Curricular Hauntings
Confrontations with Ghosts in Pursuit of a Place of Freedom

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Catch if you can your country's moment, begin
where any calendar's ripped off: Appomattox
Wounded Knee, Los Alamos, Selma, the last airlift from Saigon
the ex-Army nurse hitch-hiking from the debriefing center; medal
of spit on the veteran's shoulder
–catch if you can this unbound land these states without a cause
earth of despoiled graves and grazing these embittered brooks
these pilgrim ants pouring out from the bronze eyes, ears,
nostrils,
the mouth of Liberty
over the chained bay waters
San Quentin:
once we lost our way and drove in under the searchlights to the
gates
end of visiting hours, women piling into cars
the bleak glare aching over all

(Rich, 1991, p. 12)[1]

IN *AN ATLAS OF THE DIFFICULT WORLD*, poet Adrienne Rich toggled between scenes of struggle and survival to craft a shared poetic cartography of wounded, ongoing history. In this work, the past pierces the present, entangling freedom and detention, memory and forgetting. Language and imagery scratch at possibilities for freedom—the desire to connect across difference—the historical failures, or refusals, to do so. Driving the Bay Bridge from Oakland to San Francisco, the speaker is haunted by the ghosts of the dead—Chinese immigrants stashed and silenced at Angel Island, and the ghosts of the living—the incarcerated men sequestered across the bay at San Quentin State Prison. The speaker asks:

> Where are we moored? What are the bindings? What behooves us? (Rich, 1991, p. 12)

And: What do we do with our ghosts? How are we bound–and what is made possible–when we are haunted by the histories we have inherited? What are our investments in histories, in institutions, in hierarchies, in the oppressions of ourselves and others? And again—what do we do with them?

In this paper, I will produce two case studies of curricular hauntings and suggest attention to affect as a methodological possibility for the "something-to-be-done" haunting demands (Gordon, 1997, p. xvi). Drawing from racial and historical hauntings (Derrida, 1994; Gordon, 1997), affect studies (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Stewart, 2007), agential assemblages (Barad, 2007; Wozolek, 2021), and the literary ghost of Toni Morrison's (1987) novel, *Beloved*, I will theorize possibilities for collectivities and solidarities in education through attention to the embodied, enfleshed shadows—the specters—lingering at the edges of curricular sites. After providing some background in what Derrida (1994) called *hauntology* and a brief discussion of how theories of haunting have been taken up in educational discourse, I will move to describing and adjudicating three sites of ghostly curricula: the gentrifying neighborhood where I live, the teacher body I have inhabited, and two poems that offer scenes of managing what (and who) is haunted.

Specters, Hauntings, Ghosts, Materialism

In the opening of his *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (1994) described *Hamlet* as a haunted play. "Everything begins by the apparition of a specter," he wrote. "More precisely by the *waiting* for this apparition" (p. 2). When I taught narrative structure in middle school classes, we called this the *inciting event*—the event that lures the protagonist out of their ordinary world and into the conflict and, thus, the action that will shape the story. When I moved to teaching high school, I taught Toni Morrison's (1987) *Beloved*, a novel that imagines the interior lives (Morrison, 1995) of enslaved and formerly enslaved people right before and after Emancipation. The novel tells us that this is "not a story to pass on" (p. 275), a line that troubles narrative redemption at the same time it demands narrative (re)tellings; my students delighted in the dual suggestion of not "passing on" a story. Events in *Beloved* are taken up from Morrison's introduction to a version of Margaret Garner—a woman who killed her child rather than see her being taken back to slavery—as reported in an Ohio newspaper in 1856. The novel opens on Sethe, who fled from enslavement in Kentucky to relative freedom in Ohio 18 years prior, and her sudden reunion with Paul D, who reappears in her life for the first time since they were both at the Sweet Home Plantation. The novel doesn't introduce its ghost until Chapter 5, but when she arrives, she is fully dressed, dripping wet, and "mighty thirsty" (p. 51). She is sexual, enfleshed, "shining" (p. 64) in a way that is both disturbing and alluring—dislocating Paul D's desire from Sethe to what we must know is her back-from-the-dead daughter. The arrival of the ghosts, in this text, do not just propel narratives to move forward; they implicate all actors in a swirling, indeterminate, disarming network of past/present/future.

My high school students always wanted to know: Is the ghost *real*? We would debate this topic, but one side always won. Yes, the ghost is real. Not only does she throw chairs and plates, she demands—she speaks. She touches; she pouts; she flirts. She eats and eats and eats. She has

sex. She is touched, by Sethe, by Paul D, by her sister, Denver. She is loved, in every possible way. And yet she is a haunting presence who scrambles not just attachment and connection, but place and history and time, responsibility to the other and to ghosts. Once it is clear that the ghost is Sethe's murdered daughter, returned, her voice in the text is merged with Sethe's, and with the trans-Atlantic journey of Sethe's kidnapped grandmother: "I am Beloved and she is mine… I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop… there will never be a time when I am not crouching… I am always crouching." (Morrison, 1987, p. 210)

Theorizing this temporal wrinkling as a *haunting*, rather than a *trauma*, produces a "something-to-be-done," wrote Avery Gordon (1997, p. xvi). This "something-to-be-done" is a methodological question, and Gordon's work suggests a method of confronting ghosts, to ask what is out of place, what "time is out of joint" (Derrida, 1994, p. 21). This confrontation is always a political project because it requires us not just to understand but to *be with* ghosts, to return their gazes, to see haunting as "one way in which abuses of power make themselves known" (Gordon, 1997, p. xvi). This confrontation also forces, as I will argue, an examination and uncovery of our own attachments to the ghosts and to the abuses of power that produce them.

Curricular Hauntings

Teachers, students, and schools are haunted by "Ghosts of Curriculum Past" who "rattle the foundations of current curriculum policy" (Kenway, 2008, p. 5). These ghosts, Kenway has written, are the forgotten figures of teachers as trustworthy, teachers as knowledgeable, teachers as experts. But those ghosts must then also be haunted, by histories of a profession shaped by gendered, classed, and raced constriction and coercion, promises of freedom for women from family duties or unsavory home lives (Apple, 1986; Grumet, 1988), violent responses to Black teachers and schools dating from enslavement to the ongoing historical present. Haunted, too, are our "socially marginalized children … so readily turned into ghosts" by dehumanizing policies and practices of contemporary schooling (Regenspan, 2014, p. 24).

Snaza (2014) has examined the rhetoric of "haunting" in curriculum studies in works by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman and argued that this rhetoric emerges in moments "where the pressure of globalization upsets the disciplinary assumptions of the field" (p. 1). Maxine Greene (1985) has also written, in her essay, "Jeremiad and Curriculum: The Haunting of the Secondary School," that American ideology and public policy has "deliberately nurtured" "a sense of crisis … along with a sense of broken promises" (p. 333). Greene traced educational reforms in the second half of the 20th century as a project of nationalism and militarism, of deploying educational spaces "to defend America, to remind the world of the Dream" (p. 338). This Dream is what Baldwin (Baldwin & Buckley, 1965) and Coates (2015) would call the dream of white innocence, the dream that has built America, the dream from which whiteness has still not awakened. The Dream that Greene describes is what abolitionist geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2022) called "American racialized political culture," a culture "dependent on a perpetual enemy who must always be fought but can never be vanquished" (p. 176). Education as national defense—defense of borders and defense of the Dream—is thus not just a metaphorical dream (or a nightmare), but a material haunting, the shadow that throws the blinding project of whiteness as a national investment into visible relief.

These works from the 1980s—Greene's, Apple's, and Grumet's—are critical today because they speak to what Benjamin (1968/2019) would have called today's "moments of

danger," which yield "flashes of memory" to be recognized, held, seized (p. 198). What was dangerous to Benjamin was not just past events themselves, but the use of memory "as a tool of the ruling classes" (p. 199). This is why I find Gordon's (1997) conception of haunting useful: instead of focusing on the haunted as an individual victim, or memories dislocated in time, Gordon found that haunting "mediates between institution and person, creating the possibility of making a life" and refusing the understanding as simple cause and effect, what Benjamin would have called "beads on a rosary" (Benjamin, 1968/2019, p. 208). Attending to this mediation allows me to watch, and to address, the ghosts that accompany me in my own messy, complicated, and confusing navigation between my work in classrooms, the institutions that govern that work, and my multidirectional attachments to history, to place, and to text.

Globalization and its pressure do not just threaten education by disrupting bounded disciplines of knowledge. Through neoliberal expansion (Harvey, 2005) and its attendant rhetoric, globalization displaces concerns for accountability in schools from students to districts and state powers. Gordon (1997) has argued that accountability is a key concern of *Beloved*, as the novel asks readers to confront its central questions: "How can I be accountable to people who seemingly have not counted in the historical and public record?" (p. 187), and also, "How are we accountable for the people who do the counting?" (p. 188). These two questions ask educators and education scholars to consider the multidirectional and affectively saturated accountabilities, responsibilities, responses, and resonances that structure our orientation to teaching and learning, and that structure us, as well.

In other words, to call back to Adrienne Rich: Where are we moored?

Haunted Geography

Driving the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge
no monument's in sight but fog
prowling Angel Island muffling Alcatraz
poems in Cantonese inscribing on fog
…
poems on a weary wall
And when light swivels off Angel Island and Alcatraz
when the bay leaps into life
views of the Palace of Fine Arts,
TransAmerica
when sunset bathes the three bridges
still
old ghosts crouch hoarsely whispering
under Gold Mountain

(Rich, 1991, pp. 12–13)

I drove the bridges in this poem for years: the Bay Bridge, from my apartment in Oakland west to the glittering city center of queer life, San Francisco. I watched these cities change, sprout yoga studios and coffee shops, drive up rent, drive out growing encampments of tents and sleeping bags huddled under CalTrans overpasses. On Tuesdays, I drove north across the Richmond Bridge to teach writing to men incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison, gray and horrible above the

glittering bay waters. And with my high school students, I went to Angel Island, the detention center that housed thousands of Chinese immigrants barred from entering California by the 1881 Chinese Exclusion Act. There men and women carved homesick, defiant, insistent poems into the rock of their cells. Writing and landscape, prison, detention, the shadows of freedom—these things haunted me, drew me close, demanded confrontation with so many ghosts. Beneath the barbed wire walls of the prison yard, I felt the ghosts of my family's detention in Auschwitz; between the lined pages my students handed to me, I read my attachments to systems of oppression, to writing as discipline, as disciplining.

Following Helfenbein's (2021) work on the *spaciocurricular*, in this section I focus on the haunted spaciocurricular site of the neighborhood where I live in Southwest Atlanta. Helfenbein established the spaciocurricular as "the consideration of *what is taught where*" (p. 35) and an analytical mode that allows scholars to examine how "spaces and places … are ontological processes filled with living politics that shape who we are as subjects" (p. 7). I will argue that attending to the ghosts of this space—the displaced, foreclosed, and shut out, as well as the material histories that have shaped the racial aspects of this neighborhood's gentrification—can help us identify critical impasses (Berlant, 2011) and shape what Guyette and Flint (2021) call "a methodology for slowing down" (p. 641) and attending to what is alive in the emerging processes of a political and economic scene.

In 2020, I moved to Atlanta. My partner and I, who are both white and queer/lesbian, bought a house in a neighborhood called Adair Park, in the city's southwestern edge. In the 1920s, this neighborhood, like others on the west side, was zoned for segregated Black life (Bayor, 1996). The creation of the western part of the Atlanta BeltLine, an ongoing redevelopment project that aims to transform unused railway lines throughout the city into pedestrian and cycling footpaths, raised home prices in Atlanta's historically Black communities by 10.6% between 2019 and 2020 alone (Pendered, 2021), with housing values increasing by 58.8% for parcels located within a half-mile of the BeltLine (Raymond et al., 2015). In addition to foreclosure and displacement for legacy Black residents, the BeltLine project provides a "new model of governance aimed at solving urban 'problems' of various sorts," which often concern "the perceived quality of life as it affects desirable new residents, especially those with more disposable income and spending power" (Immergluck, 2009, p. 1724), like my partner and me.

While the numbers I have mentioned above provide a sense of some of gentrification's impacts on displacement, Leslie Kern (2022) has pointed out that quantitative measurements like these miss the "multi-layered, multi-temporal, and relational" (p. 104) aspects of gentrification as a process that "includes the affective, everyday, banal, and interpersonal experiences that accumulate over days, months, years" (p. 108). Kern has called for interdisciplinary approaches that are "attentive to the emotional, psychological, embodied, material, relational, and even intergenerational elements of displacement" (p. 109). The approach I take here—an examination of gentrification as a haunted spaciocurricular process "in which abuses of power make themselves known" (Gordon, 1997, p. xvi)—attempts to explore what echoes (Massumi, 2002) between shifting and insatiable relations to power, place, and memory.

While "gentrification as an economic process is never divorced from culture" (Kern, 2022, p. 69) and from cultural markers that are raced and classed, gentrification is also a story about globalization, neoliberalism, state, local, and corporate actors. It is a story about gender, race, class, sexual identities, and the ways in which all of these points are always in relation to each other through capital, cartographies, and discourses of home and belonging. In a post-industrial city like Atlanta, legacy Black residents either hold fast to their homes, watching new moneyed neighbors

move in, or they are sidelined and displaced. Blue collar workers, laboring in the dark to clean gleaming offices, in cramped drive throughs, in smoky gas stations, form the "shadow city of service work" (Kern, 2022, p. 59). Derrida (1994) wrote that haunting is "a habitation without proper inhabiting" of time, place, and language (p. 20), that to be haunted is to exist both without time and outside of it, in a time and place that is "out of joint." It's the liminal experience of being here without being here, of being overlooked, forgotten, mapped over, moved in on. I think about an interview my mentor conducted with a school worker in this neighborhood. He said,

> To witness your neighborhood failing around you and then what looks like, from the outside looking in, now that white people are moving into our neighborhood, it's getting fixed up, and we're getting access to all these cool things … like the BeltLine, but the kids don't think that's for them, and I don't know that they're wrong.

"From the outside looking in." To find yourself a ghostly presence, a shadow, a flash in a moment of crisis—this is what it is to be haunted by history, by place, by dangerous maps (Helfenbein, 2021). The 1950s saw the building of I-20 as a cartographic and material boundary between white and Black life (Bayor, 1996); the 2020s have seen breweries and condos do the same. And the ghosts remain.

A few weeks ago, on a muggy August afternoon, I was walking my dog around the park just a block or so from my house. I passed by several people who had pulled their cars up alongside the park's edge, their heads bent over their phones. We all said hi to each other; I think people come to use the park's WiFi on their lunch breaks. I passed around the playground, which is slated to be updated soon and past a set of fuchsia rose bushes, wilting in the heat. As I looped toward the other side of the park, a young Black man and a young woman got out of their car and made their way to a metal bench, one that overlooked the park from an elevated, hilly vantage point. The woman lit up a joint and looked outward, toward the expanse of close-cropped grass and the newly planted rain garden just below. As I passed them, the man called out to me:

"Do they still have basketball hoops here?"

I said I wasn't sure. I didn't think so. I don't remember seeing any.

We spoke across some distance, and it was difficult for me to see his face. I felt my own harden uncomfortably, and I labored to soften it, to lean into an opening between us. What was alive in this exchange? What sparks, flickers, glows, and possibilities? I felt the opportunities pulsing open and shut in the breaths and pauses of our conversation across the grass.

"I used to stay over here; I haven't been back for a while. They used to have basketball hoops," he told me. "They took them out because they thought there were too many Black people over here. I haven't been back in so long. They never used to cut the grass like this."

"I bet you're right," I said. The woman on the bench next to him looked away.

I said goodbye and take care, and I turned to finish my walk, away from their bench and toward the basketball court in question. I saw that the court had been freshly painted with a bright design of flowers and suns; I saw that the hoops were there.

"Hey!" I called. "There are hoops here!" I couldn't tell if he had heard me or if it mattered. I was embarrassed by my gesture, by the landscape that made it possible—the mowed lawn, the painted court. You are welcome here, in your home. It will just be on my terms. Isn't it nice like this?

What does gentrification teach? That those who have lived here before, the returning *revenants,* are rendered ghostly, that haunting is a violence that merges past, present, and future

by collapsing temporal bounds and providing material reminders that history is not over. These ghosts are not metaphorical; they are material and affective. They actively shape our imbrication with the worlds we have inherited. The haunted spaciocurriculum of gentrification teaches who and what cities are for, who and what gets to enjoy progress, to decide what progress is, to imagine themselves as outside of history.

Gentrification as a curriculum also teaches how to look out for ways communities and individuals imagine and take part in resistance—how people navigate the experience of living among the spatiotemporal impasse of gentrification as an agential process of its own. Kern (2022) has described seven ways communities resist gentrification, including by taking control, making policy, getting creative, being disruptive, coming together, drawing from the past, and creating alternatives. In Atlanta, activists have organized and occupied 300 acres of forest to stymie city plans to use the land for police tactical training and to house a major production company (Defend the Atlanta Forest, 2022). Others have organized mutual aid projects to deliver free groceries to low-income residents during and after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (Atlanta Survival Program, 2022). Both of these projects explicitly name housing, displacement, and gentrification as part of what necessitates collective movement.

Alternatively/additionally, there are some methods and modes of (Black) resistance that are not accounted for within mainstream discourses and/or that would not be visible to me, a white woman. Reflecting on my interaction with the young man and the park, and his quiet companion, I wonder about how he or she or both of them resist racial and spatial domination in ongoing ways, maybe even within the exchange I described above—even as those systems of domination conceal, as Katherine McKittrick (2006) has written, "sites of resistance, geographies of human pain or love, locations of subversion, the place of the Black everyday, or diasporic geographies" (p. 13). I wonder about the ways my own investments in these systems of domination render these modes of resistance invisible to me and how my own participation in them tears at the possibilities for solidarity I have sought by participating in some of the activities I described above.

The way gentrification is narrativized also matters, as Kern (2022) has written. A story about gentrification that frames it as unstoppable and places human actors as pawns in the grip of an inevitable process "only serves the powerful" (p. 174). Following Rosiek (2018), if gentrification, like racism, is "a being in motion" then documenting and responding to that movement "will require a mode of representation that unfolds in time" (p. 15), i.e., narrative methodologies. But narrative, with its beginning-middle-end structure and distinguishable actors and settings, might miss the ways responsibility, agency, place, and time are often indeterminate, difficult to separate, co-constituted. Below, I will explore how poetic methodologies might offer a way to examine how, when, and where actors are bound up together in the spaciocurriculum of gentrification.

Something-to-be-done: Cartographies of Affect and Entanglement

Quantum theories of entanglement (Barad, 2007), of touch (Barad, 2015), and of affect (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011; Stewart, 2007) invite us to reconsider ourselves and our bodies, not as individually bounded entities, but as co-constituted and always-emerging uncertainties within agential assemblages. Theories of affect refer to "those intensities that pass from body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), and in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 1). Affect can

be thought of as "potential: a body's *capacity* to affect and be affected" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 2). Attending to affect also helps us think about not just what we feel—because affect refers to the embodied, in-process experiences before they are captured by naming. This focus on process and emergence can help educators and curriculum scholars to address our students, ourselves, our classrooms, our subject matter, our texts "not as things already laid out on the table, the only task being to represent and evaluate them, but with an eye to their hardenings into something recognizable, their ironclad investments, or slippages, or failures to endure" (Stewart, 2021, p. 33).

Affect is a useful theoretical and methodological approach because it helps us sense how we connect to students and how we fail them and how we are always entangled in a process of being and becoming, taking shape and shaping within/against/among a swirling galaxy of concerns, demands, allegiances, and curricular projects. Haunting, I argue, is about an affective entanglement with embodied traces; to be haunted is to feel and know history's sticky residue on the present. Acknowledging this entanglement is what Flint (2018) called "the event of remembering, of being moved to remember" (p. 15). To be haunted is to be forced to confront and recognize our attachments in relation to one another—including attachments to assemblages of violence (Wozolek, 2021)—and to notice how we manage those attachments in search of understandings of what Patti Lather (2016) called the "intra-active, webbed and networked … messy and fluid objects of the world" (p. 22).

Ghostly Bodies

What are the bindings?

Moving through cartographies of scale, I will here discuss the second site of a haunted curriculum: the teacher body/my teacher body as I have come to know it, that is, shaped, blurred, and unbounded within a network of friends, colleagues, and comrades. Again borrowing from Helfenbein's (2021) *Critical Geographies of Education*, I think about these bodies (my body) as an element of curricular geography because of the way they have been "mapped, bordered, defined … even erased" (p. 7). As Katherine McKittrick (2006) has written, "geography is always human and … humanness is always geographic—blood, bones, hands, lips, wrists, this is your land, your planet, your road, your sea" (p. ix). Our/my teacher body is and has been managed—by neoliberal efficiency models, by "data-driven" accountability measures, by the demands of the clock and the bell and the hallway. This body also *manages* the movement and sound of children, the language, how and what they read and write, and to what ends. This body (my teacher body) is haunted by histories of managing and being managed that are racialized, gendered, and classed.

In *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*, Madeline Grumet (1988) examined "the study of curriculum as gender text" (p. 34) and American schooling as an institution that reifies gender and class hegemony through the apparatus of the state. After describing schools as a site for women to escape domestic life and responsibility and to claim financial and social independence at the onset of early 20th-century industrialization, Grumet wrote that "the overwhelming presence of women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know are still present in the culture of schooling" (p. 45). As a woman teacher, I contend that the gendered and embodied battle for epistemological agency has been at the heart of women in schools—but also that this battle is imbricated and deployed within a field where white supremacy and class antagonisms are always already in play.

In *Beloved*, Sethe is caught in what she calls her rememory, which Avery Gordon (1997) has described as referring to memory that is not personal or individual, but "prepared in advance," lingering "beyond our individual time, creating the shadowy basis for the production of material life" (p. 166). One of Sethe's rememories concerns Schoolteacher, the instructor brought to the Sweet Home Plantation to instruct the white sons of her enslavers. In a horrifying moment, Sethe realizes that the ink she has been preparing for Schoolteacher's use has been used to teach these children to describe—following Gilmore (2022), to thus produce (p. 109)—the human vs. animal characteristics of Sethe's being. This brutal action of textual violence, with its attendant material consequences, is what explodes Sethe's decision to flee Sweet Home and to cross the Kentucky River north into Ohio.

"A geographical imperative lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice," Gilmore (2022) wrote. "If justice is embodied, it is then therefore always spatial, which is to say, part of a process of making a place" (p. 137). Sethe's plot-moving act of resilience here is to refuse the way her body is rhetorically and materially managed, invaded, overdetermined, and violated, and to make a place for herself in freedom by crossing that river. When Schoolteacher and his posse arrive in that place—chasing her North to bring her home—Sethe kills her infant daughter rather than send her back to Sweet Home. The return of her daughter, who is known only as Beloved (named for the partial phrase carved on her tombstone) offers another rhizomatic geography—her emergence from the river calling up her own mother's crossing, her crossing from the birth canal, from the River Styx, from the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993). The multiplicity of this crossing is spatial and embodied. History is here with her. Her skin is still wet from the crossing.

In the classroom at Sweet Home, Schoolteacher controls the means of material and intellectual production, and of meaning-making through language and text. Schools, and *writing* as a production of schooling, belong to violent histories of geography and American racial production. This production is an assemblage of education as a nation-building project, which Michael Apple (1986) argued must be articulated and critiqued through analyses of gender and class; critically, Zeus Leonardo (2013) tied educational standardization as a project of nationalizing whiteness. The move to control what is learned in schools, and the demand for disciplined bodies, spaces, and time, is couched in what Apple (1986) called the state-produced crises in education, what Maxine Greene (1985) described as "the link between education and the American mission … now formulated in terms of efficiency and functional specialization … to be achieved by means of scientific management" (p. 336).

This management is also achieved by ever-multiplying calls for accountability—to families and communities (borrowing from corporate worlds, these are called "stakeholders"), to administrators, to districts, to states and courts. Drawing on the scene of Sethe's rememory of Schoolteacher, Avery Gordon (1997) has commented that "Morrison's call for accountability suggests that it is our responsibility to recognize just where we are in the story, even if we do not want to be there" (p. 188). Where am I in this story? Neoliberal structures and histories are not "world-homogenizing sovereign[s]" (Berlant, 2011, p. 15); there is more at play on the scene of the teacher's body—agency, attachment, desire, history.

As Erica Warren and I (2022) have written:

> The weight of accountability bears down on the body. If we are considering the scattered accountabilities—to students, communities, and the bureaucracies in which we work—we must consider how and when teachers will account to themselves and to the affective

> curricula. Our bodies are pedagogical sites that teach us and our students to examine our attachments and to imagine new orientations toward liberation. (n.p.)

Educators and educational researchers need to encounter the ways in which we are born of these histories, just as we are haunted by them. The ghosts that force this encounter demand an engagement with the affective glows and flickers, the echoes and resonances, the "rhythm, relay, arrival[s] and departure[s]" in "relations of motion and rest: *affect*" (Massumi, 2002, p. 20).

Attending to affect can visibilize an attachment to power that emerges at the expense of another. Here I am thinking about those of us who can claim benefits from structural violence—including teachers, scholars, policy writers, city planners, those of us who are white, those of us who have access to capital and choice and movement. Zembylas (2020) draws from Foucault (1983) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to comment on "the fascist tendencies that exist within all members of society, that is, all of us … the yearning that all of us have to want others to conform to our own rules and beliefs" (p. 2). Desire, itself socially produced, is more central than ideology in our attachments to control and to domination, Zembylas (2020) argued. To unmake fascisms, educators must identify the ways in which desire for control, repression, and order is mobilized and to bring these desires out of the shadows and into the light. As Warren and I have written (Warren & Edber, 2022), as female and/or queer and/or Black teachers, our desires for control are complicated by the ways in which we have been socialized to please authority, the ways in which we have been conditioned to be valued and valuable, and the ways in which our own bodily control has been curtailed by socially, politically, and geographically gendered governance.

Teacher bodies are shaped by the ghosts of educational and curricular inheritance and by our bodily orientation to networks of care and connection to young people. I remember the sweat that sprouted from beneath my arms when my seventh-grade students were "out of control" during an intense classroom observation from my principal, the creep of anxiety when I raised my voice and felt the relational openings between us slam shut. The grim tension of testing season, the delight of catching a joke launched through the air in a moment of connection. I feel these memories on my body, in my dreams. The moment during my first year when two students went through my desk, found my stash of pencils, and broke each and every one; the fury I felt between my eyes and the shaking in my hands as I worked to steady myself to address these children. Why was I so angry? Whose learning was interrupted? Whose time was taken up? Whose property?

I remember another moment, in another school, when a conversation I led with students buzzed with excitement and possibility, the silences not awkward and stiff but full of potential. The feeling in the room, the red and white floor tiles gleaming, the window letting in the smeary light of the Bay Area's early afternoon. My apprehension as I approached the security desk at San Quentin State Prison, handed over my ID to be cleared to teach my evening class, the orchestration of control and surveillance in this pedagogical space heightened to the extreme. The way my students spoke to me, with care and kindness, as they walked with me across the twilight of the darkening prison yard. "Get home safe," they'd say. And that word stayed with me, stuck with me, as I got back in my car and drove home. Whose safety? Safe for whom?

As a teacher who is committed to countering school as a controlling apparatus, an examination of my own investments and entanglements with racist state control elicits discomfort, embarrassment, even shame. Yet these affective flickers can be instructive. Zembylas (2021) called them *pedagogies of shame* and argued that attending to this shame, and making space to witness it, can create "a point of departure for a new level of ethical responsibility and political community" in schools (p. 62).

Poetic Possibilities

What behooves us?

Finally, I turn to poetry as a genre site that might help educators and education scholars wrestle with ghosts by putting us "in touch with the possibilities for sensing the insensible, the indeterminate" (Barad, 2012, p. 216) and for imagining freedoms to come.

In classrooms—spaciocurricular sites overdetermined by racialized geographic processes—these fatal couplings multiply through the work of controlling bodies *and* by controlling texts. As a former English teacher, I think about Schoolteacher's scene in *Beloved*, and I also think about the project of literary analysis as described by Common Core State Standards: Determine the meaning. Determine a theme. Analyze the author's choices for plot, characterization, and setting (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). These standards suggest that meaning is fixed within text, hidden between the lines, available to be uncovered by finding clues about the author's intention, to evidence. A turn to poetry—in particular to work that entangles space, bodies, time, history, and language—offers a generative literary destabilization of meaning, matter, and self. In making this turn, I am taking up posthuman and new materialist interests in poetic analysis and methods (Cannon, 2018; Cibils, 2019; Guyette & Flint, 2021; Shelton & Flint, 2021). Barad (2012) described her own increasing interest in poetics for "being in touch with the infinite in/determinacy at the heart of the matter" to "open up the possibility of hearing the murmurings, the muted cries, the speaking silence of justice-to-come." (p. 216). Poetic readings move us from textual work that pokes at the shadows of meaning and intention and opens ways of noticing flickering, fleeting, freeing ways of being. Here I argue that poetic readings offer a way to force encounters with ghosts as they are co-constituted within and among historical, spatial, and embodied points in an ever-emerging field. Examining poetry in our haunted present is, thus, not just dreamy. It is materially urgent.

Throughout this essay, I have used Adrienne Rich's (1991) *An Atlas of the Difficult World* to engage with the elusive, unstable, unmanageable work of examining the emerging self as it is networked within coconstituted haunted cartographies. I would like to offer a second poetic scene: an excerpt from Ocean Vuong's (2016) volume, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. This volume engages with the author's experience as a Vietnamese refugee, the specter of his missing father, and the emergence of his queer life. In his poem, titled, "Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong," the speaker's body, his memory, his family, and his movement through space are interdependently figured, each woven through the other in a way that refuses boundedness, singularity, or stability. The poem opens:

> Ocean, don't be afraid.
> The end of the road is so far ahead
> it is already behind us.
> Don't worry. Your father is only your father
> until one of you forgets. … Ocean,
> are you listening? The most beautiful part
> of your body is wherever
> your mother's shadow falls.
> Here's the house with childhood
> whittled down to a single red trip wire.
> Don't worry. Just call it *horizon*

> & you'll never reach it.
> …
> Ocean. Ocean—
> get up. The most beautiful part of your body
> is where it's headed… (Vuong, 2016, p. 82)

Cities, memories, bodies, shadows—all of these are neither collected nor reconciled, but rather float and flicker, meaningful for their connectedness, the way one point momentarily sticks to another in the poem's field, before joining and sparking with another.

Consider this poem as a genre site for examining affective buzzings and resonances (Gershon, 2020; Stornaiuolo & Hall, 2014) within a haunted landscape. First, the poem opens by the speaker's address of himself, using a name for both a person (himself) and calling up a place that suggests not just any ocean, but the one crossed by his parents as they fled post-war Vietnam. "Don't be afraid," the speaker invokes to himself (himself, the ocean), before collapsing time, place, body, and memory along with inheritance: "Your father is only your father/until one of you forgets." What does this forgetting do for the speaker? For us? Here, the connection between father and child is only a whisper on the page, a shadow self traveling from one place to the next (Tolentino, 2019).

Next, the house: "with childhood/whittled down to a single red trip wire." The house is a place and a time, a threat, where technologies of war and memory fuse into what is always already a challenge to survival, a life. Whose memory? Whose war? The mother's shadow *is* the speaker's/audience's body—the most beautiful part. And this most beautiful part, in the next stanza, is headed in an unnamed direction—gesturing toward a future orientation, leaning forward and at the same time, like Benjamin's angel, remembering back. This poem shifts an orientation to the ghost by allowing the speaker and reader to *touch* the ghost, to *be with* the ghost, to *be* the ghost.

Vuong said that, in his life, speaking to his father felt like speaking to a ghost. But within this poem, "I speak to my own shadow … these three characters that are built on mythologies and unbounded by the physical world became fluid to one another" (quoted in Winter, 2016, para. 14). The ghost is inscribed on our bodies, made visible—fleetingly—through our bodies' work in spaces. We are what haunts us. To know that is to know freedom—from fear of ghosts, from fear of the stranger, from fear of the work to come to claim this ethical way of being within history.

I offer these poems as a site for helping readers and scholars to identify where we are haunted and where we haunt and to locate our own agency as we manage haunted scenes. I draw from Lauren Berlant's (2011) work on analysis that

> moves us away from the dialectic of structure (what is systemic in the reproduction of the world), agency (what people do in everyday life), and the traumatic event of their disruption, and toward explaining crisis-shaped subjectivity amid the ongoingness of adjudication, adaptation, and improvisation. (p. 54)

Work from poets like Rich (1991) and Vuong (2016) engage a self/human subject as embedded in historical processes, structures, memories, and geographies, not to erase the human subject's agency, but to speak to the agential assemblage (Barad, 2007) co-constitutively shaped by human and non-human actors. These poems

> specify how the activity of affective attachment can be located formally in a historical, cultural, and political field in ways that clarify the process of knotty tethering to objects, scenes, and modes of life that generate so much overwhelming yet sustaining negation. (Berlant, 2011, pp. 51–52)

If readers can see/feel/experience how, where, when, and to what we are bound, to what we are "moored," we can continue the ongoing work of navigating and organizing within agential networks with an emergent strategy (brown, 2017) that responds to the demands of an assemblage that shapes and is shaped by human actors.

Rosiek (2018) argued for an orientation toward racism as a "constantly moving target" that merges and re-emerges "in and through various substances," including "individual attitudes, economic materiality, formal and informal institutional practices, cultural and linguistic discourses, etc." (p. 15). If "racism is a being in motion" (p. 15), and structural and individual racism are root causes of gentrification, for example, then scholars, activists, and educators need to take up methodological and representative tools that attend to that motion. Rosiek suggests the use of narrative representation as one that "unfolds in time" (p. 15). Narrative, however, has a tendency to identify and name actors (protagonist, antagonist) as separate and bound both from each other and from the setting, events, plot, themes. On the other hand, poetry can "lure us toward the possibilities of engaging the force of imagination in its materiality" (Barad, 2012, p. 216), the force that Audre Lorde (1985) described as forming the "light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action" (p. 37).

I will return briefly to Rich's *An Atlas of the Difficult World* to expand on how haunting within poetic configurations can offer a curriculum of emergent solidarity. As the poem continues, the speaker mediates and manages her own attachments to assemblages of violence that threaten the lives of others as well as herself, that threaten her *because* they threaten others.

> I don't want to know how he tracked them
> along the Appalachian Trail, hid close
> by their tent, pitched as they thought in seclusion
> killing one woman, the other
> dragging herself into town his defense they had teased his
> loathing
> of what they were I don't want to know
> but this is not a bad dream of mine these are the materials
> and so are the smell of wild mint and coursing water remembered
> and the sweet salt darkred tissue I lay my face
> upon, my tongue within. (p. 14)

The stanza layers and weaves its histories—of a specific murder of a lesbian couple, of a landscape of homophobia and misogyny, of a specific location of terror within a spaciohistorical context of a land violently settled and colonized. There is no possibility of "seclusion" from these ongoing histories. The speaker does not "want to know" but nor can she *not* know, as the "materials" of this instant echo and resonate across time, place, and self and haunt her dreams.

A crosshair against the pupil of an eye
could blow my life from hers
a cell dividing without maps, sliver of ice beneath the wheel
could do the job. Faithfulness isn't the problem. (p. 14)

Beyond merely describing social and political problems, the poem is a curricular site in that it engages the reader in naming these attachments *so as to unravel them*. The "pupil" here takes on a double meaning, as both the bodily apparatus of sight and as a subject who is being taught, who is subject to a curricular message. In identifying how she is bound up within the lives, times, and geographies of others, how she is inseparable from them, the speaker is able to divest from the idea that "faithfulness" to the dividing lines of "me" vs. "them" will protect her.

Poetic worlds that blur the distinctions and boundaries between actors present realities as complex, shifting, and co-emergent. Read as a haunted curriculum of poetics, these works stir action by demanding a restless, active, critical orientation that traces the non-linear emergence of attachments, solidarities, and relational openings—to ghosts, to each other, to the work ahead.

Freedom is a Place

"Since scholars believe that looking is sufficient," Derrida (1994) wrote, they do not always "do what is necessary: speak to the specter," to "unlock the possibility of the specter" (p. 11). The poetry I presented here allows us to speak and listen to this possibility by challenging stable meanings and watching ourselves cohere only through the acceptance of what can't be fully known. These genre sites help us merge "the darkness of forgetting and the shadows where ghosts lurk, but also the flashes of action and brilliance of collective love (posthumanist) labor" (Snaza, 2014, p. 170). The posthumanist work here entails confronting the ghosts, speaking to the ghosts, being with the ghosts, being the ghosts. Tracing the grief, joy, uncertainties, sparks between the boundaries of time, space, body, place, and text.

"At the end of the day," wrote Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2022), "freedom is a place" (p. 93). This place is not metaphorical, but material: it is where my safety is not won at the expense of yours, where my existence does not diminish yours. It is a place, as Allen Ginsberg (1956/2022) wrote in *Howl*, where I understand that "while you are not safe, I am not safe" (Section I). In search of freedom, I touch the historical ghost who haunts the present—the ghost who is me. We greet the ghosts, and the ghosts can teach us: to feel ourselves bumping against history, to account for the ways we are always entangled with the ongoing historical present, and to move in solidarity with the attachments that shape our collective survival.

Notes

1. Editorial note: We have attempted, to the best of our ability, to match the appearance of Rich's (1991) published version of the poetry quoted in this essay, as spatial representation is a significant aspect of *An Atlas of a Difficult World*.

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