

Curriculum at the End of Time

Abjection and the Apocalyptic Body

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“Let’s talk of graves, of worms, and epitaph...” – *Richard II*, William Shakespeare

THE AIR IS HEAVY WITH ROT. Paper, wood, metal, ideas. Nobody and nothing remain, “death is necessary” (Downey, 2022, p. 19). Mildew blooms like dark flowers, devouring what once seemed like certainties. A ruined school building stands as a last testament to the way things *used* to be. Textbooks and classroom materials mold and rot. Clocks tick away with nobody to perceive that time itself has ended. At this threshold, curriculum clings to its old certainties of progress, mastery, and the promises of a future already long dead. Beneath this decay, from students, teachers, to epistemologies, a festering exists that leaks and collapses into abjection. Learning has not just ceased, but it becomes an intellectual rotting, fermenting and falling back into previous sedimentations. A collectivity that exists at the margins exudes not hope, but a kind of terrible remembering that all the promises of different kinds of futures have failed to arrive.

We begin this paper in the rot, amongst death, and within the ontology of corpses to demonstrate that life can still create and thrive at the edges and hinterlands of various forms of existence: life, mourning, being, and death. We smell the grave and yet we will continue forward. Staying amongst these scenes of death conveys the dire situation we now inhabit. As we embrace the ruins and explore the graveyard of what once was, we are not pulled towards a nihilistic conclusion, nor are we called to a vanity of hope that pervades much educational theory. Recognizing the situation we are in, is not defeat nor is it resignation. Instead, it becomes a productive force that animates our imaginations towards a radically different future potential.

Theorizing in this way, this paper seeks to transgress and inhabit the middle grounds of collapse. From these experiences, I can begin to imagine a curriculum for the end of time. We find ourselves already inhabiting this end, although past realities continue to persist. These rituals haunt us like specters from a past already long dead, ghostly, and automated. Accreditation committees still convene, syllabi are still created, assessments are tallied, all with the failed promises that we are not already experiencing many different forms of ruin. Research is “held hostage to quantification” and research “is sized up according to market metrics” (Stables, 2024, p. 136). A sort of toxic positivity pervades mainstream educational discourses that insists everything will be

okay. Or that our job, indeed our duty as faculty, is to remain “positive” when higher education is collectively staring down extinction. We collectively reach the horizon and what we see there has crumbled. Within this ruinous present, curriculum that was once a promise of a future still to come cannot exist within promises of salvation. Decay marks this new architecture and before we can theorize, we must linger amongst the ruins, listening and hearing what the debris can possibly tell us.

With many diverse breakdowns currently underway, dominant ideas on curriculum still insist on coherence. Traditional realities found in institutional settings demand outcomes and standards, stitching together the remnants of lost futures with tenuous, brittle threads of accreditation. Demands of productivity emerge and knowledge that demands narrow forms of mastery triumph, even as the walls close in. There is no public mourning for education, and instead any sort of refusal of its logics and its own demise is disciplined into silence. In educational scholarship, we still insist on playing along with the notion that we can still act like we always have, begging for acceptance and forcing educational scholarship into reenacting some sick gesture of life. This demonstrates that current scholarly traditions need to be radically rethought in this current historical conjuncture. Calls for “relevance” still haunt educational conferences and reviewer comments, despite the blooming catastrophe that unfurls before us. Education becomes an elaborate preservation of denial across borders, a choreography of refusal to see the end is nigh (Heimans, et. al., 2024).

A refusal to see, the body already knows. It always remains entangled in various kinds of realities (Edber, 2022). The body trembles and resists, registering the apocalypse long before the institution admits defeat. In the body’s refusal to perform any longer, a new curriculum has a chance to blossom from the wreckage, what Hartman (2019) might call “waywardness”: a choreography of refusal that is improvisational, ungovernable, and bodily. We do not seek a curriculum of repair or salvation, but one of *abjection*: a pedagogical encounter that emerges from the spaces that remain after destruction has wrought its course. We stay where coherence unravels and we speak a language of the absurd. Before we can attempt in thinking how learning and creation happen within these spaces, we confront the rituals of expulsion that guard the boundaries of the collective educational body. We begin to ask what it means to study, to teach, to think, to theorize, and how to breathe once again at the end of time. In the corpses of standardization and mainstream education, we might yet find another kind of pedagogy that speaks to our current conjecture. This is a curriculum that studies with the dead, dwells with the broken, and learns to convey the language(s) of collapse. In the corpse of what once was traditional education, we might yet find a different kind of curriculum can potentially emerge.

Conjunctures of Hauntings

Thinking with and through curricular theory always begins in the residues of a historical/social/political conjuncture of unfinished conversations, institutional mandates, and syllabi composed for yet unknown futures, what Grossberg (2010) might have seen as a dynamic configuration of forces (p. 26). Grossberg wrote of the “unstable and changing set of discursive formations and configurations of affective regimes” that, “mediate and articulate” ways of being in the world (p. 222). Escaping abstraction, curriculum theory is thought/imagined/practiced through similar conditions that Grossberg argued existed for cultural studies. Beyond this, however, are the specters that continue to haunt educational theory and practices, specifically

curriculum theory, a recognizable atmosphere for anyone that has spent time within educational institutions that are often filled with exhaustion, crises, or rupture. Classes continue but something has definitely changed. Teaching and learning occur alongside that which cannot be fully acknowledged, circulating through a haunting that transcends mere metaphor. These are the conditions of a pedagogical life, experiences that materialize before theory attempts to understand or represent it.

Rituals of Expulsion: Curriculum as Abjection

A moment emerges that is silent, almost imperceptible, when institutions turn away. It does not happen with an explosion or with a spectacle of violence, but with slow decay. Abjection, as Kristeva (1982) notes, is not simply disgust but a visceral, psychic act of casting out that which threatens a coherent sense of self, what she called the “psychic economy” (p. 50). Meaning disintegrates in the spaces of abjection and boundaries fall apart that often frame dominant ways of thinking and being. The corpse and the filth of the grave is not a foreign experience, but one that is intimate. Underneath this notion of “I” exists a deep rot. The haunting residue of abjection continues to speak even after structures have failed. Voices remain and cry out through the cracks, only to continue the dark continuation of lives once lived, the abject whispers to us that we have always been created from wreckage.

Collapse is not a sudden event; it is a slow decomposition that delivers a fatal blow when it becomes too late to act. The biblical imagination saw apocalypse as one with signs that pointed toward destruction, angels heralding the end times (National Council of Churches, 1989/2021, Revelation 14:6–13). We do not hear the trumpets ring out across the varied landscapes of contemporary realities. Instead, we are mired in messiness, despite it being a potentially productive space of performative creation (Curtis, 2024). Curriculum performs this kind of expulsion in its own forms of ritualistic practices. It identifies the contaminated, the unassimilable, and the excesses that cannot be molded into a sanctioned future. These are all ejected beyond the threshold of belonging, becoming a resident of the absurd, hanging about like a specter (Crosby, 1988). Mainstream education demands a life that hides the rot, with little to no patience for any sort of leaking, weeping, or refusal to heal. We cannot bury the dead in peace because we are unable to mourn the loss. It becomes a chasm that cannot be traversed.

A curriculum at the end of time abandons the promise of inclusion. Confronted with institutional and existential horrors, it can offer only acts of rejection rather than incorporation. The abject emerges, however, not only in moments of failure, drop out, or expulsion, but saturates everything in its path, from practices and notions of assessment, to tracking, to disciplinary practices, to drop out, to expulsion. Like a restless specter that haunts the house on the hill, definitions of academic “rigor” or “standards,” under the neutral guise of “merit,” masks the relentless drive to hide and obfuscate apocalyptic experiences, an impending rot that cannot be assimilated. Curriculum becomes that system of borders that only want to contain and trap, a choreography of denial that aims to protect the dying world from the truth and experiences of its own demise. The apocalyptic body resists legibility, the apocalyptic teacher refuses the burden of offering false hope, and apocalyptic forms of knowing exceed the dominant logics that seek to contain them. All of these continue to haunt us. We want new ways of being, knowing, and learning that do not seek repair. Here we can give a much clearer example.

Curriculum enacts abjection, in many contemporary institutions, by continually casting students, and educators themselves, outside boundaries of what is considered to be “legitimate” learning. Standardized testing regimes, as just one blatant example, reduces complexity to measurable fragments. If it cannot be quantified in this hegemonic logic system, then it is considered excess or waste. Credentialing or accreditation processes reflect similar logics, where knowledge, creativity, or identity that do not seem to “fit” prescribed norms become epistemological debris. Instead, institutions seek to produce clean, authoritative images of learning by marginalizing anything that cannot, or does not, fit the mold. The unruly, the unassessed, and the nonnormative are pushed to the margins and the hinterlands of practices. This kind of expulsion is abjection in its curricular formation. It becomes a system that sustains itself by disavowing the very richness it claims to cultivate.

Kristeva (1982) wrote that, “the abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal” (p. 12). This unstable borderland, between human and nonhuman, self and Other, materializes within an apocalyptic curriculum and finds its truest form in that what remains still disembodied and unknown. What this means is that traditional binaries that once help structure meaning and understanding no longer hold sway over understandings of what is considered real. The old promises of modernist education are but mechanisms to deny our connections to the Other (nonhuman or monstrous), to grief, to anxiety, and to anything it appears unable to track, monetize, or diagnose. The modern rituals of assessments, rubrics, graduation requirements, behavioral codes, or any other mainstream educational practice, are there to cleanse the social body, pathologizing anything that falls outside of the margins as waste to be managed, expelled, or made invisible. The abject student, those who cannot keep up or bleed in the margins or threaten the fantasy of progress, becomes the contemporary scapegoat, as the “victim is always the scapegoat” (Girard, 1986: p. 39), demonstrating that institutional promises are already broken. Kristeva (1982) argued that it is precisely...

Such a dynamics of reversals that makes of him a being of abjection...a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement. The mainspring of the tragedy lies in that ambiguity; prohibition and ideal are joined in a single character in order to signify that the speaking being has no space of his own but stands on a fragile threshold as if stranded on account of an impossible demarcation. (p. 84-85)

Kristeva’s theorization of abjection indicates the violent expulsion of what threatens the boundaries of the self, casting out failure, grief, decay, and uncertainty in desperate attempts to preserve a hollowed identity.

With the abject already present in collapsing institutions, we see that curriculum becomes a tool in an attempt to stave off destructions that are already forming within the margins and borderlands. Curriculum is construed as a technical, epistemological, and ontological machinery of purification that sorts the useful and the useless from the worthy to the wasteful. Kristeva (1982) might have thought of curriculum as a sort of “purification rite... that essential ridge, which, prohibiting the filthy object, extracts it from the secular order and lines it at once with a sacred facet” (p. 65). Through the various mechanisms of assessment, grading, or credentialing, the institution stages a ceaseless exorcism of failure, and more curriculum will be created to exorcise this failure. Disorder is purged for a modernist dream of progress. Rigor becomes just another disciplinary test and the mirage that mastery will grant us passage into a promised future. Behind

the polished institutional rhetoric of forward momentum, there are affects that materialize. Fear grips the institution. It trembles with the reality that learning may leak, knowledge may rot, and bodies may engage in acts of refusal. Streamlining linear success becomes difficult as bodies resist. Every rubric or accreditation benchmark, every standardization becomes this quiet act of abjection, like an exorcist casting out of the possessed body and the messy, haunted realities that education was never equipped to deal with. Study within this system becomes a risk in turning into this institutional waste, what Lewis (2013) called “the capability for incapability” (p. 44), negating the potentials and fire that radical inquiry and study offers us.

If curriculum polices acceptable boundaries, then the student who cannot, or will not, perform as required by the institution becomes the undisciplined object. The student that refuses conformity becomes the abject body of the institution. Failure alone is insufficient, as it must also be embodied and made visible so that institutional systems can continually define itself against those that it expels. The abject comes in many forms, including the body that learns too slowly, that speaks the wrong language, or that carries histories and trauma that are unaccounted for in sanctioned scripts and spaces of learning. These students, as abjection embodied, disrupt linear time. They defer, they drop out, they refuse to advance to credentialed success, or they simply disappear. A systemic kind of violence further marks the outsider body, often the racialized, the disabled, the queer, or the mad. They serve as markers that institutions cannot fully sanitize or control. Because the abject both fascinates and repels, normalizing institutions continually generate rituals of exclusion, classification, and containment to manage the threat it poses to social order. Abjection is no accident and becomes an enduring feature of education’s pedagogical and curricular encounters.

If the abject is cast out like the lepers of old to preserve and maintain the illusion of normality, what is deemed different can never fully vanish. Institutions simply reframe the abject as parasitic and inhuman. Here we can turn to Michel Foucault’s (2006) work on the figure of the leper and how it is connected to the body of the outsider, the abject, and the mad.

At the edges of the community, at town gates, large, barren, uninhabitable areas appeared, where the disease no longer reigned but its ghost still hovered. For centuries, these spaces would belong to the domain of the inhuman. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, by means of strange incantations, they conjured up a new incarnation of evil, another grinning mask of fear, home to the constantly renewed magic of purification and exclusion. (p. 3)

The leper was the inhuman and others became like them in the schemes of European modernity, such as the mad or deviant. Michael Serres (1982) argued that the parasite is not simply something that intrudes but is a *necessary* element of any dominating system. “The parasite is the active operator and the logical operation of evolution, of the irreversible time of life” (p. 188). The parasite interrupts, diverts, feeds, and sustains the very systems it seems to threaten. The abject student is not merely expelled, but they become a parasitic presence within the curricular body, introducing noise (“the ultimate parasite” [p. 4]) into the smooth signal of progression and mastery. The struggles, resistance, delays, and departures of the abject create a sort of institutional rhythm against which “success stories” are measured and celebrated against. The parasite, Serres reminds us, transforms and is neither wholly external nor fully capable of assimilation. It forces adaptations, mutations, or ossification. The institution’s ceaseless rituals of assessment and exclusion are not evidence of strength but more like symptoms of its fragility: a haunted choreography that cannot escape the excesses it attempts to purge.

The parasite is always present within the space of the abject. It haunts the institution and the normalized curriculum with its failures, excesses, and disruptions, despite attempts to dispel them. Curriculum trembles under the weight of the parasitic organism it wishes to normalize, cast out, and discipline. It cannot fully erase dissent. Refusal becomes more frantic and elaborate. Seeking to preserve a future already slipping out of reach, abjection overflows the system's fragile boundaries. The parasite wreaks havoc on the system. When exorcism fails and legion still remains in its infinite multitudes, the parasite and abject can no longer be contained. We begin to glimpse curriculum at the ends of time, utterly unprepared for it, and realize that it is not an event or experience to transcend or move beyond, but a condition we have *always already* been living through.

A new kind of being comes into focus as we push towards a radically different existence. When a new self takes formation, we can no longer ignore what is forming on the horizons of thought and being. When the dust settles, moments begin to feel stretched and strange. Life pauses and reveals yet more fractures. Apocalyptic time emerges precisely in these moments not as some dramatic finale, but as a slow unfolding. A sense of the ordinary has shifted to something completely uncertain. In this next section, we can turn towards altered temporality that apocalypse can bring as it becomes the backdrop of new possibilities emerging.

Apocalyptic Time and the Politics of Ruins

Linearity has dominated our conceptions of time in the West and has often been seen as the modernist impetus towards mastery and order (Friedman, 2019). Now, time begins to fold back upon itself, fractured and littered with promises long dead. Apocalyptic time unmasks, revealing not the end but the moment when illusions of linearity and progress are shattered. What emerges from that spill is a different kind of history, a different kind of knowing, and a different kind of telling that splinters a self that is supposed to be stable and knowable. Every second quivers with revelation, but time feels suspended. The world appears to be continually collapsing into itself. Ruin does not follow catastrophe, but instead is the ongoing pulse that trembles in the present. Endings multiply, yet, impossibly, the world continues to turn.

In these ruins and amongst the wreckage, curriculum does not cease. Instead, it mutates, scavenges, and survives. No longer promised or a guarantee, the institution stumbles through a landscape of ruins, clutching at its broken rituals of learning, measurement, and standardization. Old performances fade away in the spaces haunted by unfulfilled promises. Curricular time once marched under the same kind of linearity that dominated modernist ontologies unfolding promises of mastery. Each lesson prepared grounds for the next and the shimmer of the future promised completion, success, and arrival. This is the kind of logic that has dictated our notions of educational possibilities.

But catastrophe unthreads and unfolds this fabric, an unfolding of the ends of history and time itself found in Christian and biblical texts (Volmering, 2019). Time begins to shatter into a debris that is unrecognizable. Recursive loops and stalled moments remake our ideas of time and rhythms of abandonment and deferred repair begin to dominate our perceptions. As education moves to the ticking clock of achievement, time finds itself out of joint. Broken chronologies arise and there are no more guarantees. Time dissipates along with its promise of everlasting life, saturated with the residues of what cannot be fulfilled. Apocalyptic time means to inhabit a slowing of time, surviving in the afterlife of modernity's grip on educational progress, what Stengers

(2015) called *refusal*: those, “who refuse what capitalism presents as rationalization and who seek to reclaim what it has destroyed” (p. 59). We no longer ascend through stages but become attuned to different ways of being in and with the world. Ruins break temporalities, no longer guaranteeing the future.

Curriculum is embroiled with disruptions of steady, linear driven, outcome-based education and semester schedules. Those in schools often find themselves caught within cycles of sudden policy changes, emergency interventions, and constant recalibrations. Week by week, outcome by outcome, expected progressions break down as new mandates, shifting priorities, or crisis-driven deadlines fragment rhythms of the academic year. Time begins to feel jagged, marked by interruptions and accelerations that displaces sequential progression. What counts as “progress” shifts and is untenable as a reachable concept or goal. Apocalyptic time bursts forth, replacing stable arcs of lesson planning with constant instability that demonstrates a different kind of world is possible. It allows a new kind of learning to be called forth, a politics of learning that rejects acceleration and mastery and points us towards a slowness that Stengers (2015) envisioned, one of attention and survival. To learn amidst the ruins means to resist the colonial tempos of progress (Hunfeld, 2022).

Apocalyptic time is not simply a stop or an ending of time itself. It becomes a slow unraveling of the assumptions that time moves forward at all. Its temporality is stasis and repetition, where the horizon of futurity points inward; each moment bears the sediment of deferred catastrophe. The annihilation fantasies of popular visions of disaster become a distant memory as apocalyptic time lingers, becomes drawn out, recursive, and marked by compounding ruins that remain unfulfilled. For curriculum theorists, apocalyptic time unsettles narratives of progress and development, exposing the assumption that knowledge advances humanity toward ever-greater fulfillment and completion. Learning becomes haunted practices, a sifting through fragments and a repetition of gestures that no longer have a temporal destination. Inside the hollowed shells of institutional lives, curriculum continues to operate, not realizing the rituals of its own destruction are being performed. Curriculum theorists continue to prepare for a future that can no longer possibly arrive.

In the wakes of these apocalyptic moments and within these kinds of temporal static, new kinds of epistemologies emerge. To know in and through the ruins is to practice acts of refusal, unwilling to meet the demands for mastery or completion as defined by dominant forms of curriculum. It remains fragmented, haunted, and resistant to any kind of assimilation or replication. The angel of history, that figure that haunted Walter Benjamin (1940), glimpsed these epistemologies of ruin. It saw back and forth, crossed time to see destruction in all its historical formations. Here, Benjamin is worth quoting at length.

His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (p. 5)

Propelled forward but facing backward, the angel of history witnesses a relentless accumulation of the wreckage. For curriculum theorists, ruin epistemologies become manifest as learning forgoes the promises of illustrious futures, but attends instead to the broken, forgotten, or the cast aside. We demand a slowing down, calling forth different kinds of social and pedagogical textures, and an openness to survival that emerges from different practices outside modernist notions of progress. We recognize that the institution itself is a site of ongoing ruin and that to know otherwise means inhabiting a brokenness without the illusion of repair.

Ruins are never neutral remains. In the slow violence of apocalyptic time, ruins are experienced differently. Some ruins are rendered visible, memorialized, remembered, and even romanticized, while others are buried, denied, or forgotten. The politics of ruins demands us to ask and reflect upon serious questions: Whose futures are mourned? Whose survivals are deemed possible? These kinds of questions force us to engage differently and agitate towards different possible futures still looming on the horizons. When we learn and commune with ruins it becomes a material encounter out of the realms of abstraction. Ruins demonstrate to us the pain of the past, such as histories of dispossession, systemic neglect, and racialized abandonment. Christina Sharpe (2016) reminds that to exist and live “in the wake” means to inhabit a temporality shaped by continuous forms and experiences of catastrophe. Survival itself becomes an act of lived resistance. Sharpe wants us to inhabit the wake of loss precisely because, “to mourn and to illustrate the ways our individual lives are always swept up in the wake” (p. 8). Sharpe demands we continually remember and recognize the horrors of the past, especially historical experiences like slavery. A curriculum of the ruins recognizes that apocalyptic time is unevenly distributed because for many, the end has already arrived again and again, stitched into the fabric of everyday life.

To exist within the space of ruins and to embody a different kind of curricular moment is to relinquish a fantasy of control. Classrooms or other spaces where pedagogical encounters may take place does not lend itself simply to transmission and recuperation. They become a space of attunement where attention is paid to breakdowns, silences, repetitions, and hauntings. We stay in the trouble of *Dangerous Pedagogies* (Giroux, 2012), intent on staying in the muck, the mire, and the catastrophe of apocalyptic time. Curriculum becomes a point of disintegration, challenging fragile collectivities amidst ongoing forms of endings. We become vulnerable to what remains. Apocalyptic time is a temporal disorientation that refuses curricular teleology that replaces them with curricular sediments. Stories do not always have resolutions and sometimes knowledge shows us the rot. We do not hope for modernist fantasies of progress or forward locomotion. We instead stay true to the fidelity of the ruins itself and we allow apocalyptic moments to become transgressive acts of radical hope. We want apocalyptic motifs to fester, to grow, and to materialize into other kinds of becomings.

Apocalypse leaves us with an aftermath, and I am still unsure at times how to tread. Curriculum becomes not a space for design but for residues that are unsettled, partial, and profoundly situated. It embraces the darkness and the uncertainty. It refuses to think in clean endings, that what usually remains is witnessing, grieving, and enduring (Zembylas, 2006). Despite these challenges, new ontological and epistemological formations will rise and inhabit the interstices of contemporary life. We listen for these echoes, of what was lost, and notice what begins to grow once again. Through these cracks life bursts forth, even with questions that linger with no immediate closure. This is a curriculum at the end of time that embraces apocalyptic realities. It is not a plan or a system but a haunting of realities from time long ago and still yet to come, hauntings that embrace the unknowability of the present even amongst the wreckage. What

kinds of life and what kinds of knowing are possible when we forgo a mapped out, replicable future that can no longer serve as the promise of silence within curriculum?

Abjection's edges reveal trembling boundaries of minor survival where our collective sense of self reckons with what cannot be fully expelled. If we crack, meaning becomes destabilized in those boundaries that form. We do not immediately reach for repair, but learn to exist and thrive within the fractures that will emerge. One begins to navigate a world where we rebuke the familiar for entirely new experiences and ways of being. Survival is no longer just the desirable outcome, but something more subtle materializes. We think and act outside of heroic endurance. What emerges is not repair but learning to live, and, dare say, thrive amid fractures. The radical imagination deeply embedded within each of us begins to see and navigate life worlds where the familiar and certainty fall away. We begin to set the stages for something smaller and more subtle, setting the stage for life in the minor key

A Curriculum of Minor Survival

When curriculum theorists strive to survive in the minor key (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986), we live and persist in the cracks. We embrace the strange once the grand narratives of modernity have burned out and curriculum studies follows without a triumph. Quiet, fractured, and improvised, we breathe amid the ruins in the minor key of life, refusing the becomings of, "lowering one's head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged" (p. 12). A minor life refuses the incessant call of the closure of apocalypse. Instead, we flicker, haunt, and endure within these margins. Survival is never simply an epic affair. Often it is barely visible, tucked within the folds of institutional fatigue and psychic exhaustion. Survival can limp, fester, and mutter under its breath; we cannot assume that "reality is equally distributed across the globe as if we are dealing with an objective world" (Baudrillard, 2010, p.74). It becomes a survival without sovereignty, a quiet persistence at the edges of decay. Curriculum takes on new forms of life. It contracts, flickers, and disguises itself in repetition and retreat. We do not seek some grand plan to rebuild the world but intend to survive, to scavenge, to remember, and to reconfigure into new life forms, "between steps on searing concrete, beneath the sterile office lights that hide nothing, rarely allowing a moment to breathe" (Chong & Nelson, 2022, p. 17). We do not want the logics of what once was and we do not seek a promise of arrival.

A curriculum of minor survival finds gravity in what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) called a "minor literature": how the minority constructs language within the context of the major (p. 16). The minor is always deeply political. "Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it" (p. 17). Minor does not indicate insignificance, but instead indicates an insurgent approach that can, and will, operate in the cracks of the major, or dominant, cultural and institutional formations. Through the minor, language strains, stutters, and escapes. Deleuze and Guattari specifically highlight Franz Kafka's characters trapped within bureaucratic nightmares and we can see the immediate relevance for educational scholarship as it takes on a "collective value" (p. 17). The glut of policy, standardization, and neoliberal time dominate life for the majoritarian. Jason Wallin (2010) argued that, "minoritarian lines...posit a belief in the future of the future, opening up a space for a people not yet seen, or a people in the process of becoming"

(p. 39). The minor becomes a strategy of subsistence amidst this bureaucratic glut. The minor may speak quietly, but it is intentional and dodges recuperative traps.

Minoritarian forms of resistance, art, or literature (creative practices writ large) hold multiple spaces for refusal without demanding an explanation. This might feel like an incomplete process but to exist within the cracks is to produce exactly what might feel incomplete. A syllabus that trails off into nowhere, a lesson that might dwell too much on mourning, a reading that wounds without resolution, the transformation of our body into that wolf that stalks the lamb. These processes are weird, bizarre, or stretch our understandings of what can possibly be. It might be the faculty member that no longer performs productivity but teaches through slowness, ritual, or fragmentation. It could be the student that drifts, bringing their own ghostly specters into spaces of learning. A minor curriculum unfolds in the margins of official outcomes through office hours that become vigils, assignments turned into altars, and shared silence that moves against standardization. Through a minority curriculum, there are no grand gestures of heroics.

Survival, however we choose to define it, comes with costs. Survival can be recuperated and co-opted too. It can be filtered through dominant forms of lenses, such as “resilience” or “productivity.” Institutional triumph is framed when the doors open for those within the cracks and the margins. But a minor curriculum wants to further expose these conditions of entanglement, offer refusal (even if symbolic) towards hegemonic realities, and offer a spectral presence of refusal when tasked by institutions to submit or comply. Minor survival is survival without the possibilities of redemption and without promises improvement will unfold. Persistence has no promise of reward because survival does not always offer moments of escape. We mark survival like a tattooed body, traces left in the voices of those of us in the cracks that disrupt the linearity of academic time. The minor thus remains a deviation, a necessary one, a persistence that is intimate with the realities of exhaustion, silence, and even disappearance. Curriculum theory, if it can or will reckon with destruction, must attend to the minor frequencies and listen deeply, especially when we have realized that education cannot look the same as it once was.

Conjunctures of Hauntings

Grossberg wrote of the “unstable and changing set of discursive formations and configurations of affective regimes” that, “mediate and articulate” ways of being in the world (p. 222). Escaping abstraction, curriculum theory is thought/imagined/practiced through similar conditions that Grossberg argued existed for cultural studies. Beyond this however, are the specters that continue to haunt educational theory and practices, specifically curriculum theory, a recognizable atmosphere for anyone that has spent time within educational institutions understand their systemic realities. Classes continue but something has definitely changed. Teaching and learning occur alongside that which cannot be fully acknowledged, circulating through a haunting that transcends mere metaphor. These are the conditions of a pedagogical life, experiences that materialize before theory attempts to understand or represent it.

Embracing a speculative and imaginative approach does not forgo the centrality of experience, but attempts to remain faithful to instability. Informed by scholarship that has challenged the metaphysics of presence, haunting exists at the fringes of experience, challenging what is not fully present nor fully gone. It becomes a temporal disturbance, one that exists within the ordinary rhythms of education. Dominant educational practices force outcomes, designs, rigidity, and measurement, even though educational realities often appear within the margins or

middle grounds of these types of dominant conceptions. This imaginative machine (Shukaitis, 2009) does not seek explanation but points towards a deep attunement to what may become possible when the disjunction between institutional and lived time open up new ways to think about, practice, and theorize new kinds of ways of understanding and engaging with life worlds. It is a joy that exists at the heart of radical practices (p. 145). Speculation is the methodological approach often deemed absurd and ridiculous precisely because they escape and exceed empirical forms of capture.

What is evoked in this imaginative speculation that runs like a current through this manuscript are ruins, abject bodies, and minor forms of survival. The point is not to form some kind of allegory that escapes a lived presence and experience within institutional realities, but instead as condensations of shared educational conditions, such as students navigating uncertainty, educators inhabiting exhaustion, and institutional life persisting beyond narratives of progress. The kinds of imagination conjured in this paper do not seek empirical verification of any kind. It is the serpent in the garden, the seeker at the crossroads, and the magician in the temple conjuring from the void. What emerges through that gate is the imagination summoned through theoretical fragments serving as echoes of lived experiences.

No After, Only Echoes

There is no after that finally emerges. The end refuses to deliver clarity or any type of closure. The only thing that remains in the silence of a future yet-to-come are echoes, fragments of thoughts, gestures, and hauntings that refuse to be buried. Curriculum lingers in this haunted space and cannot take a coherent form. It reverberates of what once mattered, in the spaces of abjection and minor forms of survival. We are left with no sort of clear answer, only with an atmosphere that hums above the ruins. It remains unresolved and unfinished. When we theorize and create at the end of time, we speak into a chamber of echoes, knowing what may return can be potentially distorted, partial, or even lost. Even despite this reality, something answers. Students breathe. Teachers theorize and create. Rituals repeat. The forms of silence in the margins gather new kinds of meaning. We teach and produce in the tremors.

As critical scholars connected to life worlds, our temptation will always be to respond. We want to try to repair, to reframe, to propose new architectures in the aftermaths. Perhaps, however, the task has shifted. Maybe curriculum theory must remain in the wreckage, in the ruins, and in the echoes of the angels of history. Instead of rebuilding, we instead choose to remain, tracing the contours of what has been systematically undone. Perhaps we listen to the faint curricular vibrations that continue to persist, the voices that emerge under the ruins and the wreckage. This is not a call for silence, but a call to slow down where we are more attuned to the residues of apocalyptic realities, where we attend to grief, interruption, and the minor keys of survival. We resist systemization and we let the ghosts continue to haunt us. Theorizing becomes an act of refusal, negating a grammar of positive futurity and actually addressing the temporality of aftermath. The smallest gesture—a pause, a look, or fragment—carry a new sense of urgency and a weight of new kind of worlds forming in the horizons and the borders of thought.

Perhaps we take a new strategy and we let it end without an ending. We let it fall apart and fall through the cracks. This is not failure, but a fidelity to the world as it is. We accept the fracturing, the unpromising, and the still murmuring. We do not need new futures, only an honest attentiveness to the lives that endure without them. The echoes that remain do not herald

redemption; they call us instead to a radical curriculum of relation. What we seek is not recovery, but recognition. Let this be our work now, to remain in the tremble, to speak as the world continues to unravel. We teach and we create in the tones of perpetual questions. If what remains are echoes, they refuse to disappear. Our curricular imaginations linger and ache and we survive in pieces in the wakes of apocalyptic imagination.

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