

**On our com(mon)passions:
Entanglements of research, teaching practices, and institutional lives**

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Abstract

This article takes the form of a conversation between two children's literature scholars who are collaborating on a conceptual and methodological exploration of post-humanist and feminist materialist concepts and ideas in their field. They reflect on how this exploration has reshaped not only their research and methodological approaches but also their institutional lives in Higher Education. The authors also relate to the propositions for slow scholarship and response-able pedagogies, reflecting on their teaching practices and the mentoring of master and PhD students in their different geographical and institutional backgrounds, among other dimensions of what they call their 'institutional selves'. Departing from Olga Cielemecka and Monika Rogowska-Stangret's (2015) concept of "com(mon)passions", the authors propose a deeper engagement in the entanglements of thinking/feeling, teaching/learning, and critical/creative as continuums that may open spaces for (new) modes of knowledge production that resist the pressure of neoliberal and positivist academia.

Keywords: affective pedagogies, children's literature, posthumanities, response-ability, slow scholarship

This article strings together our readings and doings with Feminist New Materialist philosophies in our research, teaching practices, and institutional lives. We reflect on these connectivities as an orientation of our com(mon)passion as researchers. As proposed by Olga Cielemecka and Monika Rogowska-Stangret (2015), com(mon)passions are research practices that get interwoven in the structure of affect, resonance, and emotional engagement. Our com(mon)passion has been about us seeking to become interdependent, about looking for new forms of engagement in the field of children's literature, and about our orientation towards response-able relations.

We started collaborating two years ago, when we first met face to face in Poland. We had exchanged several short emails and then chatted over coffee at the airport in Wrocław, Poland, after a conference where the two of us had missed each other's presentations and each other's



presence. But we had not missed the very relevant theoretical reference to feminist New Materialism and posthumanism, which we were both starting to introduce into children's literature research. There, in a 'non-place', as Marc Augé (2008) terms it, we exchanged views and agreed to write together. Writing together is so intimate, but we took the risk of collaborating with one another although we were still strangers.

Our collaboration soon centred on drafting an article that we named "New Materialist Openings to Children's Literature Studies" (García-González & Deszcz-Tryhubczak 2020). We presented a version of it at the biennial congress of the International Research Society for Children's Literature in 2019. Only one of us could come, but we created a video in which we brought nature, culture, books, voices, and letters on screen to speak of our exploration of how Feminist New Materialist thinking provides important openings for children's literature studies and enables developing complex understandings of child-adult entanglements. Feminist New Materialism points at how materialities have been marginalized as a result of the poststructural emphasis on language and discourse. New Materialisms recognize materiality as agentic, complex and, most importantly, relational. In the article, we discuss how this philosophy enables conceptualizing children's books and young readers outside the framings of developmental psychology, which presumes that human lives should unfold according to age-determined needs and competencies. We also wonder why most studies of children's literature with a posthuman perspective restrict the non-human to animals, plants, toys, and machines, which are viewed from a human-centred perspective. And we ask the following questions: What if we think of the agency of books? Do books read us? And how do writing, reading, drawing, and other forms of doing *with* books open processes of becoming-with? We find it striking that texts and images are predominantly seen as discursive, and not as material elements of the world that produce and participate in processes and porous relationships with human and non-human entities. These and other questions had been shaping our New Materialist take on children's literature studies. Yet, it soon became evident that reading and working with these theories was putting into question not only our own research practices but also our 'intra-actions' within our institutions. 'Intra-actions' is a neologism introduced by Karen Barad (2007: 139) to refer to the mutual constitution of the subject and object; that is, they are only relationally distinct and do not exist as separate individual elements. Therefore, in this article, we inquire into how New Materialist thinking informs, decenters, and opens our teaching practices. More broadly, we address the question of what feminist New Materialist theory does to our 'institutional selves'.

Reading Barad (2007), Braidotti (2013), Lenz Taguchi (2016), Dixon-Roman (2016), St. Pierre (2004; 2011), Haraway (2016), Murriss (2016), and MacLure (2013b), among others, oriented us towards transversing dualisms in knowledge production, questioning the position of the researcher, and experimenting with modes of data creation. In this new orientation, we keep seeking for affirmative ways of academic engagement, following Isabelle Stengers's call for inquiries that have the 'power to cause us to think, feel and wonder, the power to have us wondering how practically to relate to it, how to pose relevant questions about it' (2011: 374). Thinking/feeling together for this article, we became interested in 'slow scholarship' (Leibowitz

and Bozalek, 2018; Bozalek, 2017; Stengers, 2018) as a label for ethical engagement in academic work that resists the accelerated forces of neoliberal academia and its imperatives on productivity, making space for attentive and response-able relations. We think of our slow scholarship as shaped by our 'com(mon)passions', which we identify as recurrent among children's literature scholars yet disvalued in the discursive orderings of our HE institutional frameworks. Cielemecka and Rogowska-Stangret's concept of 'com(mon)passions' refers to research practices 'as a common matter deeply interwoven in the structure of affect, resonance, passion, emotional engagement and the will to engage oneself in research practices as always-already care practices' (2015: 56). We may read this concept along with the interest in 'affective practices' (Wetherell, 2012: 4) in research as closely related to some key terms of New Materialism, such as 'response-ability' (Barad, 2007: 393; Haraway, 2008: 88), and 'diffraction' (Barad, 2007: 72; Haraway, 1992: 70). While response-ability points to a shared human and non-human capacity to respond and care for the worlds we produce, diffraction calls our attention to 'where the effects of difference appear' (Haraway, 1992: 300). Both terms stress the need for ethical and committed research that transcends the level of critique and facilitates respectful transdisciplinary methodologies and new modes of engaging knowledge production.

Yet, as we have learned ourselves writing a joint article, this response-able commitment is difficult to practise. How do we read 'text/oeuvres/approaches are respectfully ... through each other in a relational way, looking for creative and unexpected provocations, strengthening these, rather than using an atomistic binary logic to compare one with the other' (Murriss and Bozalek, 2019: 873)? How can we move towards affirmation, entanglement, and becoming-with someone else's research? After all, we have been formed in structures in which knowledge is created through categorisation and cognitive distancing as researchers observe and describe rather than respond to and engage in others' research. Vivianne Bozalek and Michalinos Zembylas use a diffractive methodology to lead an international reading group whose members deal with posthumanist and New Materialist texts without trying to explain them but rather through an 'attempt to make the texts proliferate, that is, to open possibilities of entering new spaces' (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017: 119). Our own joint readings have followed a similar path, or rather a similar open field walk, in which the texts enter into a dialogue with our notes on shared and collaborative files and notebooks, with our video calls and our efforts to think creatively about what these texts may do to our research habits and production of knowledge. Looking at how this collaboration has unfolded and how it has been becoming-with the rest of our academic work, we realize that our shared endeavours may well be described as an exercise of slow scholarship that resists the 'increased pace of scholarly life and its ill effects' (Hartman and Darab, 2012: 49), providing time and space for nurturing intellectual curiosities. In slow scholarship, the 'slow' is not related to time but to a mode of addressing the inquiry, which Leibowitz and Bozalek describe as shaped, among others, by 'a receptive attitude, care-fullness, creativity, intensity, discernment, [and] cultivating pleasure, and creating dialogues between the natural and social sciences' (2018: 31). This kind of slowness is reflected in our reliance on dialogue, which enables us to render the entanglement of speaking, writing, and feeling together from our different, yet

also similar, institutional, and geographical contexts. Writing this article as dialogical—and thus resisting the standardization of academic expression in the ‘the tyranny of the paper’, as José Santos Herceg (2012) calls it, let us not only nurture the creative in the critical but also think/feel an alternative to the dominant humanist vision of the subject. Moreover, our embracing the convention of dialogue has made it possible to situate knowledge-making and to acknowledge what would otherwise be neglected as disvalued material.

Serendipitously, as we were having this conversation, we came across Monika Rogowska-Stangret and Olga Cielemecka’s dialogical article ‘Vulnerable academic performances. Dialogue on matters of voice and silence in academia’, published in January 2020. We had read other publications by these authors and were happy to discover that our dialogical writing is not isolated and constitutes a publishable form of academic writing counteracting the individualistic logic and practice so prevalent in the humanities. For Rogowska-Stangret and Cielemecka, a conversation like theirs is ‘both staged and spontaneous, curated and unconstrained, contained, and open-ended. A vulnerable academic performance calls in the embodied, the experiential, the excitable, and the personal aspects of our existence and, consequently, disturbs, if only momentarily, the rigorous norms of speaking in academia’ (2020: 28). Engaging in a similarly unusual and risky venture—first an embodied and animated conversation online, followed by an unrestrained written record of our exchange—we share this transatlantic dialogue, from Santiago de Chile to Wrocław in Poland, two ‘semi-peripheral’ sites to the Eurocentric and Anglophone academia (de Sousa Santos, 2016: 17), seeking to produce space for new teaching/learning practices in relation to children and young people’s culture.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: When seen through the lens of New Materialism, children’s literature studies may be regarded as centred on representational research, which involves relatively little risk and whose results are usually predictable. Yet both of us are aware of how the close vicinity of fields in which New Materialism has firmly set in—education (Braidotti, et al., 2018; Juelskjær, 2020), literacy research (Kuby, et al., 2018; Truman 2019; Lemieux 2020), and childhood studies (Spyrou, 2019; Diaz-Diaz and Semeneć, 2020; Kraftl, 2020)—provides children’s literature scholarship with conceptual tools and ethical-political standpoints from which it can contribute to, rather than absorb, other theoretical frameworks. These proximities have resulted in an ongoing interest in readers and in the materialities of reading, which are generally overlooked in general literary studies. Would you say that this interest is indeed becoming more and more visible in our field?

García-González: It is visible in the themes of the recent congresses of the International Research Society for Children’s Literature: ‘Creating Childhoods: Creation and (Re)-Interpretation through the Body, Histories and the Arts’ (held in Worcester in 2015), ‘Possible & Impossible Children: Intersections of Children’s Literature & Childhood Studies’ (in Toronto, 2017), ‘Silence and Silencing in Children’s Literature’ (in Stockholm, 2019). It is also evident in the focus of the next Congress, which will take place in Santiago, ‘Aesthetic and Pedagogic Entanglements’. I can see an interest in embodiments, affectivities and the materiality of reading and attachments to texts,

all of which appear rather unexplored in general (or adult) literary studies (Breu, 2018). I find children's literature a fascinating testing ground for transdisciplinary approaches, for what Rosi Braidotti terms the 'critical posthumanities' (Åsberg and Braidotti, 2018; Braidotti and Fuller, 2019; Braidotti and Regan, 2017). Braidotti and other authors have been reflecting on the role the humanities should take to face the contemporary challenges posed by such phenomena as digitalization, climate crisis, illiberal governance, and, we should add, the COVID-19 pandemic. The critical posthumanities seek new and transdisciplinary ways to engage with these pressing matters, renewing understandings of ethics and epistemological stances in the academia. The field's engagement with the question of how to research and relate to children and childhood, which has been the focus of your and other scholars' work (Gubar, 2013; Chawar, et al., 2019; Deszcz-Tryhubczak, et al., 2019; Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2019), prepares the ground for further transdisciplinary work and for innovative methods. New Materialist approaches take us to think questions which have been central in our field: the divide between children and adults and the one between knowers and learners, as well as the epistemological gap between knowledge produced in the arts and humanities and that emerging in (social) sciences.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: Yes, I agree that New Materialism may extend the approaches we are familiar and comfortable with, making them generate new methodologies. I know you have been thinking and doing with New Materialism much longer and more intensely than I have. You are also enjoying a more welcoming environment for New Materialist thinking. I wonder how New Materialism attracted you in the first place.

García-González: My interest in New Materialisms stems from an interest in the material poetics of texts, which emerged after I became critical of my own analytical emphasis on the discursive. It all started with my following Hans Ullrich Gumbrecht's (2004) call for a move away from the paradigm of representation (García-González, 2020), which eventually led me to cultural studies of emotions and affect theory (Ahmed, 2014; Fox, 2015), as well as posthumanist and New Materialist philosophies (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013; Mazzei and McCoy, 2010). I became interested in how texts do things to us that appear to be invisible in traditional critical readings. How power operates in complex entanglements which representation critique seems to fall short unveiling. Yet, this shifting paradigm could not have been possible if it had not been framed in a geographical, institutional, and disciplinary move. The institutional materialities are crucial here: I began reading on material poetics in Switzerland, but it was only after moving (back) to Chile that a more profound reshaping of my notion of research and of subject/object relationships was possible. This shift took place during the establishment of the Center for Advanced Studies in Educational Justice, where I work, and by the configuration of human and non-human forces in the BioSocioCultural Research Group, which aims to produce a field of discussion on research methods for inequalities questioning the nature/culture divide and inquiring into how we account for matter in research (García-González, et Al., 2019; Matus, 2019; Veliz and García-González, 2020). In this group we have a reading group that meets regularly to discuss feminist New Materialist texts. I have the impression that the anxiety that such a paradigm

shift entails, especially for doctoral students, is assuaged by the participation in this reading community and by sharing readings like 'Researching without representation' by Maggie MacLure (2013a), 'Mapping not tracing' by Adrian D. Martin and George Kamberelis (2013), Norman Denzin's (2013) 'The death of data?', or Patti Lather's (2016) 'Top Ten+ List'.

In the reading group, we seek special issues and books that experiment with alternative modes of producing knowledge; this may include visual articles, videos and, overall, reflections that challenge humanist academic production. As Erin Manning proposes, we need to counter that humanist 'fierce belief that we, the privileged, the neurotypicals, the as-yet-unscathed, the able-bodied, hold the key to all perspectives in the theatre of living' (2019: 15). In this exploration of new modes of knowledge production and of new methods—or modes of plugging one text into another, as Jackson and Mazzei (2013) say—we appear to underestimate the importance of being gregarious and collaborative: I would not have been able to get into New Materialism and to shift my orientation towards research if I had not been thinking/feeling with my colleagues and if we had not been reading courageous people who defy the humanist orders that have built our disciplinary approaches to knowledge production. Have you also experienced anxiety in your research with New Materialism?

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: I certainly have and I am experiencing it all the time. New Materialism 'grew on me' as I was trying to make sense of the participatory research project I was co-conducting with a group of school children in the UK. It was not my first project of that nature but the first one to entail a full openness to the assembled agency of the children, adults, and literature instead of following one right research design—although at that time I did not realize that I was practising a post-qualitative approach (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2019). Trying to account for the development of the project, I found it helpful to rely on relational approaches to childhood and adulthood inspired by New Materialism (Spyrou, 2018). I promoted New Materialism as a productive approach in participatory studies of children's literature during the 2018 international children's literature summer school at the University of Antwerp. I hoped to unsettle the audience by disrupting the usual habits and practices of children's literature research. During my lecture, I wore a T-shirt that was a costume made for me by the children I was collaborating with. In fact, I wear this T-shirt in a film adaptation of a fantasy novel that we made together. I explained that the children had suggested it was to show that the moment of my giving that talk was actually a joint child-adult endeavour. For me, the T-shirt and the very fact that I played a character from a novel I had studied and written about constituted a material, direct, creative, and emotional, and not just intellectual, representational, and neutral, engagement with text. I also hoped that my wearing this T-shirt in such an academic context would be a provocation taking a life on its own, extending the project and encouraging the young scholars listening to the talk to reflect on their own research practice in the field of children's literature studies along New Materialist terms. Importantly, as at that time I was still struggling with how to talk about the project, I was also trying to show that it is not necessary to have a coherent interpretative narrative about one's research but let events speak for themselves. However, my audience probably expected an

authoritative voice, a clear categorization, hierarchies, and closure. I did talk about the project on several other occasions, at my university and elsewhere, usually obtaining a comment that such approaches are certainly important but rather unconventional (I would prefer 'innovative' or 'creative'). Hence, my contacts with you have indeed proved a turning moment in how New Materialism has shaped my research. You rescued me from methodological isolation and from doubting myself.

García-González: You are welcome! It seems to me that once you 'move' to this framework, collaboration and dialogue become the core of the intellectual work.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: It gives shape to our institutional selves as well. What has New Materialism done to your teaching practices?

García-González: It has made me aware how knowledge is embodied, affective, and collective. We should learn to acknowledge these entanglements. For instance, I teach a course in children's literature criticism in which I question literary criticism or, more specifically, how literary criticism is organized around the male figuration of the Human, which judges with a primacy of reason. Hence, we start making visible how our literary 'taste' has been modelled by humanist worldviews to then think how this may be challenged. My intention is that we become uncomfortable. We watch videos of booktubers in class—most of which I dislike—and reflect on our affective orientations towards the figure of the booktuber, considering such non-verbalised dimensions as our disposition towards youth cultures, rhythms, and market-oriented literary products. We aim to acknowledge these intensities and how they are involved in our practices of valuing and recommending certain children's books. Last year we had a very interesting discussion about what the students' studying of children's literature meant to them. They mentioned having a feeling that following a university course about children's literature would end up 'killing their love of books by the imposition to be analytical and to use theory'. We tried to diffract this claim by reflecting on theory as proposed by Jackson and Mazzei (2013), as *something* we may 'plug in' to the texts, transforming them. We also wondered why academic approaches to arts are frequently reported to 'kill' the aesthetic by what is taken to be an excess of criticism. As Dorota Golańska argues, 'there is a fundamental difficulty in approaching art [and literature, for that matter] through the theoretical framework that does not have roots in the mechanism of representation' (2020: 76). Indeed, '[a]rt simultaneously affects us indirectly (through its symbolic means) and directly (through its active \ materialities); these levels are always "entangled"' (2020: 79). Hence, we need both representational and more-than-representational approaches. In this course, I always address the problem of the adult positioning in regard to texts addressed to children, but New Materialism theory has helped me to understand this in substantially more complex ways. We tend to believe that this gap would be bridged by having children participate in juries or by promoting spaces and platforms for children's literary criticism. Yet these initiatives may in fact maintain the divide between children and adults while assuming that children's 'voice' is heard. I realize now that the question is not which books children like more or how they make

their reading choices, but rather how we are able to describe and make sense of how we, adults and children, get attached to certain texts and develop strange and strong relationships with them and what age, among other materialities, has to do with it.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: It seems to me I have reached the same conclusion about children's and adults' role in children's literature research. My starting point for trying to resist the adult-centred approach was a recourse to participatory research involving children as decision-makers co-shaping the research process with me. I co-conducted two projects based on participatory methodologies. I think they were quite successful in that they introduced the very possibility of a child-centred inquiry and intergenerational dialogue about books into our field (Chawar, et al., 2019; Deszcz-Tryhubczak, et al., 2019). When I reflect on these projects, I can see that they were indeed framed within the anthropocentric and representational focus that prevented us from a joint exploration of our intra-actions with materialities of children's literature. In a more recent intergenerational research project (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2019), both the children involved and myself gave in to the power of the book we worked on, following its energy and vibrancy, as well as acting in response-able ways to wherever the project led us as it unfolded, often influenced by non-human factors, including the weather or the technical equipment. We destabilized and decentred quite a lot of binaries entrenched in academia and in our field, such as the researcher/the researched; the child/the adult; meaning/matter or the book/the reader. I am wondering if you see this kind of decentring as possible also in and through our teaching?

García-González: I do. Yet I wonder if we are just experiencing a top of the iceberg in this. In this course on children's literature criticism, for example, we look at how literary awards and concepts of "literary quality" respond to a rather transnational desire of (adult) experts for the recognition of an aesthetic culture in which (real) children play no part. Yet, even if I have always been critical of this, I am now becoming aware of how much more may be achieved by decentring the knower/learner binary. Once one of the students came to our class with her 9-year old child; the girl stayed silent during the entire 2 hour-class, listening to our discussion about who held the authority to distinguish what was good for children. I then asked the students to pair and write short reviews of some picture books I had brought, most of which challenge adult authority and/or ideas about age appropriateness. While the students were working on the reviews, the girl wrote her own a review, too. I did not notice it. The class proceeded, with the students sharing their critical approaches to the texts. When it was over, the girl showed her review to me. How did I fail to see her? It was quite striking to notice that I had failed to see her precisely when we were discussing how adults fail to engage with children in our reflections on children's literature. I keep wondering how we could have read her review without making it representational of a child's view. It is often the case that children are involved in participatory research as 'others' that will speak for all children, and new binaries between children and adults are created.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: Yet, this is tricky. I think this experience could be used to encourage students to think critically about intergenerational relations around children's literature. My experience

with teaching is a bit different. In a course I taught some time ago – on utopianism in children's literature – a serendipitous development offered a potent example of how language and text are not only 'animated (human) student- or (human) teacher-led reading practices' (Hinton and Treusch, 2015: 4) but also co-produce 'engagement of bodies, spaces, and wor[ld]s' (2015: 4). For one of the classes, I asked the students to reflect on J.K. Rowling's failure to unlock the utopian potential for transformation of the wizarding community that emerged during the war against Voldemort. Most students admitted that they had not thought of the Harry Potter series in the context of radical political and social changes. As they excitedly discussed what new developments in the wizarding world such a transformation would entail, I asked them to read sample fan fictions showing how readers extrapolate from the seeds of revolution planted by Rowling to create a critical commentary on social and political phenomena they know from their own lives. Although very few of the students admitted to reading fan fiction and none to writing it, they enjoyed analysing them. Encouraged by the success of this class, I introduced an alternative final assignment: I suggested the students write their own utopian, dystopian, or anti-utopian short story for young readers of any age. My intention was to encourage the students to be both critical and creative, which would further their understanding of both utopianism and the conventions necessary to produce a text for children. Eighteen students of forty submitted their stories. The final class, during which the students both discussed their own stories and commented on the others' texts, turned out to be the most productive one in the whole course: the students evidently enjoyed reading one another's stories and were eager to share their thoughts¹. Introducing creative writing into the course revealed language's 'material liveliness' and 'the relational dynamics integral to it' (Hinton and Treusch, 2015: 4), which in turn affected the students and myself: the student-lecturer binary was suspended when we all discussed the texts as they were turning us into 'a teaching-learning 'subject' (2015: 12). The class resulted in a human-nonhuman assemblage entangling children's literature, fan fiction, and the student's stories which intra-acted with one another and co-produced learning and teaching.

Exciting, and yet challenging, opportunities to practise relational student-lecturer dynamics also arise in my MA seminars on children's literature. They are usually of a broad scope, which enables most students to determine what interests them to such an extent that they are willing to spend two years researching it. Yet some students join the seminar to pursue subjects remotely, if at all, relevant to the focus of the seminar. Instead of forcing them to work on a pre-defined topic, I encourage them to look for alignments between their interests and the focus of the seminar. Such an approach entails the development of mutual trust and self-exposure to ideas and texts outside one's comfort zone: it is often the student that introduces me to unfamiliar texts before we start to explore them together. For instance, to be able to supervise a thesis on the *Pretty Little Liars* series (the student was a fan), I watched all the seasons and became so addicted to the series that I continued following it after my student graduated. Typical power

¹ See Deszcz-Tryhubczak, J. 2020. The pleasures and impasses of teaching young adult literature to Polish graduates in English Studies. In Cadden, M., Coats, K. & Trites, R.S. (eds.) *Teaching Young Adult Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 172-178.

relations characteristics of academia were thus reoriented towards human-non-human co-production of knowledge.

García-González. This raises a question of what it means to mentor and to be mentored in a New Materialist order. I guess it is not only about (more) horizontal relationships or about reassessing who possesses the knowledge and why it matters, but it should also mean the emergence of new forms—as you say: making clear that we are aiming to become vulnerable, too. We acknowledge that to mentor is learn by teaching. I have recently supervised two master theses that go quite beyond my field of expertise: one on Design and the other in Publishing. Both are practice-based, and we aim to allow the creative and the speculative to be combined in critical approaches. We should expand what we consider as arts-based research or ‘research-creation’, as described by Springgay and Truman (2015), and pay attention to how this expansion facilitates thinking with and across techniques and disciplines. I wonder how we could think of this as stemming not only from the intuitive mode of knowledge of arts but also from considerations of social sciences as material interventions in the worlds we research. I keep thinking of Spyros Spyrou’s reflection on how ‘we are part of the worlds we seek to describe, we are also partly responsible for the realities we help enact through our entangled activity with all that is taking place in these worlds’ (2018: 6). We produce—rather than describe—worlds through research, and we should be thinking more about what kind of worlds we aim to create. It seems to me that mentoring projects that are beyond our area of expertise may help us to understand better how our research and teaching intervenes in the world.

Deszcz-Tryhubczak. It was most likely this way of thinking that motivated me to practise participatory research in specific communities and with regard to specific societal challenges. Having been reading and analysing texts on my own or with a colleague doing the same kind of research, I started to feel disconnected from the world around me. You mentioned earlier that you asked your students why children’s literature matters to them. I think researchers in our field should ask themselves this question more and more often especially in the current audit culture. Is there a place in it for slow research, affects, intra-actions, and ‘deep hanging out’ (Geertz, 1998; Haraway, 2016)? Coming back to the teaching-learning encounters, they may become very productive when involving PhD students. I had a very interesting experience with a group of PhD students in fall-winter 2019-2020, when I taught a seminar for a group of the 2nd-year PhD students at my faculty. These students come from various language departments, and the range of their interests is very broad: from contemporary Australian literature to the regional literature of the Gorce Mountains in the south-east of Poland. The purpose of such seminars is to engage students in theoretical discussions about literary studies. I designed my seminar to include several approaches, including New Materialism and post-qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2012), and I encouraged students to read the selected theoretical texts diffractively through one another by asking them to think about possible relations between the ideas they found in them and their own research. In other words, I tried to make them open their PhD projects both to the other participants’ comments and to new concepts. I made it clear that I was only beginning to explore

some of the concepts myself. The seminar became a series of collective reading sessions where ideas were freely exchanged without much concern for differences in our academic status. You have mentioned vulnerability as indispensable for sharing and collectivity. This is also stressed by Rogowska-Stangret and Cielemeńska:

Vulnerability plays the essential role of a pre-condition to enter into a collective dialogue. It allows for an openness to that which emerges without us ever fully predicting or controlling its trajectory ... Open-endedness is part and parcel of what we envision to be a performative, that is, an embodied, located, and relational dialogical practice. (2020: 28).

These affectivities definitely appeared during the seminar not just for me, but also for all the students, channelling openness and receptivity that would have been difficult to develop otherwise. As I learned from the students at the end of the seminar, they liked the suspension of the lecturer-student binary, which they found an uncommon practice at our faculty. I hope that indeed the seminar generated a dynamic non-hierarchical assemblage of texts, ideas, and people, where insights were co-produced spontaneously and with care for one another, without the othering of alternative research perspectives and choices. However, it would be too much to say that we eventually became a small research collective that would live longer than the seminar itself to produce com(mon)passions. Perhaps we all felt that although some concepts we discussed made us rethink our approaches, the students were not able to follow them as we would then be questioning their supervisors. I can only hope that the students return to the texts we read and stay in touch with me.

García-González. I have noticed that doctoral students often report feeling coaxed by methodologies and rigid research plans they have to design. A group of PhD students came to me asking for a course on narrative analysis. The course behaved like a rhizome as we realized they were more interested in thinking about other methods than in 'learning' those of narrative research; we ended up reading a lot about post-qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2011) and exploring how to produce research projects which are not organized as following a method, but rather as processes in which the researcher gets entangled. Most of them dropped the idea of doing narrative research and opted for working with the Deleuzoguattarian notion of assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Nail, 2017), to acknowledge the human and non-human forces that are entangled in the production of the research problem. My main role there may have been to give institutional support for their explorations and to produce a togetherness to hold on to when facing the pressures of the doctoral program and remnants of positivist hegemony. Unfortunately, in the climate produced by an audit culture and the neoconservative backlash against non-positivist research (Spooner, 2018), it is not easy to produce a New Materialist doctoral thesis. We need (inter)national collaborations invested in our com(mon)passions to produce space for new modes of knowledge production. Maybe this would work as a possible conclusion to this conversation?

Deszcz-Tryhubczak: We will inevitably continue to pose the above and new questions to each other and to ourselves. I believe we need to defy one more academic convention and abstain from providing a conclusive ending. Rogowska-Stangret and Cielemecka point out that their conversation is an 'ongoing project' that 'keeps an eye (and an ear) open to our readers and in the hopes of opening up this dialogue and inviting others to join' (2020: 26). As we are not aware of any similarly dialogical practice in children's literature studies, we hope that the open-ended structure of our conversation will provoke similar debates about research and teaching practices in our field from other scholars' variously situated standpoints and perspectives. This multiplicity is especially congenial to forming and participating in diverse relationalities and collectivities as our academic community continues to grow and expand beyond established institutions, structures, rules, and hierarchies.

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