# Lessons in the psychology of learning and love

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper addresses embodiment and emotion in early educational contexts, even as they are currently being screened out as too risky to acknowledge and are only allowed in as emotional literacy or resilience, both responsibilising and individualising moves that abstract from classrooms and relationships. I take as the analytic focus two accounts of fleeting events, offering consecutive readings across theoretical frames including materialist and psychoanalytic perspectives -spanning school, university and tutorial contexts. The purpose of this paper is to explore relationships 'between' affect (emotion, feeling) and effect (outcome, result), between teaching and learning, between incidental moment and primary task. Conceptualisation of what is understood as between is seen as vital in two senses: first, in the sense of bringing into being, that is, involving notions of agentic activity (albeit without necessarily implying singular agency or intentionality), as well as, secondly, the colloquial sense of being important. In linking these two vitalities, questions of relationship come to the fore in co-producing and constituting educational environments.

**Keywords:** education; story; affect; psychoanalysis; actor network theory

## Lecciones de la psicología del aprendizaje y el amor

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo trata la personificación y la emoción en contextos educacionales tempranos, aún cuando en la actualidad hayan sido desechados por ser demasiado riesgosos para ser reconocidos y que solamente se les admita como conocimiento emocional o resilencia, responsabilizando e individualizando ocurrencias que son abstracciones de lo que ocurre en la sala de clases y en las relaciones interpersonales. Me focalizo analíticamente en dos recuentos de eventos efímeros, ofreciendo lecturas consecutivas que cruzan marcos teóricos, incluyendo las perspectivas materialista y psicoanalítica – abarcando los contextos escolar, universitario y tutorial. El propósito de este artículo es explorar las relaciones entre afecto (emoción, sentimiento) y efecto (desenlace, resultado), entre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, entre el momento del incidente y la tarea primaria. La conceptualización de lo que se entiende que queda entre es considerada vital en dos sentidos: primero, en el sentido de darle vida, es decir, incluyendo nociones de actividad de agencia (sin que esto necesariamente implique la existencia de un agente singular o intencionalidad), así como, en segundo lugar, el sentido coloquial de ser importante. Al relacionar estas dos vitalidades, aparecen en escena asuntos de relaciones interpersonales en la co-producción y constitución de ambientes educacionales, aún cuando el descansar en un solo modelo o marco de referencia para su interpretación se demuestra que es menos relevante que las adiciones, y de hecho fricciones, que esos modelos podrían iluminar o provocar.

**Palabras clave:** educación; narración; sentimiento; psicoanálisis; teoría actor-red

The educational encounters discussed below are prompted by methodological and analytical considerations to explore what is at stake in the ways we describe or narrate the stuff, or material, that we analyse. Stuff is an ambiguous, imprecise designation which exemplifies Pollock's (2007) call to embrace errors, disorders and difference as disruptive and fruitful resources. Stuff also colloquially qualifies emotional baggage that this study suggests infuses practices and processes of learning.

This project is ethical-political: to attend to the ways emotions inhabit educational arenas even when proscribed or else channelled through optimising neoliberal discourses of emotional literacy (Burman, 2009) or resilience (Suissa, 2015; Henderson & Denny, 2015) for the shaping of active, entrepreneurial, self-sufficient citizen-subjects. The project is addressed through consideration of a range of explanatory or analytical frameworks. I mobilise a range of perspectives, without seeking to privilege one over another, such that relative (in)compatibilities and mutual complementarities can be better discerned. Questions of reflexivity are fore grounded as sites of necessary interrogation and critique for the ways authorial commitment and positioning may structure available interpretations.

The selection of material for analysis here is framed according to five considerations. Firstly, in relation to the question of specificity and (what more quantitatively-inclined researchers might understand as) 'representativeness', the encounters and/or events discussed are of course specific but not, particularly atypical, although they have become more difficult to explore.

Secondly, the domain of the experiential as a touchstone– either for its reality or for warranting specific readings – is interrogated and unsettled. While 'the empirical' is shot through with ideas about objectivity (Hollway, 1989), the question of the object(s) invoked via the discourse of objectivity comes under scrutiny here via exploration of its/their subjective constitution as well as material enactment.

Thirdly, in relation to the readings offered here, these are only some of many possibilities. Far from undermining my claims, this partiality of perspective is an analytical strength. The concern here is as much with how we write about what we do, how action is rendered into words, as with how we understand the actions described. Here early childhood education practices are shown to be intimately connected with ways of describing and analysing these.

Finally, the narration of these stories from a UK context reflects more than the language in which this is written. Specific cultural politics of early childhood education incite and regulate these 'stories' (or fragments and events), that include particular versions of general geopolitical and cultural-historical shifts. It is precisely via these conditions that their protagonists' active negotiations and navigations take place.

Two stories form the basis for the discussion here. One of these stories is mine, in the sense that I was the observer, witness, or perhaps participant in the classroom. The other was told to me in an educational context of undergraduate tutorial supervision (and narrated here with the student's permission). Both bits of data are unreliable and subject to the many distortions to which recall and narration are subject (see e.g. Burman, 1997ab). However, this question of memory, or veracity, is here less important than how these stories work as provocations for thinking, feeling and reflecting in relation to (the silencing of) discourses of emotions in early psychological and educational contexts.

Recalling both psychoanalytic (Freud, Klein, Lacan) accounts and philosophical critiques of accounts of history (e.g. Benjamin, 1969), memory - like progress- works backwards: the past is retroactively animated, and the origin point of a sequence or series confirmed by its successor. My authority as writer, as well as - in these examples - teacher, researcher, and both a former pupil and child, unites but also destabilizes these various positions. So although autobiographical or (auto)ethnographic, as advocated by Madison (2011), the work of analysis is to subject these stories to critical investigation as texts-in-themselves; to consider alternative readings and consequences of their inclusions and exclusions.

**The Register and the call to (gendered) subjectivity**

So we move to the first 'story'. Louise[i] arrived for supervision to discuss her undergraduate dissertation exploring representations of gender in children's reading books and children's readings of these texts in an early years primary classroom. All seemed to be going well. As we draw to a close I asked her: was there anything else that had surprised her, or that she had noticed? She hesitated, and then described how when the teacher came to take the register, one little girl, Sara -instead of saying here or present (as would be expected)- said 'I love you'. And

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[i] Her real name, used in acknowledgement of her permission to use this example.

then all the other girls in the class who came after her in the register also said 'I love you', but none of the boys.

This minor fragment of classroom daily life highlights the affective saturation structuring children's early encounters with schoolrooms and relationships, including their gendered relations. Unsurprisingly (given the feminised status of the teaching profession, especially in early educational contexts), the teacher was a woman, and this largely naturalised context clearly matters in how gender functions within the children's orientations and interpellations, as also Louise's and my positions as psychologists/educators.

Both the time and space of the classroom are bifurcated by 'Sara's[1] intervention; it demarcates a before and after. Her response to the call to identify herself as physically present in the classroom (rather than - perhaps - absconding), instead speaks her relationship to the significant other of the teacher, in relation to whom her desire to learn is institutionally organised (whether inspired, regulated, required). Assuming her name or claiming her presence would position her as one of a series of children responding to their names being called - as substitutable, singular but undifferentiated and, above all, separate. Instead of identifying herself in this way, Sarah speaks back to the call, the call to be present and engaged (at least physically) in the classroom. She does so not merely by placing herself in this series as an object, but as a subject; by naming her relationship with the speaker.

It is an event that shapes what follows: the girls follow in saying 'I love you', the boys likewise by distinguishing themselves from the girls. Here we might consider educational literature on the feminisation of classrooms and the challenges boys encounter in finding their place within them (Walkerdine, 1988).The boys do not follow the sequence set by the girls; they do not make the same investment to subjectify their relationship with the agent of their learning, the teacher. Rather they stay within the conventional frame of positioning themselves as single, individual subjects. To use the pun available in English, they do not gift themselves to the teacher and educational process by naming themselves as present/presence. This small performance also highlights how the heterosexed gender order is superimposed upon what is (in this characteristic educational context) a homoerotic claim ('I love you', said by a girl to her female teacher).Yet this is also an epistemophilic claim, to want to know, to be, to have, that psychoanalysts (in particular, Kleinian psychoanalysts, Bott-Spillius et al., 2011), would suggest is vital.

Clearly, the tone of Sara's speech could have been sarcastic. Yet even if we could determine how Sara spoke, or that she was less than 'sincere' (though this would be a difficult matter), this still installs the same sequence, albeit perhaps prompting a different register of giggles from the other students. Also unknown is whether this was a regular, even daily, occurrence; if Sara always distinguished herself in some kind of way or, alternatively, if other girls or boys took up this role (which would suggest further interpretive frames). Significantly, there is no indication of how the teacher understood or engaged with this event; although, from Louise's account, she was unduly perplexed, or discomforted by what had happened.

However, such questions and reflections in turn fall foul of a conceptual error: the presumption of the possibility of a full or complete interpretation. Instead, such absences caution against the desire for making sense. As with Maclure et al.'s (2010) discussion of the indeterminacy of a young child, Hannah's, silence in the classroom, we cannot know what this event means. Instead of swiftly moving to discount what we cannot understand, as positivist or cognitivist approaches have done, we can still allow, or acknowledge, that its occurrence was meaningful.

This is a crucial interpretive move to make; to admit the availability of possibilities even if we are not able to tie them down. It relativises the knower, the researcher, the one who seeks to own or wield claims to knowledge, and indicates what is at stake for the knower in wanting to know; how the knower gains their stability through such activity. The meaning-making process is turned back upon itself to ask why we -as psychologists, as educational researchers- want to know this, why we demand that the meaning disclose itself, and why to us?

Crucially, this move does not necessarily relativise knowledge, but rather our claims to it. The postmodern (and associated) turns have usefully destabilised the position of certainty from which authoritative claims are made, but this does not make the substance of such claims groundless. So, instead of seeking the complete analysis, we are instead confronted by its impossibility. As suggested elsewhere (Burman, 1992, 2008), this does not mean dispensing with analysis of power relations. Rather, power relations structure the field of possibilities, and it is their shifts and shiftings that eventually resolve many ambiguities. We know already that this scene involves pupils and a teacher; girls and boys in a classroom; power relations organised by (for example) class, gender, age and professional status. But this is not all.

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[1] Name changed from the one told to me.

So far I have discussed within a broadly psychoanalytic frame, including Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation. Other models could be plugged in (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). The register could be considered in Foucauldian terms, as the means by which the teacher both exercises her power of naming and through which the biopolitical and disciplinary institutional relations that structure compulsory education are effected, as a device that governs the children and also the teacher, albeit that she is obliged to take (or enact) it (Ball, 2013; Allen, 2014).

Further, actor network theory would portray the register as an agent, a physical artefact that organises the sequence and structure of activities and relationships, thus making the posthuman move to attend to the agency of non-human objects as well as human subjects in organisational settings, and indeed to notice dependencies and mutual configurations (Fenwick & Edwards, 2012; Burman, 2015). The Register (capitalised now to reflect its status as an agent or actor) thus becomes a boundary object (after Leigh Star & Griesemeyer, 1989; Latour, 1991) connecting, even constituting and constraining contiguous moves between the various actors (the children and teacher): hence even as the Register mediates these relations it also performs them, and so articulates power dynamics.

There is also the affective charge of the object, that (in ways usually not acknowledged by the social studies of science) the name boundary object also ushers in (Burman, 2004). Drawing on the writings of the British psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott (1953), the Register could be seen to work as a boundary or transitional object between child(ren) and teacher. In this sense it simultaneously functions to make, mark and manage the gap, the transition between self and other, between subject and object of desire: the absent carer /(m)other or object is made present (evoked, brought into presence, generated but of course mis-represented) in the school, by the teacher. Is it the teacher or the Register, or their combined agency, which both evokes the gap but also secures the continuity between the child-at-school and at home? Such questions recall how, in its early days, the British educational system required the teacher to labour to make the children love her as a key part of the project of moral reform, as well as educational instruction(Jones, 1990).

Further, the French psychoanalyst's Jacques Lacan's (1946/2006) discussion of logical time can be applied to the staging of this classroom-register-taking-happening. There is a clear temporality of the event: the time of the glance (the teacher's glance, round the room; the more metaphorical glance of the child as she hears the call, the demand to identify herself, to know who or what she is). Then, there is the moment of hesitation leading to understanding, where the child determines what she is, how to respond; third, there is the moment of concluding, of action, of saying 'I love you'.

In Lacan's logical time sophism, a problem is posed to three prisoners. Each wears a coloured disk on their back, which they therefore cannot see but which is visible to the others. The guard tells them that if they can say which colour they wear then they are free to leave, and that there are three whites and two blacks. The moment of the glance is where each prisoner looks at the others; the moment of hesitation is where he (for they are indeed gendered as male in Lacan's account) waits to see if one of the others rushes out of the room. When this does not happen, each prisoner infers from this that all three of them must be white. So, since each makes the same inference, at the same time -and precisely because they have arrived at this conclusion- they move to the door simultaneously.

The point is that there is a logic –crucially, an intersubjective and therefore social logic- to this temporal sequence; each is necessary, and one necessarily follows the other. Like the teacher, the guard calls the prisoner to identify himself, but the only way this can be done is via a relational sequence of interpretive inferences. Only on this group-relational basis can individual subjectivity be assumed, be made and so identified with. Thus individual identification is inevitably, necessarily forged through relationship with the other.

Using this framework, Sara's response to the teacher's calling of the Register can be reconsidered in terms of the institutional demand to identify herself. Indeed, akin to the prison warden, it is the teacher who makes and exercises the classroom rules. As the representation of the institution (see Allen, 2014), she asks the children to say they are here, which (among other matters) presumes they know who (or what) they are; that is, that they recognise and use their names. Each class member awaits their turn, and indeed we might say that taking their turn to respond to the call constitutes their membership of the group.

But, as Sara's response indicates, there is more going on in assenting to or claiming recognition of, a name when the Register is taken. For even as, in Lacan's sophism, black and white are disks that identify but are not apparent to their bearers, so too names (and the call to be

named) insert the subject within multiple, myriad orders of gender, class, generation, culture and religion. Significantly, we have no racialised identifiers in the Sara story, only gender. But we can still consider how, as analysts, we might be drawn to different frameworks had such been made salient, and what difference this might have made to our interpretations of this event.

Sara's response recalls Butler's (1997) focus on turning around as the key and perhaps only space for agency and change, instead of mere passive reproduction, in iterability. Instead of being called into being as educational subject, as subject of education, Sara responded by taking the call a step further, by assuming her position as desiring subject. However her place, as recognised by the other children, the rest of the group, was identified with, or as, a gendered position. She had already presumed her place by responding at the appropriate time, albeit in an unusual manner, and this sets up a conundrum for those children who follow to determine whether they are like her, or not? The paradigm of identificatory distinction prevailing in the classroom appears to be organised around gender. So after the moment of concluding, the rupture or pause generated by Sara's intervention, the sequence continues; albeit now not only making explicit, but rather explicitly performing, gender identifications. The boys claim their names, while the girls (not to be outdone by Sara, perhaps?) name their claim on/for the teacher.

This is the rush towards the door; that is, the concluding, the assuming of identification as the prisoners leave their prison. Notwithstanding her creativity and transgression, Sara is hailed by the rest of the group, each in their own way, to confirm her -and their-girl (or non-girl) status. The challenge posed and reiterated throughout the rest of (what is conventionally) a register organised around the alphabetical listing of second names is whether each child will organise their response according to this gendered norm undergoing elaboration by the class. Having been initiated, one by one, this gendered bifurcation is asserted and maintained until the end of the register. While it is important not to generalise beyond this, at least for this short period, the group identify themselves to each other, as well as the teacher, via the gendered alignment of their responses. Perhaps (if we employ a classical Freudian model; Freud, 1921) they are thereby managing their competition for the teacher's affections through commitment to the common gender predicament -which for the girls takes the form of normalising a shared claim, while the boys constitute their joint identification through its disavowal.

Within Lacan's model, as in most or many schools –of thought as well as classrooms, gender works as the paradigm for difference. But this does not have to be so. Indeed axes of social difference - racialised differences in particular –should not be viewed as mere parallels or analogies of gender relations (see Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Leary, 1997). Hence this example also speaks to how gender-focused analysis and research in education, as elsewhere, can occlude other intersecting dimensions. We could recall the ways the gender and achievement/girlsoverachievement effects disappear once questions of race and class are taken seriously (Epstein & Francis, 1998). Could we understand the teacher-student interaction in primarily classed terms? Or in racialised terms? Such questions invite others, including in particular how the intersections between race/culture, class -and of course age (since this was an early years classroom)-  produce and limit what so far I have considered only in terms of gendered and generational dynamics.

Such questions also invite analysis of forms of interaction rather than merely the markings of social divisions on individual bodies. Hence the Register interaction could be understood as a form of call and response between the teacher and the children, drawing on a Bakhtinian notion of dialogue (e.g. Bakhtin, 1993; Shotter & Billig, 1998). This frame could be supplemented by an African-Caribbean sensibility highlighting performance and relationality. It also evokes traces of remembered repression since call-and-response, or antiphony, originated in the spiritual songs sung by African slaves (Dillard, 1994; Sale, 1992). This highlights the audience or community as an active participant, and that the story is not over. Questions of culture enter the frame explicitly, and thus we glimpse how gender has so far worked to displace other axes of difference/position/identification (of colour, class, (dis)ability, among others) that produce and inflect this scene.

In turn this invites more scrutiny of the relations of the telling, as well as of the event or story told: of Louise's class and cultural positioning, and and mine. We might question whether or how the focus on gender 'silences' attention that  might have been accorded 'race' and/or culture? But the story goes on… backwards.

**A little pre-history**

As many commentators have noted, many rationalist and humanist assumptions remain in, and indeed can be reanimated via, reflexive accounting procedures where they presume some kind of unmediated access to an available, known, singular mind (Pillow, 2003). Such considerations

are particularly present in work around children and childhood by virtue of its apparently personal, unique and biographical associations with pastness. In over-developed societies where youthfulness –if not youth– is fetishized, this pastness is imbued with a sense of nostalgia, or at least separation or lost-ness. This is highlighted by the literature on emotionality in representations of childhood and the role of fiction as well as science in producing this (Steedman, 1995; Shuttleworth, 2010).Work around children and childhoods is conducted in relation to each researcher's own personal history and orientation to their own childhood: we have all been children and so our responses and interests towards children and childhood are shaped by that history –the more so when we imagine they are not. This also applies to children –who although they are too rarely put in the position of conducting research– are certainly subject to the ideal-typical discourses about childhood.

The combined familiarity and strangeness of researching in classrooms can feel uncanny. Moreover, as a newcomer or outsider to them, the intimacy and clarity of interactions observed in schools could be emotionally affecting, or (in English) moving, as indeed I found Louise's story as narrated to me. I will stay with this moving moment -this happening that makes change, combining emotion and action, affect and effect- to explore what is moved, and to consider what else this movement brings to mind.

Louise's story evoked a moment early on in my doctoral research in classrooms with similarly aged children, but some 30 years earlier. The setting was the same city, in a similar area, working class and very culturally diverse. I was embarking in a neo-Piagetian study of children's understandings of time[2], but before undertaking interviews with individual children I spent time watching and helping in the classroom. On this occasion, children were working on exercises individually at their group desks. It appeared to be laborious, painstaking work involving focus and concentration. When they had finished, the children lined up in a queue by the teacher's desk for her to check their work. Next, the teacher gave a kiss to each child whose work was good (or good enough). The children waited their turn to get their kiss as an, or the, acknowledgement of their achievement (I cannot recall if any child did not get a kiss- that is, was designated as not having produced good-enough work).The extent to which this reward motivated their work cannot be evaluated, nor (as I shall discuss below) is this is the only or best way of reading what was happening. However, what was clear was that this kiss was, at the very least, a signi-

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2 This eventually became Burman (1990).

ficant accompaniment to the verbal comment and praise uttered by the teacher and the communication to the child so addressed that s/he could, or should, experience the satisfaction of a job well done.

The scene impressed itself upon me yet another indicator of how early schooling processes function at the interface between the private space of home and the public space of education. Also, how, in these classrooms precisely by virtue of its sympathetic renegotiation, the separation between emotional-rational domains was being installed.

Unlike Louise's story of 2012, both boys and girls waited in the queue for their kiss, with, or as, the mark of their work, as their evaluation. This example now strikes many different chords, resonating temporally in different directions. Relating this to my earlier analysis of the Register, this could be read as indicating a less gender-segregated classroom than the ones twenty-first century children typically inhabit. In particular, its mundane character in an early 1980s primary school classroom, whose functionality (the kiss was quite perfunctory) seemed precisely to indicate a practical acknowledgement of the affective character of forging relations and practices of learning; of how love, the desire to please, and the desire to know, were intertwined.

Like Louise, I did not ask the teacher about this practice. Indeed it was one of those exchanges or events I saw, but did not write about at the time. I recall telling my supervisor about it, just as Louise talked with me (another retroactive repetition therefore).

But there is one key issue that has to be discussed before proceeding further. One obvious difference between then and now is the predominance of a preoccupation with (sexual) abuse. Currently, in the UK, all contact between adults and children seems to be framed within the schema of abuse, whereas in the 1980s abuse was something that was seen as largely exceptional and as happening away from institutional spaces such as schools.

As a feminist educationalist, it is hard to know how to place one's own historically shaped responses in relation to such major shifts and polarisations. We now know that much institutional abuse, including sexual abuse, of children was perpetrated in the UK, as elsewhere, during this period that was overlooked or disbelieved for a long time, and which is only now being disclosured, giving rise to prosecutions and compensation cases. The bureaucratic response to (what is now called) safeguarding children currently proscribes contact to such a level that a teacher cannot now physically comfort a distressed child by hug-

ging her without threatening to incur prosecution, still less dispense approval or acknowledgement of achievement through kisses.

In a perverse way, reminiscent of Lacan's claim that 'the word is the murder of the thing' (see Aoki, 2000), child protection sanctions child neglect; the former neither substitutes for, nor occludes the latter, but rather operates after and in relation to it such that it is produced by it. Lacan's formulation was concerned with how words do not merely refer to, and so re-presents, their referent. As symbols, they produce an irrevocable separation from this that also installs a desire to return to that state of unmediated access. As Schwenger (2001) puts it: "If there is a murder of the thing by the word, then this does not definitively annihilate that thing; it only transposes it to the scene of an interminable haunting of language" (p.113).

A British example illustrates this. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is a major child protection organisation that, although non-governmental, is unique in having some statutory powers to initiate child abuse investigations (see Flegel, 2009). In a recent effort to promote child (self) safeguarding, in 2013 the NSPCC generated an underwear rule aptly called PANTS (see Mclaughlin, 2013). Akin to Foucault's (1981) repressive Victorians-whose eagerness to classify and regulate the modes of sexual activity they sought to proscribe produced these as discursive entities - the detailed typologies of contact and touch elaborated within the NSPCC's policies could be said to constitute aspects of the very problem they seek to address (Piper & Stronach, 2008).

Within the current regime of preoccupation around child safety, at the level of both action and word, the mobile character of discourses of risk and vulnerability work to shift these characteristics from the context surrounding the child to adhere (c.f. Ahmed, 2004) to the child him/herself. This threatens not only to shut down relationships between responsible adults and children, but also to frighten the adults from being able to hear what children are saying to them, for fear of being placed into a situation of calling in the social workers (Reavey & Warner, 2003), while also thereby discouraging children from dis-closing (Lawson & Niven, 2015). What is clear is that such a kiss would now be actionable; reprehensible rather than routine, or even required.

But having historicised the Kiss's socio-political and spatial context, let us try to attend further to its other agencies. Beyond a psychodynamic frame, how else might it be read? Treating the Kiss as actor in the field of events and

networks of interaction in the classroom, we could see it as linking the child, the teacher and their work together. The Kiss connects the shapes on the paper with the letters that the children labour over (or spend their time with), which prompts their movement to leave their desks and line up to show these shapes to their teacher. This materialisation of a set of practices expresses, or translates, the meaning of the teacher's evaluation of the children's academic progress within a doubly familiar modality (as both well-known and reminiscent of family relationships).

Seen from this perspective, therefore, the Kiss is not an epiphenomenon of the interaction, a dispensable feature, but rather is a vital bodily activity; one that crosses, connects, and even substitutes, bodies. In this sense, it not only accompanies but rather mediates (in a Vygotskyan or Leontievian sense) an educational process precisely by effecting (creating the conditions for, producing the actions with and so inciting) the interiorisation and transformation of physical processes (from tracing shapes to learning letters, from counting on fingers to abstract mental manipulations, and so on) (Leontiev, 2009).

Considering the Kiss this way suggests its interpretation not merely as a teacher's cynical pedagogical strategy to use tokens of affection to persuade children to engage in the educational tasks she sets them. In any case, this would attribute a conscious voluntarism to something that seemed much more intuitive, routine and relying on implicit -cultural and professional- understandings. Rather, drawing on the analysis of gesture (c.f. Lock, 1978), we can see the Kiss as functioning at the intersection of, and so mediating between, the field of action and symbolisation. As such, this gesture comprises a miniaturisation of a set of affective engagements wrought from other contexts, including relationships of authority and attachment. Indeed these contexts now are read by twenty-first century readers – or certainly for British ones– in terms of abuse, based on the emulation of and so betrayal of a trusted, loving relation. But, like other gestu-res, the Kiss has become detached from a specific context and relationship and is now mobilisable in this, different, setting. It becomes part of the symbolic economy, the economy of symbols, both tool and result; the driver of, as well as what is carried by, a process of abstraction that originates in specific material relations. Hence a sociohistorical reading becomes available (Newman & Holzman, 1993; Vygotsky, 1925/1971; González-Rey, 2011).

So now this Kiss in the classroom becomes an example of the organisation and performance of joint, shared meanings.We should recall that this is no surreptitious, salacious kiss; it is a ritual kiss, much as a priest blesses

a congregation. Kisses of course signify not only sexuality but also knowledge (as well as the relations between these). Consider the canonical narrative resources that would also have been available to the children: the kiss that wakes Sleeping Beauty, or turns the frog into a prince. The kiss is transformative. Indeed literary accounts of metamorphosis highlight the role of the physical in the mental: "...metamorphosis is itself a process of exchange, in which "body" connects the two forms. The physical suddenly assumes an independence that enables it to encroach on the mental world" (Massey, 1976, p.51).

There are clear cultural, as well as temporal, specificities here. Kissing practices punctuate and mark differences across European and Latin American greetings and goodbyes. Yet what is both more personal and more social -and historical- than a kiss? Within this classroom, the Kiss clearly functioned as a public unit of meaning, recognised by all participants, and thus of relational exchange (as something that could be bestowed or withheld). In this sense, perhaps the teacher provides an emotionally charged currency to lubricate the educational activity. But, as Burke and Duncan (2015) discuss, the body in the classroom is social, symbolic and cultural as well as physical. The Kiss is a material expression, a concrete physical figure or literal trope even (Butler, 1997), by which meaning is performed and turned from one affective matrix of relational activity to another: from the social to the individual; from the physical to the mental; it sits at the level of the intersubjective, collective field of action; on the social skin.

Returning to psychoanalytic perspectives, the skin mediates the inside and outside of the body. Within classical British psychoanalytic thinking it has been discussed, in particular by Kleinian analyst Esther Bick (Bick, 1968; 1986), as forming the boundary specifying the individual subject. But drawing on other -French, group psychoanalytic- perspectives we can see the Kiss, as enacting a set of group relations, of collective subjective production via the social skin (see Anzieu, 1989). The Kiss binds the children to each other, and thereby also to educational processes, as much as it expresses a particular affective relationship between the teacher and each child. It is a repetitive action that (echoing my analysis of the Register) can be read as placing the child within its membership of the class, the group. As such, it orients the child both to the educational setting and to its process. To add a Foucauldian inflection, it produces and represses, organising and regulating both bodies and minds, and working from bodies to minds.

## Final reflections

Five conceptual and methodological points emerge from the above analysis. Firstly, I have intimated what might be gained from treating something apparently small and insignificant as serious. While not an original point (see Haug, 1987; Billig, 1995), this nevertheless underscores the importance of the banal, the cliché, the peripheral and the assumed, as repositories of sociocultural meanings. These meanings demand interrogation and analysis, attention to which throws up new lines of inquiry for psychological and educational theory and practice.

Second, methodological devices and analytical practices that attempt to fix meanings have been displaced. Rather, the question becomes why and how significance or meaning is accorded to particular events or fragments. What is not said may be as meaningful as what is: each act of speaking or writing occludes others. Analytically –as with the discussion of the consequences of privileging a gendered analysis– this invites an attention to silence: what is silenced, silencing practices, and the multiple pressures mobilised by silence, as much as by speech (Mazzei, 2009; Maclure, Holmes, Jones & Macrae, 2010).

Third, I have moved across various interpretive frames to juxtapose analytical models that typically are treated as incompatible. Readings have been drawn from (often competing) psychoanalytic perspectives (relational, Lacanian, group analytic and even Kleinian), as well as some of the more recent attention in cultural theory to affects. Alongside this, I have engaged sociocultural and actor network theory. Perhaps these perspectives emerge as less opposed than their reception in (and via) Anglopho-ne literatures has typically suggested, as new readings of sociocultural theory that attend to emotions and social subjectivity indicate (González-Rey, 2011).

Fourth, the retroactive shifts of temporal planes presented here may work to relativise features of our present moment that threaten to become naturalised into commonsense (as in current discourses of abuse). This also troubles the ways memory inevitably enters into, and unreliably distorts, both our accounting and analytical processes; recent as much as long past, collective as well as individual. My aim has been to use these examples as methodological agents provocateurs, to destabilise or decentre received assumptions or frameworks. Doing this can disclose not only new shapes and surfaces, but also better highlights the contours and shadows of the usual enlightenment narratives of knowledge production in psychology and education.

So, reflecting upon the two examples I have discussed, Sara perhaps appears more agentic in her relation to the educational project than the (unnamed and ungender-differentiated group of) 1980s children who waited in line for their kiss. Yet there may be losses and risks as well as gains for Sara in stepping out of her place and shaping the order of discourse that follows. The conditions of possibility for her intervention include the intensification of practices of individualization under contemporary neoliberalism with corresponding consequences for children's (gendered) relations with each other in education.

The final question concerns the focus on emotions in learning. While schooling systems elaborate complex bureaucracies for managing and regulating difficult relationships and their embodied performances, what this masks is how emotions, including discomfort and even fear as well as anxiety, are inevitable ingredients in learning processes, since the desire to learn destabilises the subject from their knowing position. I have focused on a pupil's declaration of love and a teacher's kiss, as some positive examples of emotions in classrooms as a counter to their more typical problematic treatment (as matters to be managed, prohibited or disciplined).

Instead, the examples I have discussed highlight how routine and powerful emotional experiences are in teaching and learning. We can read these as reminders of what it is that is more often screened out in later learning contexts. This is not to say that learning to manage such feelings -and their embodied enactments- might not be a useful lesson in itself. Rather my point is that failing to acknowledge or, still worse, proscribing their exhibition of such feeling via proliferating and bizarre apparatuses of regulation renders such potentially fruitful resources of application and interpretation inaccessible.

In a specific application or continuation of Menzies Lyth's, 1959, classic work, Deborah Britzman (2011) argues that processes of professional manualisation offer an alignment of individual and institutional strategies for dealing with the anxieties provoked by uncertainty. However, these strategies are ineffective because they work to close down rather than promote reflection on these issues. Such features are evident also in new public management discourse and audit culture, with their emphasis on satisfying students as customers. These strive to expunge discomfort from all arenas of education -from its earliest phases (early education classrooms of the kind I have discussed here) to its most advanced spaces (in higher education, Lorenz, 2012). Should genuine learners ever be satisfied? And should intellectual analysis ever be complete?

While I was doing the classroom observations for my doctoral research, educationalists Salzberger Wittenberg, Williams, Henry and Osborne (1983), working at the heartland of British psychoanalysis, invited local London teachers to participate in lectures and activities. These teachers were supported to engage with emotional aspects of teaching and learning that their daily practice had screened out, and so they re-encountered precisely those affects they were no longer aware of managing in their own teaching. These kinds of interventions seem to run counter to current educational policy focus on targets and performance, even as the forgetting of such psychoanalytic applications recapitulates the amnesia surrounding how the early psychoanalysts were, from the beginning, involved in early education and schooling (Danto, 2005). At the same time, mindfulness and emotional literacy agendas illuminate psychological, educational and occupational arenas (as perhaps the only way in which affective and associative processes can be now admitted into public discourse), and as documented rates of self harm and suicide amongst children and young people escalate[3].

I have focused on practices of textualising apparently less extreme or ethically problematic examples of relational engagement to indicate how attention to the emotional characteristics of learning, which are so palpable in early educational contexts, may offer key sites for furthering analysis of educational processes and practice. Increasingly, children are tested at ever earlier ages, and pressures for academic achievement are intensifying as they (are obliged to) assume their positions as flexible but agentic neoliberal subjects who are responsible for their own futures (Ailwood, 2008; Fendler, 2001). Especially in these days of responsibilisation, fear of failure may well paralyse (with responses -including alienation and various forms of educational dissociation- often culminating in dropping out) if it goes beyond a threshold of discomfort that galvanises institutionally sanctioned activity.

Beyond this, my aim is to incite or provoke a re-membering of methodological practice, to make our analytical material more material, addressing the complex but necessary relations between head and heart, and body and mind. This is a reminder, therefore, to take care of our words (Riikonen & Smith, 1997), even as the delicacy and intimacy of early childhood –and arguably all-educational contexts (including writing) necessarily involves actions and interactions. So when Massey (1976) writes "to follow a mixed metaphor is to have a physical accident"

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[3] British children have consistently been reported as the most unhappy in Europe. See, for example, UNICEF (2011).

(p. 194). This is not to suggest calamity, but rather simply to acknowledge the bodily character of psychic life.

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