On the Raveling of Deep Aspect
Curriculum as Subjective Place

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Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it.

—Sigmund Freud (1938), "Findings, Ideas, and Problems"

In Freud there is no summit, as it were, to be reached, even though consciousness is ethically obligated to bring to exposure as much of its obscurity as it can.

—Hortense Spillers (2004), "Topographical Topics: Faulknerian Space"

I need a notion of aspect that involves all the senses, including the affects. A sort of deep aspect, if you will. The dawning of deep aspect, if durable, will represent a long and arduous process. Perhaps an interminable one. And this process implies a pedagogy, one addressed to the senses as the terrain of those sociogenic forces by which race and gender cement themselves in the modern psyche.

—Dolsy Smith (2020), *Rough Notes to Erasure*

I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE THE IDEA OF CURRICULUM AS SUBJECTIVE PLACE, first through a brief review of psychoanalytic and curriculum scholarship that discloses the concept and then through a reading of Dolsy Smith's (2020) para-academic, autotheoretical book, *Rough Notes to Erasure: White Male Privilege, My Senses, and the Story I Cannot Tell*.[1] Through my reading of Smith's book, I develop and offer a specification of the subjective place of curriculum that emphasizes the encoding of psychical locality in its social implication and involution.

Smith's (2020) book proceeds through critical writing and memoir, making it legible—outside the field of curriculum theory, in literary studies—as an "autotheoretical" text (Fournier, 2021).[2] Within the field of curriculum theory, Smith's project has much to offer our understanding

of *currere* (Pinar, 1975/1994, 2004, 2023; Pinar & Grumet, 1976)[3]—specifically as that labor of autobiographical study is carried out toward understanding white masculinity as lived experience and social hegemony. Working autotheoretically, Smith pursues "the raveling of deep aspect" (p. 80) of white cishet male subjectivity, the social and subjective position from which he writes. The exposure of the lived raveling of hegemonic white male subjectivity—an intimate analysis of the entanglement—is necessary, in my view, for countering the social formations, violent and oppressive, to which it is passionately attached.[4] More generally, *Rough Notes to Erasure* might inform our grasp of *currere* as a necessary practice and an impossible genre of curriculum inquiry. Regarding the genre of *Rough Notes*, Smith describes his effort to "write against the grain of explication in … the academic critical essay"—"a genre," he points out, "that prizes the explicit as both method and end" (p. 29). It is through the logic of explication, Smith argues, that the hegemonic white male subject "figures himself as transcendent to his body and its milieu … forgetting shared history and collective destiny" (p. 23). Smith attempts, then, to "sketch failures of explication," toward exposing "deep aspects of privilege and domination" (p. 28), and he does so under the sway of an autobiographical impulse, a drive to write through the subjective substrate of personhood, and toward "explication's remainder" (p. 41)—what he terms, following Hortense Spillers, "the flesh." I examine Dolsy Smith's project through the notion of "curriculum as subjective place," further specifying the concept through a reading of his work.

I use the phrase "curriculum as subjective place" to evoke the educational potential and the fundamental difficulty of conceptualizing curriculum as the location of educational experience.[5] An inextricable correlate to curriculum *of* or *about* place, curriculum *as* place is, nonetheless, a necessarily distinguishable problem—that is, as I understand it, a problem of subjective emplacement in an emergent, temporally complex, socially and psychically bounded, yet porous and capacious sphere of meaning. Such a sphere of meaning comes to form, Bill Pinar (2004, 2015, 2023) explains, as "complicated conversation" and through the labor of study. With the phrase "curriculum as subjective place," I want to bring emphasis to the encoding of psychical locality in the process of study: in the scene of study.[6] To grasp the significance of the subjective place of curriculum in these terms requires that we reconsider and amplify the psychoanalytic foundations of the discourse on place in the curriculum field (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b; Pinar, 1991).[7]

I'm using "psychical locality" to designate the spatial figuration of the self's emergence, incompleteness, and entanglement with otherness. I'm borrowing the term from Freud, not in his precise usage,[8] but rather for the spatial ambiguity of subjective emplacement the term installs, both to defamiliarize the notion and felt sense of subjective interiority as wholly mappable, delineable, and narratable space—and, simultaneously, to insist that the elaboration of an inner world, in its confounding "intimate exteriority" (Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 139),[9] is an ineluctable project of the study of place in education.

What Freud (1900/2001) introduces as "psychical locality," Lacan (2004/2014) elaborates as "the scene" of subjectivity, and Paola Mieli (2017), underscoring the worldliness of psychic reality, terms "the scene of the world" (p. 19). For my purposes, psychical locality, the scene, the scene of the world, is the "reality"—a figural, non-referential space—where "a speaking being, lives and experiences the world, where the things of the world are said, are designated, and allow themselves to be studied, observed, classified" (Mieli, 2017, p. 18). While psychical locality is the scene from which we symbolize the world, it is also the scene where symbolization fails—where our study meets the "unassumable excess" of the world and our place in it (Santner, 2001, p. 22). This excess—what Santner (2022) elsewhere terms an "*encystance* of [a] void" of knowledge (p. 127)—is what we negotiate in anguish, pleasure, and ambivalence as we sustain and potentially

transform our "*libidinal implication* in reality, our being truly—and that means *partially*, with *partiality*—there" (Santner, 2022, p. 173).

Freud (1900/2001) introduces the concept of "psychical locality" in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as he discusses a set of diagrams of "the psychical apparatus," the diagrams presented to elaborate the way dreams, understood as unconscious wishes, find passage through memory traces into the perceptual field of the dream and consciousness. For Freud, the term "psychical locality" designates the site of memory processes that function outside of consciousness—the unconscious and the preconscious—as they facilitate the self's libidinal trajectories.

Freud (1900/2001) is inspired in his spatialization of the psyche by philosopher and physicist G. T. Fechner, who, Freud argues, puts forth "the only hypothesis that makes the special peculiarities of dream-life intelligible"—that is, in Freud's paraphrase: "the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life" (pp. 535–536). Dreams, Fechner suggests, have a spatial distinctiveness, a scene of their own, a locality and constitutive eventfulness other to material reality—an idea that compels Freud in his pursuit of the meaningfulness of dreams and, more generally, in the development of his topographical metapsychology. This notion animates Freud's thinking because his theory of mind necessitates spatialization. The mind, for Freud, is constituted by what it occludes and by the symbolization—circuitous, conflicted, and libidinally contingent—that discloses to consciousness, however incompletely, its occluded dimension. "Psychical spatiality," Simanke (2011) explains, "was the condition under which Freud's concept of the unconscious could be formulated: if there is to be something mental that is not conscious, it can only belong to another psychical location—that Fechnerian 'other scene' (anderer Schauplatz)" (p. 274).

Although his theory of mind demands a spatial concept, as he theorizes psychical locality, Freud (1900/2001) explicitly avoids the impulse to situate psychical processes anatomically, within any definitive physical or corporeal space. Through analogy, he emphasizes that the psyche is space of another kind, comparing the psyche to "a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus" (p. 536). Within the analogy, "psychical locality," Freud writes,

"will correspond to a point inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being" (p. 536). More specifically, he explains, unconscious and preconscious processes are located at "ideal points, regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated" (p. 536). As suggested here, and throughout Freud's topographical modeling of the mind, Freud conceptualizes the location of psychic life, the subjective space of self-formation, as a scene non-locatable within—though profoundly entangled with—material reality. The notion of psychical locality *figures* a space for the translation of unconscious libidinal life. "In other words," de Lauretis (2008) explains, through his spatialization of the psyche, Freud demonstrates that

> the drive exists in a space between corporeal stimuli and mental representation, a space or 'psychical locality' that is not just non-homogeneous but more precisely heterotopic: it is the space of a transit, a displacement, passage and transformation—not a referential but a figural space. (pp. 61–62)

Given his speculative theorizing about the inner dimensions and fundamental location of human subjectivity, as he employs figures of space to describe the ultimately non-locatable "scene of action" that constitutes psychic life, Freud heightens a sense of an inner reaching for subjective meaning that must negotiate, as Miele (2017) explains, "a structural doubt that underlies the appearance of the 'I,' and from which the 'I' will ceaselessly suffer" (p. 56). Curriculum that

emerges and functions as a subjective place encodes one's singular negotiation of this structural doubt as well as the social and libidinal coordinates of one's subjective emplacement in the world. Regarding subjective emplacement, following Lacan, Mieli (2017) argues: "The advent of the subject coincides with the constitution of the milieu that is its own" (p. 61). She explains further:

> We call place the particular space that belongs to a given subject, his or her singular relationship with the world s/he inhabits, the creation of "his" or "her" world on the world scene. The drive objects relating to demand and desire situate the subject, locate its sphere of action, draw the coordinates of its extension. (p. 61)

Curriculum as subjective place echoes and redoubles this scene and surround of subjectivation, serving as an intellectual locality for the inauguration of new trajectories of thought, self-formation, and relationality.

The curriculum of subjective place that I've elaborated in psychoanalytic terms is founded in curriculum theory. For Pinar, "'*place*' denotes a cultural, historical, subjectively meaningful even spiritual location" (Pinar, 2023, p. 27). Study, in his theory, as I've noted, establishes curriculum as such a location. Pinar's notion of "study as the site of education" (Pinar, 2015, p. 20)—specifically the spatial and habitational characteristics of this concept—appears in a rich yet somewhat diffuse literature. The idea is introduced, by my reading, in his essay "Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis: On the Significance of Place" (Pinar, 1991)—his contribution to the book on the American South edited with Joe Kincheloe, an essay reflective of their shared study of the South (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991a; Pinar, 2010).[10]

Pinar's contribution to the book bears out the larger project's social psychoanalytic framework, situating curriculum geographically, in the American South, while elaborating the self's encounter with history in terms of place. Here, Pinar first specifies what I'm calling "curriculum as subjective place." Discussing "a program of study … appropriate to [the] American region" that is the South, Pinar (1991) explains, "such a curriculum not only represents a 'place,' it also becomes 'place,' a curricular embodiment and contradiction of peculiarly southern experience" (p. 165). Pointing up the conditions of social-historical alterity that confront and infuse curriculum-situated subjectivity, Pinar characterizes curriculum *of* or *about* place as, in itself, "a 'place' or 'ground' in Gestalt terms," one that "permits the student to emerge as 'figure,' capable of critical participation in a historical present widely ignored and denied" (p. 165). In this account, a curriculum of place, through some temporal interval, becomes a subjective place. In terms of psychoanalysis, I suggest the student of place encodes their psychical locality through this curricular becoming, coming to inhabit curriculum as a discursive, imagistic, and temporally complex location (affording a unique sense of place in the world), as they refigure "the scene" (the always incomplete psychical location) of their subjective constitution.

In the first edition of *What is Curriculum Theory?* Pinar (2004) integrates his initial conceptualization of the curriculum of place into a *currere*-structured investigation of the, then, present moment of public and institutional education in the United States—the "nightmare" of the present, Pinar is often quoted. The subtle reworking of the curriculum of place material for that book, he explains elsewhere, reflects his effort to "[refocus] autobiography from self-study to self-expressivity through academic knowledge directed to, informed by, the world" (Pinar, 2011, p. xiii). Toward that goal, Pinar manifests the autobiographical labor of *currere* in interdisciplinary explorations of questions and ideas specific to the phases of *currere* (regressive, progressive, analytical, synthetical). In these explorations, Pinar composes what Eric Santner (2022) might call

"constitutively open or decompleted" textual spheres (p. 61), so they might not only inform but also foster subjective and social movement among teachers, addressed in their collectivity, as they face the stultifying conditions of institutional education. I understand Pinar to be saying these compositions are autobiographical in that they are implicitly self-analytical (most often implicitly); and, they are self-expressive, encoding psychical locality in its social implication and involution.[11] They are also provocations to self-analysis and self-implicated academic study, the latter of which Pinar refers to as "indirect autobiography," an approach to study that "subjectifies intellectually the process of social psychoanalysis" (Pinar, 2004, p. 38).

Pinar (2004) subtly inflects the account of curriculum as place in *What is Curriculum Theory?*—emphasizing the psychical constitution of subjectivity-emplacing curriculum by quoting the psychoanalytic thought of Kaja Silverman. As a potential, the emplaced subject of curriculum, who brings curriculum to form as place through social psychoanalysis, Pinar (2004, quoting Silverman, 2000) suggests, "is receptive to the resurfacing in the present and future of what has been" and "holds himself always open to new possibilities for the deployment of that signifying constellation which most profoundly individualizes him" (p. 246). Such openness—what Silverman (2000) calls "an ethics grounded in a passion for symbolization" (p. 62)—is contingent upon the singularity of subjects and their very resistance to such libidinal expansion. Pinar's interpolation of this concept implies that what initiates and sustains curriculum as a place is the working through of one's particular psychical investments, occlusions, and repetitions within a sphere of interdisciplinary study.

Over a decade after his writing on the South with Kincheloe, Pinar (2004) reiterates, a curriculum *of* place becomes "intellectually lived ground" (p. 241), as he indicates that the interdisciplinary discourses that constitute a curriculum of place ("abstract traditions") become "situated in the concrete lives of individuals and groups" (p. 246). In an extension of the earlier Gestalt analogy, Pinar continues: curriculum "becomes a place of origin as well as destination, a 'ground' from which intelligence can develop, and a 'figure' for presenting new perceptions and reviewing old ones" (p. 246). There is here, what we might call, a shift in aspect perception: curriculum appears not only as *ground*—that is, a place of intellectual and autobiographical dwelling and contradiction—but also as *figure* for symbolizing, challenging, and reconstructing perceptions. Subtle as this shift is, it enables us to grasp curriculum as a site and process—like the scene of psychoanalysis, the scene of aesthetic encounter, and the scene of reading—in which the experience and symbolization of subtle movements of perception potentially accrete into scenes of more profound subjective transformation.[12]

If, in Pinar's conceptualization, place is "a fluid and shifting phenomenon" (Casemore, 2017, p. 44), it is ineluctably a matter of subjective presence—and, therefore, a matter of the minimization, loss, and destruction of subjectivity in our historical moment. In his most recent work, Pinar (2023) thoroughly accounts for the narcissistic deterioration of subjectivity via presentism, instrumentalism, and technologization. In earlier work, Pinar (2001) examines specifically "the erasure of subjectivity" within hegemonic white masculinity (p. 979). Such racialized and gendered self-estrangement, he argues, "produces a monolithic self-structure, impervious to self-criticism, inner conversation, [and] self-reflexivity," making those invested in this enclosure of identification "easily threatened, easily threatening" (p. 979). Transformation of these conditions and implications requires, in part, an intimate analysis of the "lived ground of bonded relational experience underneath" white manhood (Pinar, 2001, p. 942)—what Smith (2020), in my view, terms a "raveling of deep aspect" (p. 80). Following Pinar, in my reading of Smith's book, I am concerned with the suturing of white male subjectivity—its emplacement

within—"a certain 'dominant fiction' of interiority" (Silverman, 1992, quoted in Smith, 2020, p. 34) as well as the raveling of that logic of habitation.

Dolsy Smith: Raveling of Deep Aspect

I now turn to Dolsy Smith's (2020) *Rough Notes to Erasure: White Male Privilege, My Senses, and the Story I Cannot Tell* to consider the curriculum of subjective place it discloses.[13] The title of my essay I borrow from Smith: a phrase he employs to characterize his act of writing. Following Wittgenstein's thought on shifts in aspect perception, Smith pursues understanding and transformation of what he calls "deep aspect," a perceptual sphere "involv[ing] all the senses, including the affects" (p. 24).[14] Later in the text, speaking of the strange work of "acknowledgment" and "enthusiasm," Smith writes: "Under their tutelage, might writing become the *raveling of deep aspect* [emphasis added], threading the world's lures with their scriptural trace?" (p. 80). The gerund "raveling"—an untangling—plays against the noun "ravel"—a tangle, a cluster, a knot—such that we are compelled to imagine an analysis of implication that disentangles through writing and, yet, further implicates.[15] The phrase captures, to my mind, the necessity and impossibility of re-symbolizing psychical locality.

Undertaken from the position and through the experience of white male subjectivity, *the raveling of deep aspect* generates "rough notes to erasure," the title of Smith's (2020) book. The title is a doubled signification that suggests *both* the erasure—the concealing—of embodied, subjective, and relational experience in white cishet male writing *and* the recovery and disclosure of that experience as a challenge to hegemonic white male identification.[16] It is a project that contributes to "the 'shattering' of the white male subject," as Pinar (2006) theorizes it, in which the white male subject's "narcissism and exhibitionism are exposed, thereby threatening the collapse of the ancient patriarchal scopic regime upon which sexual and racial difference relies" (p. 183).[17]

In his book, Smith (2020) interrogates the white cishet male subject's production of an interiority that, "as a resource for the coherence of the self, can be sustained only by the violent production of an exterior," an exterior "occupied by those who, by definition [in this logic], lack a proper interiority" (p. 55). In my reading, Smith accounts for the production of a subjective place, one with a ubiquitous curriculum, encoding psychical locality as spatial absolute, as a psychical enclave buttressed against contexts, people, intimate alterity, and extimate selfhood.[18] Smith elaborates the psychical splitting of the white male subject as a possessive orientation to others, intensified by a passionate attachment to what has been severed. Enthusiastic possession, an intersection of impulses for profit and pleasure, orients the white male subject, in Smith's analysis, "obscuring the material and mutually constituting character of … 'interrelationships' with other people and things, [which] torques the senses into a narcissism that feels its entanglement with others and otherness as interiority itself" (p. 59).

The central figure of the book—specified through critical analysis and autobiography—is the hegemonic white male subject. Yet the book is equally focused on writing as process and mode of social and subjective inscription. With regard to the latter, Smith (2020) addresses composition pedagogy in the neoliberal university and its white masculinist underpinnings (p. 84); explores the inscription of white male rage in hate speech that "proliferates in the soil" of the explicative logic of bureaucratic capitalism (p. 32); engages with writers who carry out "critical resistance" and "recuperation" through aesthetic traditions of "Black women's and Black queer survival and

flourishing" (p. 162); and conceptualizes and writes "autobiography as a practice of resisting the closure of the scholarly essay" (p. 35). The topic of writing, the variegated theme of composition, and Smith's reflection on his own writing process—in the context of his deep but ambivalent engagement with his sources—makes the text, to my mind, a remarkable disclosure of study as subjectively expressive intellectual labor directed toward the reconstruction of one's particular "scene of the world."

Smith (2020) characterizes *Rough Notes to Erasure* as a "para-academic work" as he accounts for his struggle to bring the text to form as an "academic book" written "from a position of deep ambivalence about academic writing" (pp. 15–16). Writing through this personal emotional landscape, Smith introduces his larger concern with the "fate of the senses and the affects under capitalist, settler-colonial modernity" (p. 42). His autobiographical labor—directed toward senses estranged, constricted, and encrypted—both initiates and unravels under the force of his critical project. So too does his critical writing—his explication of philosophical, critical, pedagogical, literary, and more broadly cultural and aesthetic texts—give way to subjectivity recovered from the disavowed "ensemble of the senses" (p. 55).

Smith (2020), following scholars in feminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial traditions, establishes a stance of provisional, even faltering critique through his analysis of "the social and political dominance … of white cishet masculinity," arguing that it

> depends on the sanctity of this [specific] optical illusion: that the figure cut by these properties [whiteness, heterosexuality, and gender normative masculinity] is at once distinct by virtue of its superiority to all others and at the same time boundless, universal, and hence no figure at all. (p. 19)

Smith inscribes the figure for the purpose of its raveling. As he does so through "figures of space" (Mieli, 2017)—interiority/exteriority, the "fragile cage" of white middle-class culture, the schoolyard, the "phonic materiality" (Moten, 2003) of black radical poetry and music, for example—his book is intelligible as a curriculum of subjective place. In other words, the book comes to form through writing that exposes his psychical locality in its social implication and involution. It is an exposure initiated through Smith's analysis of—and effort to reconstruct—his own ethical orientation to others, those "whose becoming otherwise frustrates the compass of [his] knowledge," exposing, he writes, "not only what I know, but also what I believe and desire, what I have been and what I might become" (p. 77).

Smith's (2020) ethical pursuit requires an exposure, traversal, and reworking of his own scene of subjectification and thus the social milieu of its enactment. For Smith, this is fundamentally a problem of senses and affects, those mangled by "the 'possessive logics' that characterize the dominant modalities of social and political life in the modern nation-state" (p. 43). "These logics," he writes, "estrange our senses and affects, collapsing the multiple vital destinies that bind us to the world into a single sense, the [possessive] 'sense of having'" (p. 43). More specifically, regarding the racial and economic sphere that authorizes his subjecthood, he explains, "The fragile cage of what makes sense in a predominantly white, middle-class (or aspiringly white and middle-class) community" encloses the "vital field of propinquity between world and flesh" (pp. 47–48), diminishing, to some degree eviscerating, capacities for feeling, intimacy, intersubjectivity, ethical sociality, and self-understanding.

Through *Rough Notes*, then, Smith (2020) looks "beyond the enclosure," acknowledging those "traditions of solidarity and collective resistance [that] sustain communities for which

political neglect, economic exploitation, social segregation, and aggressive policing reproduce the conditions that make life in public a daily struggle" (p. 48). More specifically, he attends to, indeed attunes to, a black aesthetic tradition, which he describes, following Fred Moten, as "cut of an aesthetics and an episteme that refuse, openly or surreptitiously, the bargains" of white middle-class culture, a culture that demands "estrangement from every alternative as the [very] conditions of existence" (p. 48). And yet, in line with his critique of explicative logic, he writes: "it proves too easy to reiterate these truths without feeling them" (p. 48). Smith continues:

> *Not feeling them* enacts a flight from my debt to others, a flight whereby I know myself as a subject. But I ought to demand a reckoning of myself and the dominant culture. I ought to demand to know why these forms of knowing and feeling, of sensing and sustaining the commons, do not count as worth understanding to those of us privileged by our identification with whiteness. Which is not to say that they are not worth something to the dominant culture, for they are worth consuming by imitation and appropriation, but in deracinated fashion, pulled from the grounds of reciprocity and entanglement that are the only foundations of an ethical life. Must we remain so stupid and one-sided? (p. 48)

As an autobiographical project, *Rough Notes to Erasure* represents, Smith (2020) explains, his "own efforts to reckon with [his particular] composition as a subject of white male privilege and power" (p. 19). This endeavor relies on Smith's substantial critique of explicative logic, "explication," in his use, describing a "scriptural process that erases as it produces, erasing the trace of its own process" (p. 36). Explication, he continues, "does violence in order to reveal, like the social inscription of the categories of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc., which makes bodies more manageable, visible, divisible, and disposable" (p. 36). Provocatively, given his own extended analysis of privilege, Smith explains, "the explication of privilege [itself] remains bound up with the conditions that privilege explication as a vehicle for what Sylvia Wynter calls the 'overrepresentation' of the white Western subject" (p. 23). Following Smith's own argument, then, the autobiographical and critical dimensions of his book risk an explicative logic intended to "retrieve subjectivity … from what threatens to entrammel it in conditions external to itself," a logic intended to secure "interiority" as a "home to rational purpose in its transparency" (pp. 113–114). And, yet, Smith returns, again and again, to senses and affects of relationality that cannot be contained in the "clarity, precision, and apodictic certainty" of explication (p. 20)—that is, to "the flesh, flush and perplexed and lousy with partiality" (p. 18).

As an example, in the most directly autobiographical essay in the book, Smith addresses his father and explores the conditions of love that sustain the fantasy of the sovereign enclosure of white male subjectivity. He begins the narrative with an intimate account, characterizing his father's illness and frailty in the latter part of his life, recalling too his father's death. He remembers specifically his father's loss of vitality in terms of a waning of his father's lifelong tendency toward "imprecation," an impropriety in speech by which he sometimes "cast" others, particularly racial others, as Smith (2020) imagines, "into the dirt" (p. 221). Smith senses his father "being at the mercy of his own body and its affects, struggling against the difference that he cannot master in himself" (p. 221). Perceiving his father "tired of that burden that the flesh bears as its gift," Smith speculates: "the self closes, in the end, over the riddles and secrets and primal scenes that have sustained it, becoming wholly crypt" (p. 222).

This thought of the animating—what Eric Santner (2001) would call "undeadening"—dimension of personhood secreted in the enclosure of the self emerges as Smith witnesses the

exhaustion of his father's being, and it provokes an affective rupture, compelling an interpretation of the structure of feeling that constitutes white masculinity. Having encountered, through memory, through his writing, the "occultation of the Self" (Guillaumin, 2005, as quoted in Smith, 2020, p. 54) in the person of his father, Smith begins again, recalling his father's last days, now explicitly reading the social relation: "My father died the year white supremacy lost the popular vote but won the election," he writes, "sounding again that furious nothingness within the white male American soul" (p. 222).

This line—to my mind, a difficult one—encapsulates a maelstrom of affect, Smith's agony in witnessing his father's vulnerability, his love and hate for his father, and his rage regarding the terms set for love to circulate between them. It also provokes Smith to reflect further on the subjective place of white masculinity, in particular as it is established through his father's solicitation of love. Smith's father sought to enthrall the son in his love, calling for the recognition of the power of patrilineal love through a playful but provocative question. The question accrues force as an implicit presence in multiple dimensions of the father-son relationship. Uncannily, the question becomes explicit, available for Smith's reflection, in his father's care for, and transference with, his pet dogs. About his father, Smith writes:

> When not shuttling between specialists to manage an obscure disease, he spent his last years swearing at the news, watching reruns of Gunsmoke, and coddling and baby-talking to his two small dogs. *Aw, there's a baby, Daddy. Say, who loves you, Daddy? Aw, who loves you?* (p. 222).

This scene attests to the indirection of psychical expression. Smith's intimate witness of impossible interlocutors discloses opaquely his subjection to paternal authority. As witness to the scene, Smith is negated within the sphere of his father's gaze and yet figured by the force of his question. As Smith writes in response to the question, he demonstrates how curriculum as a subjective place comes to form—that is, by refiguring one's "libidinal implication in the space of meaning" (Santner, 2022, p. 175). Smith continues:

> I wrote this book as a way of talking back to my father. Of addressing the insistent narcissism of that question: Who loves you? … The question doesn't admit of an answer. Or the only answer is its repetition. Not a rhetorical question so much as a question that installs a rhetoric, it hollows out an interiority as the space of its resound. My father's demand that I desire his love remains one of the conditions under which, and against which, I write, since writing, or the ostentatious performance of "being a writer," was, from quite early on, one of the ways in which I learned to court and weather his approval. … That I am white, cishet, male, and middle-class: as the song says, *What's love got to do with it?* But love *does* have to do with it. (pp. 222–223)

Smith writes toward and traverses the symbolic limit of emplaced subjectivity. His writing encodes psychical locality as overdetermined by, in Santner's (2005) words, "the constrained space of a determinate social formation" (p. 105), but it also defamiliarizes the particular and contingent interiority this psychosocial bond affords as the imagined precondition for writing, autobiographical or otherwise. Interrogating love within the intimate space of the family, where it is troubled by the excess of demand and the conscription of desire, Smith composes a curriculum that exposes and begins to ravel his "libidinal implication"—that is, "the affective grip that a social

formation is able to call forth" in him (Santner, 2012, p. 44). Race, gender, and class in Smith's autobiographical analysis are not merely subjective positions functioning as correlates of power; they are libidinally and thus unconsciously invested spheres of meaning, requiring ongoing interrogation for the "sense of place" they afford. "From these social and political aspects of being, which are styles of having a body, of occupying one's parcel of space and stretch of time," Smith writes, "one derives ways of being lovable, along with a formidable sense of where love comes from. *And where, or to whom, it returns*" (p. 223). He continues:

> James Baldwin's observation that Black folk know white people "better than their lovers" reminds us that love, under certain conditions, can become an obstacle to self-knowledge. It reminds us that being loved, or seeking to be loved, might, in fact, enact … the "avoidance of love," insofar as the conditions under which one seeks love require that one refuse to acknowledge the totality of that love's conditions. This requirement is love's pact with power. (pp. 223)

In this thread of autobiographical study, Smith moves from intimate recounting of familial relations to reflective analysis of the social and psychical conditions of those bonds. The line of investigation, free associative in nature, diverges from, while deepening the significance of, a fundamental scene of libidinal implication—the significance bearing not the promise of sovereign subjectivity, but rather, what Janet Miller (2005) calls, the "necessary incompleteness" (pp. 45–56) of autobiographical inquiry. Smith's (2020) contemplation on the act of writing and its intractable uncertainties heightens the sense that self-formation involves both individual creative agency and the negotiation of self-shattering heteronomous forces.[19] As he turns to Baldwin to consider the vicissitudes of love and its racial entanglement, he further concretizes and expands the subjective sphere of his autobiographical study, rather than simply arriving at a new narrative enclosure for the disturbance his intimate analysis provokes. He brings to form curriculum as a subjective place, one that enables, in Janet Miller's (2005) words, "speaking and writing into existence ways of being that are obscured, unknown, or simply unthinkable when one centered, self-knowing story is substituted for another" (p. 54).

As a place, Smith's (2020) autobiographical curriculum counters the white father's pedagogy of love—a pedagogy that "encodes the power not to fail, the power to decide [one's own fate], as the promise of success" (p. 225). Smith counters this pedagogy, not by articulating a superordinate position of explicative critique, but through reflective immersion in the implications and involutions of his psychic life. This mode of subjective emplacement in curriculum—along with the anxieties and uncertainties of interpretation it provokes—is symbolized as Smith, again following Baldwin, underscores the "open secret" of the white father's pedagogy of love, a "pact with power" that white men "expend boundless energy to conceal from themselves" (p. 225). More specifically, he encodes the condition of self-estrangement for further analysis, while also exemplifying the remarkable openness and complexity of his self-study, by figuring the subjective place of white cishet men in a rhetorically variegated statement, a line at once autobiographical, hermeneutic, and critical—a line dialogically abundant, citationally dense, and poetically ambiguous. Although intricately meaningful, indeed cryptic, in its discursive and affective context, the line also reads, in a way, as a platitudinous statement of autobiographical significance, one suggesting the redemption of the self from its obscurities and alterities. Situating first person singular subjectivity in—and, from one angle of perception, in possession of—the locality of its existence, Smith writes: "The *I* appears, irradiated, in its place" (p. 225).

Smith (2020) offers this line as a gloss of a statement made by the French psychoanalysts Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok (1986), a statement that is, in fact, a reversal of a Freudian dictum regarding the purposes of the psychoanalytic process. Freud's (1933) maxim, "*wo Es war, soll Ich werden*" was rendered by James Strachey, Freud's original English translator, as "where id was, there ego shall be" (p. 80). "Most analysts today," Luepnitz (2009) argues, "understand the violence done" to Freud's ideas "by the introduction of the Latinate id, ego, superego" (p. 968). In this context, Smith notes that Freud's line can also be translated "where it was, there I shall be" (pp. 225–226).[20] At stake in the interpretation of the maxim is the degree to which psychoanalysis understands and thus fosters "consciousness" as, in Spillers' (2004) terms, "ethically obligated to bring to exposure as much of its obscurity as it can" (p. 544). By some accounts, particularly the Lacanian one, the line is too often mis-interpreted, interpreted in a way that diminishes the capaciousness and complexity of subjectivity and the analytic process. Ego-psychology, in Lacan's view, takes the line to mean that the "conscious ego can and should both achieve reflective … transparency to itself as well as, on the basis of this achievement, attain the self-mastery of taming and domesticating the unruly, irrational portions of the psychical apparatus" (Johnston, 2020, p. 31). Given his critique, Lacan retranslates the statement ("Ich" read as *I* instead of *ego*)—"Where It [Id] was, I must come into being"—to suggest that psychoanalysis enables "a kind of 'existential recognition' of the symbolic determinants of one's being" (Evans, 1996, p. 82).

Abraham and Torok (1986), who Smith (2020) quotes, reverse the Freudian dictum altogether, specifically in their conceptualization of "crypt" and "cryptonym." The crypt refers to "an isolated region within the psyche in which an experience that is shameful, and therefore unspeakable, has been 'buried alive'" (Rand, 1990, p. 59); and the cryptonym refers to this force of "repression … carried out on words" (p. 59), such that, in Smith's (2020) synopsis: "a word buried in the unconscious part of the ego … occupies a site that can be expressed only by a series of detours through a lexicon" (pp. 231–232). To capture the functioning of the crypt, Abraham and Torok reverse Freud's dictum regarding the relation of id and ego, characterizing an ego split and psychically immobilized by an inner crypt. Not only is Freud's line reversed; the rhetorical context of its articulation also shifts inward. If Freud's statement represents a metapsychological perspective on the purposes of psychoanalysis, Abraham and Torok rework it uncannily to represent an imagined voice from a severed psychical interior. "It is as if one side of the Ego acted the part of the Unconscious for the other half while saying … Where there was Ego there should be Id" (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81). In this formulation, a shameful experience encrypted in the ego, encoded by an inarticulable word, functions "*like* an unconscious" (Derrida, 1986, p. xx, emphasis in original), an ersatz unconscious signaling an otherness to be symbolized while, through a void of signification, sustaining the structure of psychical occlusion. In another turn of translation, one hears the agony of the impossible self-relation: "*Where I was there should be it*" (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81).

In Derrida's (1986) introduction to Abraham and Torok's work, he explains the crypt functions as a "kind of 'false unconscious,' an 'artificial' unconscious lodged like a prothesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the divided self" (p. xiii). The ego encrypts a libidinally invested shameful experience, one that echoes within but cannot be symbolized in language. Thus severed from the state of becoming that would be an existential recognition of the symbolic determinants of being, the ego is riveted to "the non-place within space, a place as no-place" (Derrida, 1986, p. xxi). In Abraham and Torok's (1986) characterization,

> the Ego cannot quit the place where it had once been; it can only withdraw into seclusion and construct a barrier separating it from the other half of the Ego. *Where I was there should be it* is the slogan of a maneuver whose sole purpose is to preserve this nonplace … that shuns symbolization. (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81)

Where I was there should be it, Abraham and Torok (1986) write in the voice of the encrypted ego. This is the slogan, they suggest, of the *I* that eradicates symbolic movement within its subjective place by encrypting a shameful experience. In his translation of the line, Dolsy Smith (2020) writes*: The I appears, irradiated, in its place.* Smith's gloss, in my view, can be read as the slogan of the maneuver to preserve the subjective non-place of white male subjectivity, encrypting the shame of the subject who accrues privilege and experiences the pleasure of identification through white patriarchal violence. So structured, the *I* is grasped as wholly illuminated—*it appears, irradiated*—in a space of its possession—*its place*. In one moment of my reading, fantasizing that Smith has properly, authentically, illuminated the space of "subjective non-coincidence" (Pinar, 2017, pp. 99–100), I admit, his line tempts me to grasp it as a celebration of place-oriented autobiographical study. Yet, the narrative lingers and returns to the point: "The languages of patriarchal white supremacy," Smith (2020) writes,

> are cryptonymic … insofar as the ingredients of fantasy no less than the armature of common sense remain, for those who take up those languages, linked to the buried pleasure of the word as a vehicle of unrestrained power over others (the power to terrorize, the power to possess). (p. 232)[21]

The I appears, irradiated, in its place.

Psychoanalytic thought affords Smith a grasp of the structure of the psychical crypt that is the non-place of hegemonic white male subjectivity. But it is writers in what Fred Moten (2003) calls the "Black radical tradition" who lay bare the social dimensions—the conditions of social implication and involution—of this mode of subjective emplacement. For Smith, James Baldwin, Hortense Spillers, and Kiese Laymon mark the place of white men's absence to themselves. Smith (2020) writes:

> Of course, whiteness, particularly in its cishet masculine and moneyed isotopes, grants power. But as Kiese Laymon argues, this power is most visible, at the level of the individual, as a kind of absence or negation. … His power is evident in all the things that do not touch his life, like lead in the water, like searchlights through the windows at midnight, like whispers and cries you can't get out of your head. (pp. 224–225)

Smith continues:

> Who loves you? That your white Daddy does, and that his love is all, encodes the power not to fail, the power to decide, as the promise of success. But such success remains a volatile, violent, jealously guarded thing, unevenly distributed even among the white male population. The true meaning of this promise is an open secret, as Baldwin suggests, well known to people of color, and which whites expend boundless energy to conceal from themselves. (p. 225)

Smith writes:

> the *I* appears, irradiated, in its place. *It* is what Hortense Spillers calls "the blankness of 'race,'" an emptiness "where something else ought to be," signifying nothing. But the blankness must be covered over; that is the condition of its power. (pp. 225–226)

Understood as a curriculum of subjective place, Smith's study of Spillers, Laymon, and Baldwin in juxtaposition with psychoanalytic theory reveals a form of subjectivation in which Smith is implicated and therefore that he must confront and work through. In this account, subjectivity takes shape—"the *I* appears"—as it covers over a psychical void. That void, as Marriott (2021) would argue, is not merely the "lack out of which meaning is woven," as elaborated in Lacanian theory, but rather the disavowed yet ever-present "thought that makes blackness itself into a state of terror *or* wretchedness" (pp. 9–10).

What I have discerned in the citational context of Smith's uncanny line, he reveals in a narrative about his experience of high school. The narrative discloses a scene of subjectivation in which the marking of the black body as other produces an exterior, securing extimate selfhood in that figured blackness. A scene from the schoolyard, which I quote at length. Smith writes:

> The radio and MTV sponsored our senses, rallying us with anthems by C+C Music Factory. Crushing, we drank from the gospel swoon of Boyz II Men and Whitney Houston. Bobbing our heads to Bell Biv DeVoe, we tasted something that raised the hair on the backs of our necks, as the beat sent shudders past the edge of what we understood. Our flesh was the hem of a garment that we touched, longing to be cured. But the poison that ailed us wasn't a girl. It was the distillate of a structure that granted our bodies the power to fail at others' expense, and to profit by their pain. We consumed Black pain, repackaged and commodified. We white boys sagged our jeans and salted our speech with "bruh." With the white girls in our grade, we made an enclosure of our bodies on the cement porch of McKinley Magnet High, inside a driveway separated by razor wire from the wooden-frame houses of a neighborhood that stood blocks away from the heart of planter affluence, rife with private security, manicured azaleas, and white colonnades. … We white boys cultivated cruelty in our voices and our postures—the cruelty that watched behind my father's eyes, that strikes at the gut, that sounds too much like love. We regaled each other and rolled our eyes, we shoved and joshed and egged each other on. We embodied the logic of "plantation power" that Clyde Woods has written about, keeping to our tight, cruel circle, policing our pyramid, while the meaty paramilitary arm of the state put the screws to all those who, against the white screen of our self-love, passed by in silhouette. Collectively, we ignored, avoided, and neglected our Black classmates, like the Black neighbors we avoided and the Black workers we ignored or talked down to. … From the Blackness in our milieu, we white kids leached a language and a kind of hunger for being, which lit up our insides with feelings that we had no name for. Feelings borne of the radiance of a history of resilience that held no meaning for us as anything but feeling. And what was that feeling, for us, but the nimbus of moments promising a taste of our potential as it evaporated into the present? (pp. 278–279)

The essay in which this narrative and the line regarding the crypt appear is a personal narrative intercalated with critical analyses of literature and engagements with critical, philosophical, and

psychoanalytic texts, acknowledging, specifically, its indebtedness to "the stories of others" (Smith, 2020, p. 35). In the narrative, Smith exposes the emplacement—the quotidian habitation—of his subjectivity in the logic and the affective terrain of patriarchal white supremacy. He does so to depict the fraught psychical landscape from which he now engages the creative work of those who "the terms of [his] embodiment would [otherwise] silence or efface" (p. 35).

Among those Smith listens to most intently "in the midst" (Santner, 2001) of his own autobiographical self-encounter are, as I've elaborated, James Baldwin, Kiese Laymon, Hortense Spillers, and Fred Moten. In his more indirect autobiographical labor, earlier in the book, Smith engages deeply with the work of Tracie Morris, Christina Sharpe, Dionne Brand, Julius Eastman, Sylvia Wynter, and Frantz Fanon. Of his attempt to move beyond the subjective non-place of white male subjectivity, Smith (2020) writes:

> I'm on the terrain here of a debt that I cannot hope to acquit. … Failure or not, my writing exposes my debt to those, living and dead, in the grain of whose works and days I become what I am. … In writing this book, I've tried to quicken my senses to that debt, without making a sideshow of the modern world's profound reserves of suffering and pain. And I've come back, again and again, to the grain of the sentence and the phrase, trying to improvise with (not improve upon) the brilliance of those whom I cite. (pp. 37–38).

In this entangled, dialogical autobiography, Smith (2020) establishes, I suggest, a curriculum of subjective place—one decompleted through solidarity with an expressiveness in the "black radical tradition" (Moten, 2003). Such a curriculum challenges, potentially "shatters" (Pinar, 2006, p. 181), the racialized encrypted state of white men, illuminating the way beyond subjectivation in white patriarchy. Writing through the Black radical aesthetic, Smith explains, Moten accounts for an expressiveness "that court[s] the disruption … 'the cut'—out of which meanings emerge" (Smith, 2020, p. 38). Smith draws on Moten's concept of "the cut" extensively, emphasizing that Moten is not concerned, merely, with "that abstract vantage point from which critical thought glimpses its dispersal behind a deceptively univocal meaning" (p. 39). To the contrary, Smith clarifies that

> The cut evokes the eruption, within the dominant practices of modernity, of the matter of the flesh and its history, which is the matter of spirit. And in particular, the spirit of the Black radical aesthetic, including Black feminist theory and poetics, embodying creative resilience in an unredeemed time of terror and pain. (p. 39)

To seek solidarity—or to imagine joining an "ensemble," to use Moten's term—with this mode of expressiveness, Smith acknowledges, is for him to be caught in the tension of either "exploit[ing] this aesthetic, as in to capitalize on it" or, on the other hand, "draw[ing] strength from it" for his project of raveling white male subjectivity (p. 39). From Smith's positioning "within a history of privileged appropriation, as a subject identified with that privilege," to engage the Black radical aesthetic at all, he acknowledges, "is perhaps necessarily to fail or fall short before Moten's invitation" (p. 39). Smith pursues this engagement, nonetheless, negotiating the affects of failure it generates, offering the dialogical autobiographical narrative "as way, not of owning the story, but of exposing the teller, outside the refuge of critical distance and control" (p. 35). Moreover, and more boldly, Smith imagines, he might find himself in this place beyond the encrypted self, in the place of "an intimate or impossibly proximal otherness that spells both resistance [to white

supremacist patriarchy] and vulnerability at the same time" (p. 66). Such a re-emplacement of subjectivity might effectuate a cut in the suture of the hegemonic white male psyche. If, as Smith suggests, the fantasy of transparent, wholly unencumbered interiority, the fantasy of the self in possession of its interior and the external space of its being, sutures the flesh to forms of domination, then to experience his subjectivity in the "rooted rootlessness" of the black radical aesthetic, inhabiting, in solidarity, "such eccentric, such impossible, ground" (Moten, 2017, p. 91) might be to experience "the cut [as] in-formation, ingress—the world pressing upon the flesh—the world realizing itself in the here and now" (Smith, 2020, p. 202).

Conclusion

In his recent book, *The Praxis of Presence in Curriculum Theory*, Bill Pinar (2023) speaks to the capacity of study to intensify our perception of "our embeddedness in the world," suggesting that study figures our worldly embeddedness—irradiating it, if partially—as curriculum (p. 38). Curriculum—understood as a complicated conversation initiated and sustained by the practice of study (Pinar, 2004, 2023)—emplaces subjectivity in a realm of heightened awareness, one that fosters our attunement to our own experience of "subjective non-coincidence," the conditions of our own "non-coincidence with what is" (Pinar, 2023, p. 37). Non-coincidence is the term Pinar employs to account for subjectivity's irremediable separation from society, culture, history, materiality, *and* the very objects and dimensions of psychic life, despite its overlay with and constitution by these very forms of otherness.

From Dolsy Smith's (2020) *Rough Notes to Erasure*, we learn that such non-coincidence can be encrypted via the white male "fiction of interiority," expressing "a desire," as Smith writes, "to close off the self from those histories, personal, national, and global, that challenge one's claims" to unimplicated self-possession—a desire for personhood that transcends the violent wages of white patriarchy (p. 37). "But this attempt to escape from the folds of history," Smith continues, "is bound to fail" (p. 37). Given subjective non-coincidence, however obscured, and despite fantasies to the contrary, curriculum as subjective place, as "an intellectually lived ground" (Pinar, 2004, p. 241), does not offer conditions of total, harmonious, unconflicted habitation in the space of being; it is not a site where the self, identity, sociality, and heteronomous relations come to be known—or to be explicated—absolutely, nor a space realized in the fusion of subjectivity with the objects and others of our passionate attachment. It is, nonetheless, a place, most certainly, where such fantasies of totalization must be confronted—again and again—a place, in fact, that discloses, if we are attuned to the disclosure, substantial risks in that regard, among them psychical abstraction from lived experience; psychical fusion with social, cultural, ideological, and technological formations (Pinar, 2015, p. 51; Pinar, 2023, p. 94); and, as Dolsy Smith (2020) demonstrates, psychical emplacement and suture within the encrypted non-place of hegemonic white masculinity. The disclosure of such defenses against the presence of otherness we grasp and suffer in the travails of speaking and writing through our individual "scene of the world" (Mieli, 2017)—through the worldly and psychical emplacement of, what Pinar calls (2015), our "dispersed and discordant self-reflexivity" (p. 196). Brought to form through study, curriculum can disclose not only our capacities for symbolizing experience but also and, importantly, as Smith's writing reveals, our failures of symbolization as constitutive of subjectivity—offering us a provisional yet potentially consequential sense of emplacement in the world. The curriculum that becomes a place—"curriculum as subjective place"—I understand, following Smith, to be a

curriculum established through the encoding of psychical locality in its social implication and involution, a symbolic process that conveys, evokes, and even affords a lived experience of place but transiently, not as evidence of new wholly ordered totality or space of being, but as evidence that we are engaged in the ongoing creation of a forever "decompleted" one.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered as a keynote address at the 43rd Annual JCT Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice. I am deeply grateful to Tom Poetter, Editor of *JCT* and President of the Foundation of Curriculum Theory, and the *JCT* team for inviting me to serve as keynote speaker at Bergamo.

2. In Lauren Fournier's (2021) terms, autotheory is a "self-conscious way of engaging with theory—as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice—alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment" (p. 7). It has roots in the larger history of philosophy and "is brought into sharper view" (p. 36) by contemporary feminist, queer, black, brown, and indigenous artists and scholars – through "cultural production" that emerges in "spaces that live on the edges of art and academia" (p. 7). The corresponding tradition of curriculum scholarship is well elaborated by Janet Miller (2010):

> Since the late 1980s, autobiographical theories have been and continue to be influenced especially by feminist poststructuralist, transnational, postcolonial, and queer theories, to name a few anti-foundational perspectives and philosophies. These theories enabled curriculum theorists and researchers, from various epistemological and ontological positionings and agendas, to consider divides between fact and fiction as well as the impossibilities of autobiography as a "self-expressive" act; to challenge possibilities of presenting a life "objectively"; and to examine how shaping forces of language prohibited any simple attempts at "truth," reference, or accurate and unmediated representations of '"self" and "others." (p. 62)

3. For key examples of *currere* studies that particularize and expand *currere* theory, see Baszile (2015), Doerr (2004), Doll (2017), Knox (2022), McNulty (2018), and Poetter (2025).

4. In his wide-ranging historical and conceptual study of "the gender of racial politics and violence in America," Pinar (2001) provides in-depth analysis of "the 'crisis' of white masculinity" (pp. 321–416) as well as the social and psychical conditions that compel white men to remain "strangers to themselves" (pp. 939–980). For further analysis of white masculinity in curriculum studies, see Burns (2017, 2018), Casemore (2008), Jupp and Slattery (2010), McKnight (2014, 2017), and Pinar (2006).

5. Through a rich set of methodologies, discourses, and frameworks, contemporary curriculum scholars explore where, how, and to what extent, effect, and implication educational experience is located (e.g., Asher, 2009a, 2009b; Casemore, 2008; Casemore & Guillory, 2023; Chambers, 1999, 2006, 2008; Donald, 2009, 2012, 2020; Gershon, 2013, 2017; Helfenbein, 2006, 2011, 2015, 2021; Helfenbein & Huddleston, 2013, 2021; Hendry, 2023; Hendry et al., 2023; Howard et al., 2016; Huddleston, 2018a, 2018b; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991a; 1991b; Kincheloe et al., 1994; Knox, 2022; McNair-Lee, 2023; McKnight, 2014, 2017; Nakagawa & Payne, 2017; Ng-A-Fook, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2024; Phelan & Pinar, 2023; Pinar, 1991, 2004, 2014; Reynolds, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2022; Schmidt, 2011, 2015; Slattery & Daigle, 1994; B. Smith, 2017, 2024; Varga et al., 2021; Wang, 2004; Wang & Flory, 2021; Whitaker et al., 2018; Whitlock, 2007, 2008, 2017; Wozolek, 2021a, 2021b, 2023; Wozolek & Huddleston, 2022). The localities and spatial conditions that constitute and contextualize curriculum are understood variously as social, cultural, material, historical, psychological, and affective sites and situations. The study of these places and spaces in their distinctiveness and dynamic interrelationship generates complex vocabularies within the curriculum field, spatial and "placial" terms (Casey, 1993, 1997) used in unique theory-bound ways—as in their source disciplines—to establish substantial and diverse lines of inquiry. The concepts of space and place have become essential to curriculum scholars, Helfenbein and Huddleston (2021) argue, as they demonstrate both that the curriculum field, after the Reconceptualization, has been productively responsive to the "spatial turn" in the social sciences and humanities and that further engagement with "critical spatial theory" in its emergent complexity might enable our understanding of curriculum to "shift into new and generative trajectories" (para. 1). Acknowledging the fundamental importance of lived experience in the field of curriculum studies generally and in spatial analyses of education specifically, these authors draw attention to "scholars of color, feminist thinkers, and queer theorists" (para. 31) whose critical accounts of "embodied, lived experiences of curriculum" (para. 35) represent the foremost effort to produce more equitable spaces of education. In another strand of curriculum scholarship, place—rather than space—is the superordinate and organizing term for

exploring the location of educational experience. Summarizing the foundations of the discourse, Reynolds (2022) argues:

> Place is that which brings the particularistic into focus; a sense of place sharpens our understanding of the individual and the physical and social forces that direct him or her. Without place, our appreciation of such particularistic forces tends to be fuzzy and depersonalized. (p. 351)

Reynolds warns against the conflation via stereotype of "particular places" and the identities of their inhabitants, characterizing and calling for additional curriculum scholarship that serves as "a type of disruption … to the violent cartographies of place, which always already portray certain places and people as other" (p. 362). "To think deeply about power and agency" in the innumerable and complex sites and landscapes of education, Wozolek (2023) argues, requires careful analysis of the "relationships between space and place" (p. 19), a mode of analysis, as her research demonstrates, that can "make unspoken and tacit understandings more explicit" (p. 55). A key challenge in this regard is variation in terminology. The various strands of scholarship on place and space in the curriculum field surely intersect, but the distinctiveness of their conceptual lexicons can hinder careful analysis of shared commitments and critical tensions. Such analysis is enormously valuable for the curriculum field; however, I do not undertake that project in the present essay, even as I employ "figures of space" (Mieli, 2017) to revivify the sense of *curriculum as subjective place*. I am concerned with curriculum that emerges through the intellectual labor of an individual person—through the creative subjective agency of one who studies. Conceptualizing curriculum as the location of educational experience—and, indeed, experiencing it as such – is difficult, as I understand it, because it requires analysis of self-formation via the "idiolocality" of place (Casey, 2001), even as that relation inherently risks an interpretive conflation of self and place that occludes otherness.

6. I'm following Smith (2020) in his use of the verb "encode," as he employs it to designate various forms of occluded signification nonetheless discernable and reachable as sites and sources of meaning (see pp. 34, 123, 151–152, 195, 217, 225).

7. Psychoanalysis—elaborated in terms of "social psychoanalysis" via the Frankfurt School, specifically Habermas—decisively marks the foundations of the discourse on place in the curriculum field (Kincheloe, 1991, pp. 125–127; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b, pp. 1–4; Pinar, 1991, pp. 173–175; see also, Kincheloe et al., 1994, p. 409). Since then, psychoanalytic thought has remained influential, although implicitly so, in many curriculum studies of place conducted through autobiography—where the labor of free association, recovering occluded histories, and "working through" informs the autobiographical approach. Otherwise, since the inauguration of place studies in the field (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b; Pinar, 1991), the study of place as a psychoanalytic endeavor has been largely unelaborated.

8. For discussion of Freud's conception of "psychical locality," see de Lauretis (2008, pp. 60–61), Kennedy (2014, pp. 82–83), Silverman (2000, pp. 85–89), and Spillers (2004, pp. 537–538).

9. Based on this phrase, Lacan (1986/1992) introduces the neologism "extimacy" (p. 139). For a discussion of the significance of this term for spatial thinking in geography, see Kingsbury (2007).

10. In the co-authored introduction to the book, in writing Pinar attributes to Kincheloe, Kincheloe writes: "the analyzed sense of place is a window to the *Lebenswelt*, a vehicle to self-knowledge, and a crack in the structure that allows the archaeologist of self to discover the etymology of one's own research act" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b, p. 6). Pinar (2010) elaborates Kincheloe's writing on place, noting that this phenomenological account supports Kincheloe's broader concern with the self's encounter with—and critique of—social-historical forces. "Kincheloe's conception [of place]," Pinar writes, "is grounded in subjectivity's capacity to extricate itself from the forces which construct it through awareness and understanding" (para. 2).

11. I'm borrowing the conjunction "implication and involution" from Dolsy Smith (2020), who associates the terms in his analysis of "the property relation" through the work of Cheryl Harris (1993), Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007), and Patricia Williams (1991). "The property relation," Smith explains,

> is supposed to abet our interiority under the figure of our radical, absolute separateness from the external world of things that have properties and that can be possessed. And yet, as Patricia Williams suggests, separateness itself "must be actively obliterated" in the act of enjoyment. (p. 58)

Interiority, then, as shaped through the property relation, is an entwined, even snarled, condition of personhood, "the sense of having" entangling psychic life—via the libidinally animating surplus of the possessed and possessable thing—with others and forms of otherness subject to commodification, while, nonetheless, obscuring those very entanglements. Following Harris, Ferreira da Silva, and Williams, Smith is concerned with racial commodification, its roots in chattel slavery in the Americas, and the way it is "projected along the axes of gender, sexuality, and social class" (p. 57)—all this providing foundation for the self-sovereign interiority of social (particularly, white cishet male) privilege. In this context, Smith suggests: "Rather than 'stultification,' the subordination of our senses to the single sense of having might be better described as *involution* or *implication*"

(p. 58). He employs "implication" here in apposition and equivalence to "involution," using the term "in its more literal acceptation, signifying an entwining or entanglement" (p. 58). Yet, throughout *Rough Notes to Erasure*, "implication" resonates with multiple meanings—as inference, culpable or inextricable involvement, and dynamic enfolding relationship—bearing out Fred Moten's (as quoted in Smith) argument that "phrasing, where form—grammar, sound—cuts and augments meaning in the production of content, is where implication most properly resides" (p. 38). I employ "involution and implication" in this spirit of signification—understanding the sphere of engagement that is curriculum to be a place constituted through our symbolization—that is, our indirect expression—of singular psychical localities that are inextricable from the world.

12. Brought to form through study, curriculum discloses our capacities, practices, and—importantly—our failures of symbolization as constitutive of subjectivity, offering us a provisional yet potentially consequential sense of emplacement in the world. "Study," Pinar (2023) writes,

> acknowledges the extra-discursive sphere that extends beyond our capacity to apprehend it, but study also enables us to articulate what before we could not, yes always in the shadows of what we cannot, but maybe more acutely aware of our embeddedness in the world we inhabit and labor to understand and reconstruct. (p. 38)

13. Dolsy Smith is a poet and university research librarian at George Washington University, where he supports open access publishing and various humanities education projects. He writes occasionally on critical librarianship and composition pedagogy, and his poetry is published in various journals, among them *DIAGRAM*, *The Yale Review*, and *The Volta*. In 2014, in collaboration with the artist Kant Smith, his brother, Smith launched an interactive exhibit in New York—*The Clandestine Reading Room*—about state secrecy and government surveillance. It was a pop-up library of leaked and declassified government documents, shedding light on the history of state secrecy and surveillance. Their project fosters "clandestine reading" in a time when "the very act of reading has become suspect," a mode of reading rooted in a "poetic logic" that might undermine the process by which the state recruits "us to a near-constant state of self-surveillance" (Smith & Smith, 2014, n.p.). In his book, he pursues another—though not wholly unrelated—problem of orienting to oneself.

14. Of Wittgenstein's notion of aspect perception, Baz (2020) writes: "the aspect is a perceived, experienced physiognomy that connects it internally … with other elements of the phenomenal world" (pp. 24–25). He explains further:

> Given the common philosophical understanding of 'objective' and 'subjective', or 'external' and 'internal', the Wittgensteinian aspect is, importantly, neither: it is genuinely perceived, and sharable with others, but, at the same time, is not independent of its perceivers, or of its being perceived. (p. 5)

15. Smith's (2020) "raveling of deep aspect" expresses, in different terms, what Santner (2022) describes as "untying things together."

16. "Rough Notes to Erasure," the primary title of Smith's (2020) book, "is a quotation, under partial erasure, from Alan Turing's seminal essay on computability, which furnishes part of the theoretical foundation for the digital and computational revolution of the twentieth century" (p. 35). Smith employs the phrase to designate "the rough edges of the laboring flesh that vanish behind the products of mechanical production" (p. 36), a correlate to the dynamic by which hegemonic white masculinity erases the lives and labor of racial and gendered others.

17. Smith's (2020) autobiographical project aligns, as well, with the autobiographical curriculum scholarship of Douglas McKnight (2017), who, in his analysis of place, race, and identity, "brings forth counter stories that both challenge [his] identity as a white male from the Deep South … as well as infuse it with a greater depth of understanding of the narrative condition within which all Southerners live" (p. 19).

18. For a discussion of "the intimate alterity of the real," see Shepherdson (2008, pp. 1–49). For an elaboration of Lacan's notion of "extimacy," see Jacques-Alain Miller (1994).

19. See Bono et al. (2008) for an analysis of

> multiple senses of human and nonhuman agency …—the agency of citizenship, power, kinship, gaze, time, the death drive, new technologies and media, sexuality, and finally, the agency of rhetoric and politics—[that] imply that praxis and freedom are based on the heteronomy rather than the autonomy of the subject. (p. 4)

They account for a "heteronomy of the future beyond the threat of subjugation that the term *heteronomy* still implies, approaching it instead as a source of transformation and creativity in the broadest possible sense of the word" (p. 5).

20. Barratt (2013) explains: "Strachey translated this aphorism badly and several commentators, including Lacan, have contemplated its significance and offered alternative translations" (p. 180). Reflecting the debate over the translation, Barbara Johnson, the translator of Derrida's foreword to Abraham & Torok's (1986) book, presents Freud's aphorism as "Where it (Id) was, there shall I (Ego) come to be" (p. 118, note 12).

21. Smith (2020) also hedges against this interpretation, as he writes:

> Then again, this pleasure is hardly buried in much of the discourse, historical and contemporary, through which the white American public identifies itself and its common interests. Rather, spectacular and mundane forms of degradation practiced against its racialized and gendered others sustain the white patriarchy in the non liquet of its own laws about rightful possession and the just exercise of power. (p. 232)

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