ghostly non/existences that teeter on the edge of the infinitely fine blade between being and non-being" (p. 4). Perhaps, this is what Spinoza (1992) understood as immanence, what Deleuze (2002) describes as the actual being part of the virtual and vice versa, and what Grosz (2017) discusses as the incorporeal. Carol Lee's (2023) poem, "Forest Floor", that prefaces this introduction, attempts to understand this same phenomenon in the context of education.

This Special Issue, Part 2 of the *Posthumanism: A Desire for a New Humanity*, is concerned with all these things as they relate to education. This issue addresses education in the material world, in relationships, and in the entanglement of matter and the incorporeal. Yet, we feel strongly that it also addresses kindness. In our first issue of *Posthumanism: A Desire for a New Humanity*, we read about collegial kindness in the form of ethical peer reviews (Strom & Mills, 2022). We encounter a similar collegial kindness in this issue too, but more than that, we experience kindness in a broader sense as it rhizomatically reaches out and touches bits of the big world we live in, and feels its way under our skin and into our hearts. We also experience this broader kindness in articles about our relationships with non-human animals. We appreciate the profound impact that inter-species relationships can have, and perhaps should have, in classrooms and for education, more generally.

Kindness, as we see it, is more than a concept or the sum of individual acts; it is a practice that creates an environment of care. As such, the practice of kindness, as with all creations, art and otherwise, can be crafted and fashioned through conscious choices. The articles, poems, and sculpture photos in this issue demonstrate the careful crafting by their makers, and the choices

they have made towards fashioning a posthumanist-informed environment of care through kindness. We hope, as editors, that you appreciate as much as we do, this form of authorial contribution in addition to the academic contributions they make. We want to especially acknowledge Penny Hardy for her contributions to environmentally-oriented kindness and thank her for allowing us to include her work in our issue.

Penny's sculptures, **Little Boy Leon**, **Break Free**, **Yin and Yang**, **Erosion**, **The Kiss**, **Whispers Through My Soul**, and the yet unnamed one are not only breathtaking, but she takes her art to a whole new level of care and kindness. In an effort to raise money for children who are victims of conflict and global warming, she has donated a sculpture and through UNICEF's Just Giving¹ website invites everyone who lands there to name the sculpture for a donation of £10 (approximately \$16.00 CDN or \$12.00 US). The sculpture will go to the person whose sculpture name is chosen for the piece. You can read more about Penny, view more of her sculptures, and get details on her Just Giving project at <https://sculptureforchange.com/>.

Kay Sidebottom and Donna Carlyle's article is called, **From Reflection to Diffraction: What Toto Teaches Us About "Thinking With" Multispecies Companions in Education**. For the authors, animal companions have long borne witness to the reflections and ruminations of their human counterparts. From owls, rabbits, horses, and insects to reindeer, mice, and lizards, animals frequently play the role of confidant, even advisor in popular culture, alongside the ever-faithful dog, like, Toto in the *Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900). The authors examine how teachers' reflective practices are often entangled with the non-humans they spend time with. Through stories and images, they suggest that time with animals can encourage diffractive shifts in thinking, different connections with the world, and a (re)connection with, or re-framing of personal and professional values and ethics.

Carol Lee's poem, **The Apparatus of Fall: Power Units Measured**, is a short thought experiment in conceptualizing the season, Fall, as an apparatus at the intersection of natural and built environments. As such, the poem asks how the apparatus constrains what can be measured (observed) and what mechanisms and perspectives does it use for measuring it.

Donna Carlyle and Ian Robson present two vignettes in **Of Dog and Dice: Affective-Messy Posthuman Narratives Through Creative Pedagogies and Corresponding in the Classroom**. The first features a primary school classroom with a dog named Ted and the second a creative Health and Social Care workshop. Through these narratives, the authors present their respective processes of "becoming-messy" researchers. Using "cuts" or "slices" from research events, they give visual materialization, as in slow-motion or time-lapsed photography, to an on-going and a constant state of "becoming." They consider viewing learning events, not as fixed points but as a folding through past, present, and future.

Francesca Bernardi's article, **Embodiment, Creativity, and Matter as Posthuman Agents in Research with Disabled Children**, examines creative autonomy in research with children. Considering this autonomy as both complex and relational, she reflects on its role in countering deceptive dualisms, such as researcher-participant, adult-child, knowledge-embodiment, that influence how participation is imagined. Demonstrated through a series of

¹ Program names and company names are the property of their respective owners.

photographs from a cross-cultural study with disabled children, her work reveals the power of multimodal practices and the joy of children's dialogic and experiential exchanges with materials, boundaries, and human and more-than-human bodies.

Julie Ovington's **The "Unruly" Snowflake: (Re)imagining School Readiness for Two-Year-Old Children** examines the notion of school readiness in the English Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) curriculum. Readiness, in this curriculum, is framed by linear expectations of child development linked to progress narratives that are influenced by Human Capital Theory (HCT). Focussing on how a two-year-old child reacts to a set activity, the making of a snowflake, this article engages with posthuman concepts of affect, bodies, and voice to reimagine how school readiness might be conceptualised otherwise. The research outcome offers a challenge to the dominant discourses about school readiness.

Counterpoint: Power in the Dining Hall is a poem by Sophie Collins. Written as echo and response to Al Zolynas' emotive poem *Love in the Classroom*, the poet describes the sudden, bodily intrusion of material smells in the atmosphere of a training session. This poem evokes school day memories, the physicality of learning, and the overwhelming frustration of teaching within neo-liberal educational constraints.

Sophia Jeong and Cory Buxton's article, **Things Matter: A Posthuman Empirical Inquiry into the Actualization of Gender in an Advanced Placement Biology Classroom** tells a story of how gender was actualized in a high school Advanced Placement biology classroom. Taking a posthuman onto-epistemological perspective, the authors decenter the human and instead foreground the co-constitutive and intra-active nature of students' relationships in and with the world (Jeong et al., 2021). Drawing on scholars of new materialisms to examine how things matter in the actualization of students' gender, the study traces how gender followed unpredictable *lines of flight* and shows what gender could *become*. Using these theories to explain their findings, the authors offer a new concept for the science classroom, students' *subjectivities-in-motion*.

Ripples of Becoming-With: Co-Creating a Post-Disciplinary Module About Posthumanism by Catherine Bates is an article that provides a diffractive reading of an undergraduate university module on the subject of posthumanism. The author considers the post-disciplinary nature of the module and thinks through the ways in which the module "becomes" through co-creation with a group of mature students. Via discussion of Braidotti's notion of the posthuman university, Lykke's theorisation of the post-disciplinary, and Barad and Haraway's imperatives to think-with and be response-able to multispecies communities, the author shares the joyful and unexpected directions in which the students take the module.

Spaces, Places & Lines Between Teacher Education and Community Garden: A Diffractive Entanglement with Posthumanism and Feminist New Materialist Thinking is a paper by Lucy Harding. In it she examines the diffractive connectedness of spaces and places between teachers, nature, academia, and community. The author recounts the story of a project in which trainee teachers and a community garden volunteer group engage photography and poetry to connect with each other in cross community-education spaces. Via a series of shared visual and material mementos, the author documents some discomfort that emerged and puts to work philosophical posthuman and feminist new materialist ideas. In this way, she constructs an affirmative and hopeful counter-narrative that she hopes will inspire other educational researchers.

Bretton Varga and Muna Saleh write in, **Embodiments and the Open/ness of Kinship: Ma(r)king Curriculum Through Material Abstractness and Counter-Cartographies**, that reimagining curriculum as world(ing)s helps pre-service teachers produce a counter-cartography for specific curricular moments that shaped their teaching identities. Drawing on abstract artist Mark Bradford's process of reflecting, researching, layering, and excavating everyday items to represent coordinates across time and space, the authors recount the story of three powerful counter-cartographies produced by pre-service teachers.

Argyro Kanaki's article, **New Materialism in Tertiary Education: A Posthumanistic International Education Course** presents an innovative pedagogy in the form of an International Education course with foundations in new materialist perspectives. After examining the positionality of the course, the author goes on to describe a range of student projects which illustrate how people, discourses, practices, and things are continually in relational situations, always becoming different from what they were before. The article identifies some salient new directions for pedagogical practices stimulated by new materialism.

In **Towards Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging: Critical Posthumanism, New Materialism, and Theatre Pedagogies Transversalities**, Marta Cotrim suggests that the overlap of critical posthumanism, new materialism, and a specific theatre pedagogy called the *neutral mask* can help further the aims of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB), especially in the training of pre-service and in-service teachers. The author argues that the entanglement of theory and practice in the form of professional development for teachers prior to EDIB training provides them with an embodied experience of *dis/identification* that may help them perceive instances of inequity, racism, exclusion, and isolation that they otherwise might not have seen.

Jennifer Charteris, Adele Nye, Daisy Pillay, and Ruth Foulkes write about **Affirmative Ethics in the COVID-19 Moment: Perplexities, Paradoxes, and Surprises**. With a shared interest in posthuman theory and memory work, the authors connected online from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa to address the question: What can we learn about the perplexities, paradoxes, surprises, and frustrations associated with our academic work during COVID-19? Mapping the nodes and entanglements surrounding the COVID-19 malaise, enabled the authors to rework the experience of COVID-19 and use affirmative ethics to understand the interconnected, relational, and transversal politics of their academic lives.

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