Mobilizing Citational Practices as Feminist Curriculum-Making in Early Childhood Education

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WHEN WE THINK WITH CITATIONAL PRACTICES, we foreground the practices and relations we inherit and set in motion as we think with knowledges in our relations with early childhood educators and children. By foregrounding the colloquialism "citational practices," we presence the ongoing practices that we activate in our scholarship and in our work as pedagogists and researchers who collaborate with early childhood educators. Slowing down to articulate and figure out the contours and intentions of our citational practices, we want to take seriously how we think with other scholars, literature, and multidisciplinary provocations. In early childhood education (ECE) and associated academic spaces (for example: childhood studies, curriculum studies), we very often inherit an epistemological history where we are taught think citational practices as sequential and extractivist grounding for creating and supporting knowledges; "stand on the shoulders of experts," we are told. This familiar mode of citational practice builds upon foundational theories, in which we cite those who came before us to acknowledge our debt to their work and to extend their contributions toward other arguments, using their insights to legitimize the provocations and ideas that we are working to make public. We want to carefully name that what we are proposing in thinking with citational practices is not a break or an erasure; we will not propose citational practices as a severing from or forgetting the knowledges that have mattered intensely to ECE in the past, but we hope to offer ways in which citational practices are also integral to complex curriculum-making practices.

To do this, our questions are of a different ethical and political vein: how do we inherit domineering knowledges and their histories and consequences and then think citational practices as the work of answering for and doing otherwise with these epistemological establishment(s) that have mattered in early childhood education? When we think alongside particular contemporary feminist scholars, what becomes of our citational practices—how might we cite differently as a response to the provocations these scholars offer toward living well in damaged, inequitable,

ecological worlds? How might citational practices entangle with curriculum-making with children and educators?

In this article, we complexify our understanding of citational practices in early childhood education and offer provocations for how we might build novel, accountable, pedagogical citational relations as we read and think together with early childhood educators. We begin by speaking about our role as pedagogist-researchers in Ontario, Canada, to set the context for our thinking. Then, we think alongside the scholars who inspire us to think differently with citational practices and who pave the citational practices pathways we launch from. We offer three propositions toward doing citational practices as pedagogists, connecting to how citational practices and curriculum-making collide. It is important to be clear that we offer these three propositions in the company of the specific scholars with whom we think. This means these propositions are speculative responses to the provocations these scholars offer and to the ethical and political energies of their work. We do not aim for the propositions to be universalizable nor easily applicable; they are to be read as questions, gestures, and moves toward doing citing as curriculum-making otherwise. To conclude, we will visit a moment from pedagogist research, narrating and making visible our citational practices and their entanglements with curriculum-making in ECE.

In this final section of the article, narrating our citational practices is particularly important as we acknowledge that the stories that we tell in our research are intimately shaped by the people we read and talk to (in and well beyond academia). This extends beyond who we choose to cite when interpreting or analyzing data within our own research projects; who we read and think with also shapes the choices we make in our pedagogical work and the subjectivities we bring with us in constructing the pedagogical conditions that structure our work.

Who is a Pedagogist?

The role of a pedagogist in Canada is grounded in the leading-edge work of Drs. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Cristina Delgado Vintimilla, B. Denise Hodgins, Fikile Nxumalo, Kathleen Kummen, Narda Nelson, and Randa Khattar (Hodgins & Kummen, 2018; Kummen & Hodgins, 2019; Land, Vintimilla et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2018; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015; Vintimilla, 2018). Inspired by the role of the pedagogista in Reggio Emilia and the pedagogical or critical friend in Europe, projects in Ontario (*Pedagogist Network of Ontario*) and British Columbia (*Early Childhood Pedagogy Network*) actively work to reimagine the role as one that responds to the particular contexts of early childhood education in Canada. A pedagogist works in education contexts to create conditions to think pedagogically—to open up avenues toward engaging with questions of our ecologically precarious, politically fraught, inequitable, increasingly regulated and surveilled, and rapidly complexifying times with children and in our curriculum-making (Land, Vintimilla et al., 2020 Nelson & Hodgins, 2020; Nxumalo et al., 2018). The work of a pedagogist is collective (Land & Montpetit, 2019), and accordingly, a pedagogist never grapples with or enacts citational practices alone. How do we live well together; how do we make a life together? These are the questions a pedagogist holds dear (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020).

Drawing the role of the pedagogist in Canada into a research context, we often name our collaborations with educators as pedagogical inquiry research (Hodgins, 2019; Nxumalo, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016). As pedagogist-researchers, we—Nicole and Meagan—work closely with educators and children in long term, careful, slow pedagogical inquiry work. Always

with educators and children as our thinking companions, we work at inheriting and inventing pedagogical conditions as a mode of responding together to our times. Experimenting and speculating together, we generate momentary practices and possibilities that answer to the local worlds we are implicated in. We see this as curriculum-making (Berry et al., 2020; Nxumalo et al., 2018). Curriculum-making names the co-labouring (Vintimilla & Berger, 2019) that energizes creating conditions in a classroom (or any place) to respond to the situated concerns and complexities of this space. Curriculum-making and pedagogy are intensely entangled for a pedagogist, such that to live questions of pedagogy without deep consideration of curriculum or citational practices is impossible. For Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020) pedagogy

> asks: What kind of human might be able to respond (response-able) to the conditions of our times? Pedagogy asks this question in relation to what a society might value, and which of those values might need transformation. What idea of the human do educational processes and curriculum-making enable? What subject formations are legitimised and delegitimised through them? What relational logics do they enact? (p. 632)

Relations, debts, mangles, histories, knowledges, ethics, politics, and futurities animate curriculum-making; to do curriculum-making with children and ecological worlds is to collectively learn to pay attention, to figure out how to respond, and to grapple together about how we might live well together. The questions that bind pedagogy, curriculum-making, and citational practices are not simple nor are they concerned with perfection or vindication. Rather, the questions we might ask from within constellations of pedagogy, curriculum-making, and citational practice are modest and serious, situated and vital, speculative and indispensable. As a pedagogist-researcher for my doctoral research, I (Meagan) worked with a childcare centre in London, Ontario, a mid-sized city with a blend of urban and suburban infrastructure on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples. I (Nicole) collaborate with a childcare centre in downtown Toronto, Ontario, in the "Dish With One Spoon Territory," a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas, and Haudenosaunee. Both of us are white settlers.

We provide context for the work of a pedagogist and the intentions of the pedagogical inquiry researcher because, in this article and from this article, we want to spur thinking citational practices otherwise within pedagogical work in the field. That is, we want to tug citational practices beyond only the realm of academic concern and instead hold them in conversation with our ongoing interdisciplinary work with educator co-researchers, children, and other pedagogists. We position citational practices, and our propositions for doing citational practices, as matters of concern for pedagogists and educators. We hope these practices will take on a life whereby educators and pedagogists might imagine what possibilities for doing citations might be possible when we work to understand citational practices as they become entangled with pedagogical work and curriculum-making possibilities. We want to think citational practices as one thread of curriculum-making, where, following Nxumalo et al. (2018), "we think that it is pedagogically responsible to also find ways to sustain emergence through subsequent and multiple processes of lived curriculum making that educators *decide* to sustain" (p. 449). Put differently, we want to think with citational practices as a commitment to making visible the lived curriculum making decisions we participate in as we decide who to think with, as well as how and why to think with some scholars, authors, knowledges, stories, poets, or artists (and more) and not others.

Doing Citational Practices

We first met the ethic and politic of citational practices through the *Citational Practices Challenge* proposed by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (n.d.). Drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2013) proposition of citations as a feminist world-making practice, Tuck, Yang, and Gaztambide-Fernández propose that citational practices require we ask who is represented, what knowledges are reproduced, and what knowledges are made peripheral or what ways of navigating the world are erased as we make choices about who and how to bring other scholars or writers' words alongside our own thinking and scholarship. They think carefully with identity politics: what kinds of scholars and knowledges are being centered, and why? How can we be accountable to the citational practice decisions that we make, knowing that silencing, diminishing, and destroying have been practices citations have for lifetimes, and continue to, enact in some academic spaces? Foregrounding identity politics from within a different discipline, Mott and Cockayne (2017) trace how citational practice happens in geography, thinking alongside Judith Butler to argue that "by suggesting that citation is performative, we highlight how citation is a technology of power implicated in academic practices that reproduce a white heteromasculinist neoliberal academy, but which also offers a model of resistance" (p. 964). They propose "conscientious citation" (p. 955) as a practice in attending to whom and how we are citing and point toward understanding citational practices as a process interested in reconfiguring how power and expertise happen.

Tuck, Yang, and Gaztambide-Fernández take up Sara Ahmed's (2013) proposal of doing citations as feminist practice. For Ahmed, citational practices are a process of world making—of creating and participating in imperfect alliances, relations, disruptions, ruptures, and dissent. Ahmed (2016) proposes that "perhaps citations are feminist straw: lighter materials that, when put together, still create a shelter but a shelter that leaves you more vulnerable" (p. 16). To do citational practices is both to chase down an idea and its history to think alongside and to intentionally refuse to centre certain ideas and certain histories. As Ahmed (2016) offers, "sometimes we need distance to follow a thought. Sometimes we need to give up distance to follow that thought" (p. 16). Sometimes navigating this distance might be a public project, emphasizing the collectivity of feminist citational practices and, traversing, as Russell (2016) suggests, the academic sphere to generously share public gratitude for those we think alongside. Following Ahmed and Russell, we learn to think with citational practices as a relation of humility, as seeing how we cobble together worlds with who we cite and why, and how those worlds can orient toward generous, affirmative, uncompromising, feminist politics.

Katherine McKittrick (2021) re-reads Ahmed's proposals toward citational practices, contending that to do citational practices we must think beyond only taking attendance based on identity of our reference lists. McKittrick grounds her analysis in Black studies and in world-making as a Black scholar. We do not intend to appropriate her analysis and instead work to take seriously what McKittrick's provocations for doing citational practices might mean for us, as pedagogist-researchers. Storying citational trends based on identity politics, whereby some scholars have moved away from citing "big" continental theorists (McKittrick uses the example of Derrida) or the problematic "titans" in their field, McKittrick asks, "Do we unlearn whom we do not cite?" (p. 22). This question feels critically important for a pedagogist to consider. We often speak, as pedagogists, of refusing child development (Vintimilla et al., 2020; see also Burman, 2016) because of how its instrumental, totalizing power devours the richness of thought in early childhood education. Vintimilla and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2020) understand the all-subsuming

sovereignty of child development through the logic of the plantation, where children become subjects imbued with economic value, such that conforming/preforming subjects are celebrated for their future contribution to capitalism, while children who do not reconcile themselves to child development are disciplined and devalued.

So—how do we cite child development as pedagogists? McKittrick (2021) makes clear that ignoring is impossible, as we do not unlearn nor erase the legacies of child development by omitting it from our ways of thinking. It lingers. That lingering matters. McKittrick offers that scholars whose citational practices she is interested in "are much more interested in *how* we know, and how we come to know, than in *who* we know" (p. 23). Here citational practices intersect with questions of process. *How* do we cite child development—and *why*? We learn from McKittrick that citational practices do not act as a blanket; there is no standing at the pulpit and articulating "this is my citational practice ethos as a pedagogist. Full stop." Rather, different works with different histories (violences, silences, possibilities, futures) demand different citational attentions from different people. As we cite them, they ask of us different accountabilities. For Vintimilla et al. (2023), a pedagogists' work is always political and ethical and is, therefore, a verb made of ongoingness. Pedagogists hold difficult, intense, and specific pedagogical commitments, and it is in how a pedagogist manifests—lives knowledges that populate—their commitments that a pedagogist's work moves from that of a critical friend, pedagogical leader, or consultant into the dense political and pedagogical terrain of a pedagogist (Vintimilla et al., 2023). Along the same thread, citational practices are, as McKittrick writes, about subject formation and the knowledges that disrupt and give life to our ways of being in the world. They are not rhythmic so much as they are responsive. McKittrick emphasizes that

> referencing is hard: we share our lessons of unknowing ourselves and, in this, refuse what they want us to be; we risk reading what we cannot bear and what we love too much and then we let it go, revise, and read again. (p. 34)

Following McKittrick, we learn to think of citational practices as a responsibility in reciprocity, where we might read and write such that we are in constant dialogue with histories, asking hard questions of the stories they tell, and always responding to the questions histories ask of us. We want to carry McKittrick's contention that citational practices are hard. There is nothing simple nor replicable nor redeemable nor even dependable about doing citational practices as ongoing work. As pedagogists, we need to sit with different knowledges and stories, feeling how they matter in our bodies and where they are in relation with our pedagogical commitments, and then figure out how to proceed. Pedagogists might learn to ask: this article, knowledge, or story is a part of the intellectual world I walk within, so *how* might I cite *this* piece?

Propositions for Doing Citational Practices as a Pedagogist

We now offer three propositions that compose how we tentatively do citational practices in our work as pedagogists. We intentionally craft these as proposals because we are not interested in professing a model for how pedagogists *must* do citational practices. Rather, we hope that pedagogists will take these propositions as invitations, emphasizing their ethical, political, and pedagogical character while nurturing a curiosity for what these practices might mean for curriculum-making.

Thinking Citational Practices with Isabelle Stengers

Proposal: Doing citational practices as a process oriented toward an unfamiliar, speculative, tentative interdisciplinarity

Isabelle Stengers (2018) offers forward a practice of "collective apprenticeship," an invitation for "putting into play what is meant, for each science, by the risk of establishing a relation" (p. 68). Thinking with Stengers and collective apprenticeship, we want to propose citational practices as the risk of establishing a relation—the work of proximity, but dangerous, risky, unfamiliar proximity. With Stengers, we imagine citational practices as the labour of sustaining an interdisciplinary collaboration that is uneasy, that does not rely on the knowledge-producing terms of interdisciplinarity the academy has come to laud. In taken-for-granted citational relations, compiling knowledge on knowledge, perspective on perspective, is a tactic to produce "better" or more robust knowledge. Traditional citational practices orient toward the pursuit of "truth" or infallibility and are concerned with evidencing the validity or feasibility of an argument—logics grounded in capitalism where knowledge is the currency and the "legitimate" currency is sparse. In relations of collective apprenticeship, Stengers proposes that different knowledges and disciplines are collected together in the name of learning the borders of varied knowledges, becoming more familiar with the worlds each knowledge comes from and makes possible, and tracing the concerns and lives that a particular knowledge can answer to. In an ethic of collective apprenticeship, how these knowledges meet and wrestle with one another also matters. It is here that Stengers points toward speculation: what worlds become possible when particular knowledges, places, stories, histories, ethics, politics, subjectivities, and bodies meet here, now?

With Stengers, we want to mobilize citational practices as the work of tracing the contours of the knowledges we think with and learning to take seriously that there might be knowledges we cannot think with, or refuse to think with, in our pedagogical relationships. In this same beat, a pedagogist might draw in a knowledge unfamiliar to the ECE canon, taking the risk of thinking alongside a story that is intentionally unfamiliar to the lexicon of developmentalism, progress, and anti-intellectualism that pervades ECE (Vintimilla et al., 2023). Stengers (2018) proposes that

> if we have to reclaim the risky business of honoring change, the assemblages we participate in, inversely, are to become a matter of empirical and pragmatic concern about effects and consequences, not a matter of general consideration or textual dissertation. (p. 107)

This makes us approach citational practices as the risk of caring for relations that undo any notion of interdisciplinarity as the production of better knowledge and that instead turn toward momentary, speculative, intentional constellations of knowledges that unsettle how and what each knowledge works to know. Interdisciplinarity is a risk, but the kind of risk that turns inherited curriculum on its head and incites curriculum-making otherwise. A pedagogist might debate what particular knowledges, together, set in motion as we work to respond to our worlds with children: if we think these knowledges together with this place, what becomes possible for living well together? What relations and worlds become impossible? Rather than trafficking in status, proving unassailable validity, or gaining traction by rooting an idea in a widely-validated trajectory, with collective apprenticeship citational practices orient toward, as Stengers argues is at the heart of collective apprenticeship, interdisciplinary collaborations that matter for how their local,

contextual consequences create possibilities for engaging with the complex contemporary worlds we inherit and inhabit.

Thinking Citational Practices with Haraway and Anna Tsing, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, & Nils Bubandt

Proposal: Doing stories as citational practice

Following Donna Haraway (2016), we understand stories as world shaping: the stories we tell shape who we are and what we do. In early childhood education, developmental psychology has been *the* story (with different consequences in the Global North and Global South and always tied to ongoing settler colonialism), and this has shaped who educators and children are allowed to be. Following Haraway, we know that the stories we tell and the stories we do not tell matter. If we consider stories as citational practice, we might also think stories as companions, where it is impossible to be in the same dialogue with all our worldly companions always, at the same time. Stories have consequences in both their presences and absences; what stories do we choose to think with here and what stories do we choose not to think with here? How do we notice and answer for the foreclosures and reproduction of violent dominant discourses? When it feels as though child development (or environmental stewardship or school readiness or early intervention) is our only story, how can we invent practices of storying that do not ignore developmentalism, as per McKittrick (2021), but instead do stories in ways that dismantle the hubris dominant stories perform and assemble stories together, otherwise?

Tsing et al. (2017) argue that "some kinds of stories help us notice; others get in our way. Modern heroes—the guardians of progress across disciplines—are part of the problem" (p. M8). These scholars tell us that stories do different things; they may point us in a direction of something, encourage us to think about something in a particular way, but they may also conceal other ways of thinking. In the introduction to their book, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet,* Tsing et al. draw attention to citational practices that privilege masculinist scientific knowledge as dangerous acts that make invisible other ways of knowing the natural world. If we think this alongside "good" academic practices in which we are taught to cite "original" sources, we might find that we do not pay attention to how other stories become woven within and barred from our citational relations— and our curriculum-making. As a pedagogist, if we fail to pay attention, we run the risk of reinforcing logics of epistemological reproduction, where, as Tsing et al. (2017) illustrate, dominant stories often miss the rich complexities that multiple, interdisciplinary, unfamiliar, strange stories "help us notice" (p. 2019) when these stories are put into conversation across theoretical boundaries.

In early childhood education in Canada, to stand on the shoulders of experts is to reproduce the linear logics of developmentalism—sequential ways of thinking childhood, growth, and learning (Vintimilla & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020). This operates as a cycle of legitimation and subject formation, curating the knowledges that can then dictate who a child, educator, and pedagogist can be in education spaces and in the world. As a pedagogist, we might find ourselves reproducing a micro-canon, whereby we return to the same scholars over and over, settling into a complacency that depends on the popularity or status of these scholars or the artfulness of their prose. Complacency and familiarity are not twins. Familiarity, as a pedagogist, might mean returning to the knowledges that fuel us to be pedagogists, that pull our hearts toward thinking curriculum-making and pedagogy. We would suggest, following Haraway (2016) and Tsing et al.

(2017), that a pedagogist should know the stories they refuse to give up on, be this the words of a particular scholar or writer, a social justice movement (like fighting against anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism), an artist or poet, their own art-making, or a commitment to fostering less precarious ecological worlds. A pedagogist can think in the junctures between familiar and strange, learning to recognize the shadows their familiar stories cast. If, as a pedagogist, we refuse to only cite what we already know—to think with only the stories that are familiar to our particular disciplines—our citational practices might become strategies whereby we can hold ourselves accountable for what such stories do to our disciplines. We must remain with what flourishes (intended or not) in the fractures that the stories we choose to presence create. Doing stories as citational practices means that we might make more visible for ourselves and others the decisions that we make around which stories and knowledges to think with and how these decisions are ethical choices entangled with curriculum-making. By thinking with other stories, whether we seek them out or they tumble into our pathway and refuse to leave, we are transforming the stories that become perceptible within our field. More so than only diversifying the stories told in a neoliberal, "we need to hear multiple perspectives," way, what is absolutely critical is that we, as pedagogists, enact our citational practices as a commitment to answering to the consequences of the stories we choose to presence and silence as we do citational practices as storytelling and curriculum-making as storying.

Thinking alongside Alexis Shotwell

Proposal: Citational practices as unforgetting and remembering for the future amid ongoing settler colonialism

Thinking with a non-linear conception of temporality, where past-presents weave with futures, Shotwell (2016) works with/in the inheritances of ongoing settler colonialism in Canada to imagine what it might mean to create more liveable worlds together. Shotwell argues that

> unforgetting … is an activity, just as forgetting is an activity … . Forgetting is a core piece of colonial practice … . In our being, ontologically, we become who we are in part through what we know and what we are made (or made able) to forget. (p. 37)

Shotwell's argument positions forgetting and unforgetting as ethical and political practices that activate knowledge politics and hierarchies and that implicate us in our own forgetting and unforgetting, as well as systemic processes that ally with forgetting or unforgetting. As Shotwell goes on to argue, "unforgetting … can be an important part of resistance" (p. 37).

Unforgetting then, names necessary work within ongoing settler colonialism in Canadian early childhood education and postsecondary scholarship. To unforget histories of colonialism is to not ascribe to the privileged, insidious veiling of the systems of knowledge that produce the unequal realities that we inherit and must confront in early childhood education and university education. How might we think unforgetting as a citational practice? Thinking in the company of Shotwell (2016), we want to propose that, to do unforgetting as citational practice, as a pedagogist, is to not cite only into a future or not only into a future untethered from a history. We want to work to think citational practices where we do not cite only as a gesture forward to build something new, nor only as an acknowledgement of past scholarly work that we build upon, but to do citing to disrupt the entangled past-present-future erasures and violences of colonial knowledge systems.

This, we suggest, is a way to do citational practices as producing temporal relations—as weaving together powerfully relevant histories with tomorrow-oriented trajectories in the name of what Shotwell (2016) calls "remembering for the future" (p. 23). For what futures will our local, personal, citational practices remember? This moves citational practices beyond an only history-oriented practice whereby we cite the foundational scholars our work builds upon or we cite in the name of proving the legitimacy of a concept or a story. Rather, reinventing citational practices as remembering for the future requires that we make choices about who, how, why, and when we cite, knowing that those choices are not only technical nor only for building validity. Rather, as pedagogists our citational practices when remembering for the future are about acknowledging and answering for how our practices and our work implicates us in dominant and less-dominant knowledge hierarchies and traditions. Citational practices might here become, following Shotwell (2016), a method of forgetting rather than reproduction, of both intentional presences and absences, where forgetting can become a part of resistance. What if we invent ways to do citational practices where we are concerned with getting to know a past for how its relations endure into the present and citing in ways that both know and disrupt that present in the name creating conditions for more liveable worlds? What happens if, following Shotwell, as pedagogists we do citational practices as a memory grounded in a politics of impure responsibility? Shotwell makes us think of citational practices as always imperfect, never innocent, never apolitical, never atemporal world-making relations, practices that actively unforget in the name of, as Shotwell offers, remembering for the future.

Doing Citational Practices with one Moment from Pedagogical Inquiry Work

We move now to sharing a moment from Nicole's pedagogist-research work with preschool and toddler-aged children and educator co-researchers in Toronto. We want to think with this moment not for how to understand/analyze it, nor to position it as an especially illuminating moment, but to bring to the forefront the ways we grapple with what knowledges to bring to this moment to begin to think with it. This is a move toward making visible our citational practices in a public realm. We experiment with thinking through who we think with and who we cite—and, most importantly—how.

Wires, Holes, and Strangers

A group of children have been thinking with the question of how we get to know place through our movement and have been noticing and walking slowly with the quad—a large and grass-filled public area in downtown Toronto. For multiple weeks, there has been a small utility hole in a little green island between two highly-trafficked pathways that the children have been very interested in. We often pull the dark green plastic cover off the hole, looking in at the sweaty bundle of leaves and grass and one single black pipe. A group of children, an educator, and I were sitting around the hole talking about what happens when we pull green grass from the ground and sprinkle it into the hole—does the grass die? Sometimes we see spiders or caterpillars roaming the hole—who else lives here? Do they need grass? A woman, who we did not know, who was walking by stopped, picked the green plastic cover off the ground, covered the hole, and scolded the children that the hole was not for them. We were shocked.

Educators, children, and I have talked about that hole multiple times since then.

A few weeks later, we were in the quad and came across a different hole—one filled with tightly coiled coloured wires. It had no cover. As we began to get to know this hole, children, educator, and I were careful; holes, in this place, come with a history of being admonished by strangers. We knelt by the hole looking in. Why is it so colourful? Do the wires attach to anything? What are the wires doing? We tugged the wires out of the hole. We had many questions about these wires or this hole—who lives in this hole? Where is its lid? What do we do with this hole? Can we even be close to this hole; is that okay with other people around?

Meagan's Citational Practices

I enter into thinking about this story with trepidation. The moment Nicole chose to share with me is not one that I would commonly choose to think about in my research. This has me thinking about citational practices because the people I think with do more than just support analysis in my work; they also shape what ideas and moments that I tend to.

In this type of thinking, I am indebted to reconceptualist early childhood education scholars, such as Dalhberg et al. (2013) and feminist science scholars such as Haraway (1988) who reconstruct the role of researcher as one who cannot be removed from the situated contexts in which they work. To notice in this way is something that I have learned alongside my supervisor, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, through her work with Sylvia Kind and Laurie Kocher in their (2016) book *Encounters with Materials*. Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. draw on the work of feminist anthropologist Anna Tsing (who we thought with in proposition #2) to take seriously the work of noticing as something that draws attention to and amplifies agencies in the multispecies assemblages I attend to in my work. When I think about noticing and inhabiting, I take seriously that my noticing practices—how I attend—are entangled with my citational practices. To notice in a particular way is to cite; it is to lean on a knowledge and activate it in how I pay attention. I also do citational practices when I slow down to question how my attention concurrently overlooks. Curriculum-making cares about both sides of attention as citational practice because I might not have dwelled beside the open hole. Because of *how* I carry Dahlberg et al., Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., and Tsing with me, I might have invited the children to attune to the grass, the trees, the litter collectively. Here is the forceful mystery in doing citational practices as curriculum-making: this is not a moment to say that I would have "missed" what happened with the hole. This is not an indictment of my modes of paying attention. What matters is that, because of the ways my citational familiarities tangle with my ways of paying attention and my pedagogical commitments as a pedagogist, something different might have unfolded. That "something different" names the creative force in thinking citational practices intentionally towards curriculum-making.

As a pedagogist, I am interested in what I am not interested in in the moment with the open hole and cords. I am not interested in co-opting this moment through a developmental lens, and in this I am thinking with Shotwell's (2016) proposition of having a no. In my collective work across many contexts, my colleagues remind me that standing for something necessitates a refusal of certain logics. Here, I am again indebted to feminist scholars such as Stengers (2018), Haraway (2016), and Kathleen Skott-Myhre (2017) who draw attention to the erasure of minoritarian knowledges in the name of rational Scientific Truth. As I think with them in this moment, I am inspired to think outside the logics of rationalism. This means resisting certain logics (ex:

individualism, didactic reasoning, truth, reason) while concurrently recognizing the scars they leave on how I might engage this moment. If I foreground more-than-human relationality, I might wonder with the children about what the wires do with the soil under the grass in the big quad. My presencing of relationality is a non-innocent citational practice; it is grounded both in the hopeful, speculative theorizing of feminist scholars who think relationality expansively and in my citational refusal to draw on knowledges that rationally explain what the wires might do (ex: they are probably for the streetlights).

Nicole's Citational Practices

I have a firm no (Shotwell, 2016) to developmental knowledges here, like Meagan, as a pedagogist, I cannot stand for citing scholars or epistemological traditions of thinking "about" children that argue that the children cannot yet meaningfully engage with the hole and the wires or that this stranger lady who scolded us knows more than us simply because of age. This means that my first citational instinct is one of defiance. As a participant in this moment, I refuse to allow the impactful and confusing lived stories of the scolding lady to prevail.

Paying attention to the wires threaded in the subterranean worlds of the quad makes me think of chemicals and contamination. Contamination, an ethic I learned from Shotwell (2016), where we seek relations of imperfection and getting on together, rather than a romanticized primordial purity, keeps bubbling up in my brain as I think how I might respond with children to the hole and wires. I am genuinely curious what the wires do. I have no idea. I imagine, in a kind of tentative citational practice that draws on the very little I know about electronics, that the wires will be filled with a filament made of a precious metal. I start to think about how our proximity to these wires likely inculcates us in stories of mineral extraction and in the anthropogenic mess of the mined, commodified worlds we inherit with children (Nxumalo, 2017). Contamination returns as a familiar curriculum-making companion.

Do I want to think this moment with scientific knowledges with the children? What happens when I remember that wires are coated in rubber, and that rubber trees are cultivated oceans away in mass industrialized farming. I cannot, this means, think with feminist science studies without thinking about land—which in this place means thinking about ongoing settler colonialism. When I think of feminist science studies scholars who think with chemicals, I think of Michelle Murphy's (2017) and Max Liboiron's (with Tironi & Calvillo, 2018) work on chemical lives. Both Murphy and Liboiron are scholars in Canada who think with anti-colonial relations to scientific inquiry. I am a white settler. How can I think with Murphy and Liboiron's work well—in ways that acknowledge the deep connections between land and knowledge, and that answer to the ways that early childhood education continues to be implicated in ongoing settler colonialism? Here my citational practice requires that I pay attention to all the lively bits that compose a knowledge—the histories, the places, the stories, the relations, the refusals, the care. What matters is that I need to figure out *how* I might think with this knowledge—is it for me? How might I do citational practices with curriculum-making as a process of setting in motion how we (children, educators, pedagogist) might think, together and with equity, care, and specificity with particular knowledges? How do I do citational practices against extraction, where I work hard and imperfectly to translate any question of "does this theory/theorist make sense here" into "what do I need to do to engage this knowledge with reciprocity and specificity"? Curriculum-making, then, enlivens this second question as one to grapple with alongside children and educators: how do we

learn well and care, collectively, with the knowledges we carry into this moment with the hole and wires, here and now?

Taking Citational Practices as an Experiment and Response

In the spirit of our tentative, speculative, but intentional experiments with citational practices, we resist offering any semblance of "best practices." We do not want to argue for overarching citational practices that can apply across every context or citational practices that are meaningful outside of the answerabilities and accountabilities of any pedagogist who engages in a particular citational relationship. What, then, might our proposals for doing citational practices as a pedagogist open toward in early childhood education? We want to offer that pedagogists *must* consider how doing citing is an ethical and political endeavour that extends far beyond the technical or collegial work of providing citations in academic conventions; rather, citational practices *must* ask us to undertake difficult moves that pull those we think in the company of into conversation, rather than a strategy to resolve tensions. To cite *must* be read as the questions we are making possible and impossible, and the gestures we are making public and covert. How we cite *must* activate our pedagogical commitments. In the spirit of the tentative proposals that we have shared, we want to offer a question to conclude: what possibilities for curriculum-making might we open up when we refuse to hold early childhood education's traditional citational conventions intact and instead trace, share, craft, and risk the situated knowledges that we are implicated in?

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Restoring the (Dis)course
A Philosophical Inquiry into Rivers and Educational Journeys

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EACH YEAR OF MY CHILDHOOD, I eagerly anticipated my family's annual summer inner tube float trip on the Elk River. Located just over an hour's drive from my hometown in southeastern Kansas, these trips provided a unique opportunity for me to learn about the constantly changing nature of rivers through firsthand experience. While floating down the river, I was immersed in a variety of hydrological lessons associated with characteristics of the river water, such as depth, temperature, clarity, and speed, which all varied from year to year. As I entered high school, I also learned about the ways in which human activity can influence rivers, including the physical altering of their shape. Beyond its physical and biological characteristics, the river provides a compelling metaphor for lived experience. Just as the importance of allowing a river to run its natural course is often overlooked, the value of embracing lived experience in an educational setting is commonly ignored. Embracing lived experience in educational settings is crucial for curriculum and pedagogy. In the context of reconceptualized curriculum studies, curriculum was significantly broadened when viewed through the lens of "*currere*," which is Latin and denotes the running of a course (Pinar et al., 2004). This reconceptualization transformed curriculum studies from a focus on *curriculum development* to *understanding curriculum,* especially in the context of lived experience.

In this paper, I will use the idea of a natural meandering river to metaphorically illustrate the value of the reconceptualization of curriculum studies and contrast the reconceptualization with the focus on efficiency and *technical rationality*. Technical rationality is a term coined by James Macdonald that embodies the perspective that schools exist to facilitate and produce learning according to pre-established goals and objectives (Aiken, 2010). The term also indicates the viewpoint that learning can be "objectified, quantified, and measured" as scientism (p. 253). Used to justify the existence of schools as a means to promote and produce learning based on predetermined standards and accountability, technical rationality treats education like a conveyer belt in a factory. However, as I argue in this paper, an overemphasis on efficiency, scientific management, and positivism is not sustainable from the perspective of thinking critically, understanding oneself, and challenging the power dynamics and underlying assumptions that guide

individual and group decisions and behavior over time. Alternatively, viewing the scholarly journey of a student and the study of beauty (aesthetics) as a meandering and naturally flowing river opens holistic possibilities for advancing reconceptualized curriculum theorizing.

The Reconceptualization in Curriculum Studies

The Reconceptualization in curriculum studies refers to a movement that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to the traditional and prescriptive approach to curriculum development (Aiken, 2010). Reconceptualists argued that the traditional approach, which focused on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student and emphasized the value of objective, factual knowledge, was inadequate for addressing the complex social, cultural, and political issues of the time.

In response to the factory model approach to curriculum, Reconceptualists proposed a new perspective that emphasized curriculum as a complicated conversation that took into account a variety of perspectives (Pinar et al., 2004). This included the needs, interests, and experiences of students and emphasized the value of subjectivity critical thinking and reflexivity. Reconceptualists argued that curriculum should be seen not as a fixed set of objectives or goals, but rather as a dynamic process of negotiation and co-construction between teachers, students, and the wider community. In the reconceptualized vernacular, the term "*currere*" is often used to emphasize the idea that curriculum should be viewed as a process, rather than a fixed set of content or a predetermined set of outcomes (Pinar, 1974). Also, *currere* is often used to represent the idea that curriculum should be seen as a dynamic, ongoing process that involves the interaction of multiple stakeholders and is shaped by the experiences and needs of learners (Gouzouasis & Wiebe, 2018; Pinar, 1974).

Reconceptualists sought out intellectual traditions and modes of inquiry that prioritized the nature of human experience and the role of human agency as central to curricular research (Aiken, 2010). Aiken (2010) observes that alternative forms of inquiry were emphasized by the Reconceptualists noting that,

> In response [to the positivistic overemphasis on science-informed curriculum research], the reconceptualists called for a focus on phenomenology and proposed a research agenda that encouraged alternative curriculum research theories and methodologies and that would take into consideration students' and teachers' experiences from aesthetic, gendered, cultural, autobiographical, and ethnographic perspectives. Thus, the scientific styles of research that favored objective, detached, standardized methodologies, allegedly leading to reliable knowledge, were given over to expanded studies of the educational experiences through more humanistic approaches that spanned philosophical examinations, as well as autobiographical, artistic, spiritual, and interpretative modes of investigation. (p. 254)

Accordingly, the reconceptualist approach to curriculum can been characterized by a dynamic and evolving focus on subjectivity, interiority, experiential learning, critical thinking, and the interdisciplinary study of educational experience. Importantly, as stated earlier, reconceptualized curriculum studies emphasizes understanding curriculum versus developing curriculum.

River Straightening

There are a variety of reasons why humans may straighten or channelize rivers. These can include (but are not limited to) flood control, maintenance, or enhancement of the navigability of a river (e.[-g., for large watercraft), land drainage improvement, creation of new spaces for urbanization or agriculture, and reduction of bank erosion (Surian, 2007). However, the process of straightening a river has negative impacts on the environment (Koebel, 1995; Surian, 2007).

One major impact is the alteration of river dynamics. Straightening a river can change the flow patterns and velocity of the water, which leads to erosion and sedimentation issues (Koebel, 1995). These changes also disrupt the natural movement of sediment and nutrients downstream, potentially affecting the health of downstream ecosystems (Koebel, 1995; Surian, 2007).

In addition to changes in river dynamics, channelization also negatively impacts water quality. Straightening a river can increase the amount of impervious surface (such as concrete or asphalt) in the surrounding area, leading to increased runoff and water pollution (Koebel, 1995; Surian, 2007). This harms aquatic life and decreases the overall health and biodiversity of the river ecosystem.

Finally, channelization can also have negative impacts on aquatic and riparian (river edge) ecology. Straightening a river can reduce habitat complexity and decrease the availability of food and shelter for aquatic organisms (Surian, 2007). It can also lead to the loss of riparian vegetation, which provides important ecological functions such as water filtration and erosion control (Koebel, 1995; Surian, 2007).

In summary, straightening or channelizing a river has negative impacts on river dynamics, water quality, and aquatic and riparian ecology. These impacts are harmful to the overall health and functioning of the river ecosystem. One example that illustrates the damage from channelizing a river is on the Kissimmee River in Florida. In the 1990s, a restoration project was undertaken on a section of the Kissimmee River to address the environmental harm caused by the straightening of the river in the 1960s (Koebel, 1995). The straightening of the river had led to the destruction of wetland and the loss of habitat for wildlife, among other negative impacts (Koebel, 1995). This restoration project involved the construction of berms and weirs to recreate the river's original meandering course and restore its floodplain ecosystem. The restoration project has been successful in reestablishing the natural flow of the river and improving the ecological health of the region. This illustrates the importance of considering the long-term consequences of human intervention in natural systems and the value of efforts to repair such damage.

Relating the Reconceptualization to a Wild River

I argue that the work of the curriculum studies Reconceptualists can be compared to the effort of keeping a natural river wild and allowing it to take its natural meandering course. Both approaches prioritize a holistic and wild approach, and in the case of the Reconceptualization the re-wilding has to do with theory, research, curriculum, and pedagogy (Hensley, 2011).

The Reconceptualization recognizes that traditional models of education often emphasize rote memorization and conformity to established norms and standards and fail to adequately prepare students for a complex and rapidly changing world. Accordingly, Reconceptualists advocate for a more holistic and student-centered approach to education that emphasizes critical thinking, self-reflection, and agency.

Just as a natural river follows its own course, shaped by the forces of nature and the environment in which it exists, the Reconceptualists argue that education should be shaped by the needs, interests, and experiences of the individual students, rather than being dictated by external standards and expectations. For example, rather than following a strict curriculum that dictates what students should learn and how they should learn it, the Reconceptualists might encourage educators to pragmatically shift curriculum to the specific place in which learning is occurring. Additionally, through the reconceptualist lens, teachers are encouraged to model and cultivate reflective learners who can reflexively evolve through various learning experiences. In this sense, educators are encouraged to create a more flexible and adaptable learning environment that allows students to explore their own interests and discover their own unique paths to knowledge and understanding. The reconceptualist approach values the inherent curiosity and agency of students and recognizes that learning is an ongoing and dynamic process that needs to be shaped by the students themselves, rather than primarily being dictated by external forces. Thus, the Reconceptualists' work can be seen as a call to reimagine traditional approaches to education and to embrace a more holistic and organic approach that values the unique experiences and needs of each individual student. Just as a natural river takes its own course, guided by the forces of nature, the Reconceptualists argue that education should be shaped by the needs, interests, and experiences of the students themselves, rather than being dictated by external standards and expectations.

Like the channelization of rivers, an overemphasis on predetermined learning outcomes and standardized testing pervades modern day educational discourse and encourages the reduction of direct experience in favor of "reliving" other people's experiences. Ultimately, in traditional education approaches, efficiency is emphasized as risk is minimized (Hensley, 2011). Agency is sacrificed for increased test scores, and dialogue is replaced with scripted instructional cues. These are all symptoms of the "dangers of realism," which ultimately translate into what Cornel West (as quoted in Doll, 2000) refers to as a "paralyzing pessimism" (p. 5). Realism is a philosophical position that holds that the external world exists independently of our perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs about it. According to Mary Doll, realism overemphasizes the importance of objective knowledge and the objective reality of the external world. Doll suggests that realism typically rejects the value of subjective and lived experience due to its lack of measurability. Doll maintains that realism marks our era and leads to a death of the spirit, which is what an overfocus on standards and accountability is doing in our schools. Accordingly, Doll insists that there needs to be a "dynamic unsettling" and a transformational reconceptualization of human experience (p. 53). Borrowing the term from Clare Hammoor (2023), I argue that the ecological crisis and the necessity to advance the sustainability movement require a "playful instability" (p. 289) characterized by experimentation and creativity in finding solutions to social and environmental problems. This also involves thinking outside of conventional problem-solving approaches, which can lead to more innovative and effective solutions to seemingly intractable sustainability issues.

Poetry and Educational Experience

Poetry allows us to see ourselves freshly and keenly. It makes the invisible world visible.
(Parini, 2008, as quoted in Faulkner, 2009, p. 15)

One approach to facilitating introspection and giving students the space to connect their lived experience with their learning is the use of poetic inquiry. Poetic inquiry is a method of research that uses poetry and other forms of creative writing as a way of exploring and

understanding a particular topic or issue. Poetic inquiry, according to Jane Hirshfield, is a "different mode of knowing" (as quoted in Faulkner, 2009, p. 16) and encourages evocative writing that is personal, creative, and expressive. Hirshfield asserts that every good poem harbors a profound and unforeseen transformative surprise (Housden, 2021). Consequently, students who delve into poetic inquiry are not only more likely to experience personal engagement and transformation but also more likely to captivate and transform their readers.

In the realm of poetic discourse, there is great possibility and richness. Poetry, much like the meandering pathways of untamed rivers, serves as a method of expression for the intricate and winding pathways of lived experience. It is through poetry that humans can reclaim their connection to their dreams and the profound archetypes that reside within them. As Gary Snyder (1995) illuminates, poetry possesses the power to not only integrate and stabilize, but also to rupture the habitual patterns of perception and allow for the exploration of diverse possibilities. These possibilities may vary in their wisdom or peculiarity, yet they all hold equal weight as authentic realities, and some may even offer new perspectives and insights (p. 93).

In this context, the aesthetic journey takes on a crucial role, encompassing the breaking open of established perceptions, challenging hegemonic dispositions, and transforming the mundane into the extraordinary. Furthermore, an essential aspect of poetic discourse lies in attuning oneself to their own idiosyncrasies and embracing their individual quirkiness. It is through this attentive and liberated state of being that true liberation can be found.

Instead of enabling students to learn through an experiential process and become more fully human, contemporary education inundates students with standardized testing. Today's educational model is notorious for not allowing students to gain their own voices and choices; instead, students follow a prescriptive educational pathway. The emphasis on standardization is reflected in the focus on educational standards and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields and the shrinking of the arts. An overemphasis on STEM education can limit student exposure to other subjects and ways of thinking, preventing students from discovering their passions and interests outside of the STEM fields. Much of science education does not embrace a dynamic worldview that weaves together knowledge from multiple disciplines and perspectives. In this sense, it is important to go beyond the tunnel vision of STEM-centric teaching.

The self-reflection and introspection inherent in reconceptualized curriculum studies align with the exploration of lived experience and life writing. By engaging in self-reflection and solitude, individuals can attain a "petit mort" or a temporary release from the confines of conventional discourse (Jensen, 2004). This departure from traditional modes of thinking and learning creates space for new and progressive approaches. In the realm of education, a "petit mort" signifies a transformative process, shedding old and inadequate ways of knowing and transcending the everyday discourse associated with conventional teaching and learning. However, transcending the familiar is not without discomfort; it entails stepping outside the comfort zone and confronting the unfamiliar, a necessary step when addressing complex sustainability challenges.

The discomfort and disequilibrium experienced in this process serve as catalysts for inquiry and growth in learners. Kathleen Norris (2001) highlights the importance of facing one's shadow, stating that growth is hindered when we avoid confronting the unconscious aspects of ourselves (p. 99). The term "shadow" in psychology refers to the unconscious elements of the self that may conflict with our conscious values and beliefs. These hidden aspects can encompass negative emotions and traits we attempt to conceal, such as anger, jealousy, or insecurity. By acknowledging and confronting our shadows, we cultivate self-awareness and integrate our conscious and unconscious lives. This holistic integration enables us to become more well-rounded

individuals, fostering greater emotional and psychological well-being. Embracing our shadow, therefore, becomes a pathway to living more fully.

In parallel, Schiller's concept of play and Snyder's notion of wildness resonate with this transformative process. Playfulness and wildness both involve breaking away from conventional structures and thinking patterns. Schiller (1965) emphasizes that play is an integral part of being human, enabling us to embrace our full humanity (p. 80). Snyder (2000) describes wildness as the essential nature of nature itself, a state of open awareness that reflects the untamed and self-organizing aspects of the human mind (p. 128). Both play and wildness challenge rigid ways of knowing and invite us to explore new possibilities. In this context, literary art emerges as a medium that embodies the spirit of play and wildness, offering a diverse and intellectually engaging approach to understanding the world (Snyder, 2000, p. 129).

By engaging in self-reflection, embracing our shadows, and incorporating play and wildness into our educational and personal journeys, we transcend conventional modes of thinking and open ourselves to new perspectives and possibilities. These transformative processes enable us to become more fully alive, fostering deeper connections with ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Snyder reminds us that we must never surrender our sense of awe. Instead, we must continue to engage in the artistic literary process. Similarly, Rabbi Abraham Heschel (as quoted in Fox, 2006) says, "Forfeit your sense of awe and the universe becomes a marketplace for you" (p. 53). When awe is removed, commercialism moves in and takes its place. Awe is a structural necessity to healthy pluralistic thought. Inversely, apathy can erode the banks of direct experience and allow other people's experiences to invade. As Maxine Greene (2001) states, "to be sunk in habitual routines, to be merely passive is … to miss an opportunity for awakening," whereas aesthetic experiences "provoke a change in the way we see things [and] bring about transformation in our thinking" (pp. 98, 102). In the end, aesthetic education is situated well for transformations and awakenings. Greene's work is aimed at "opening new pathways in lived experience, breaking the taken-for-granted, setting aside the crusts of mere conformity" (p. 186). Thus, pursuing aesthetics and the humanities are ways to work towards a more integrated wholeness in one's life journey.

John Dewey (1934, as quoted in Greene, 2001) states that "imagination is a way of seeing and feeling things as they compose an integral whole" (p. 81). Thus, imagination is an integrative context for human self-discovery. Buckminster Fuller (as quoted in Fox, 2006) poses the question of how we might "think in terms of wholes" (p. 105). He is implying that we must seek out the right balance of analytical and interpretive thinking for our journey. In the realms of thinking and education, thinking holistically favors interpretive thought over analytical thought. Thomas Merton (1974, as quoted in Palmer, 2004) claims that "there is in all things … a hidden wholeness" (p. 4). Thus, the capacity to feel more integrated and balanced is within all of us. "Wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life" (Palmer, 2004, p. 5).

Joy and Aesthetics

In the realm of education, fostering joy and embracing the inquiry process are essential. Thomas Aquinas (as quoted in Fox, 2006), highlights the significance of joy as "the human's noblest act" (p. 28). Aquinas emphasizes the need for joy and education to intertwine, as we should

strive to learn and nurture our noble capacities (Fox, 2006, p. 28). Consequently, teaching in an aesthetic manner becomes closely linked to evoking joy. Maxine Greene (2001) explains that when we engage our imagination with our perceptions, embody them, and make them our own, joy emerges. This infusion of conscious awareness allows for new and unexpected patterns to surface, offering fresh perspectives and vantage points (p. 11).

Therefore, the intellectual pursuit of learning can be playfully enhanced by deliberately integrating aesthetics. It is crucial to "release the imagination" and let it become an inseparable part of the lived experience. By doing so, we unlock the potential to evoke joy, enabling individuals to truly appreciate the journey of life. Encouraging joy and infusing aesthetics in education creates an environment where learning becomes a source of delight, empowering students to explore, discover, and embrace their noble capacities.

Conclusion

An examination of the pathways taken through lived experience is one of the worthiest inquires on which we can embark. Teachers and educational theorists need to recognize the value of incorporating lived experience and aesthetics in a learning environment. We need to be aware of the tendency to remove direct experience and the aesthetic perspective from the educational landscape. To sustain the discourse associated with experiential education, it is crucial that we protect direct experience from the "an-aesthetic" (similar to anesthesia) influence of pre-determined standardized curriculum. I submit that we must not "channelize" human experiences and compromise the wholeness of individual educational journeys. The metaphor of river straightening is a valuable starting point for the discussion surrounding aesthetics and education.

Experiential education and the incorporation of lived experience and aesthetics in the learning environment are crucial to fostering a sense of place and sense of connection to the world around us. By providing students with opportunities to engage with and learn from direct experience, we can help them to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the complexities of the natural and social world and move beyond pre-determined standardized curriculum and pedagogy. We must allow students to explore and learn in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their own lives and experiences and empower them to draw from their lived experience reflexively on their journey. By doing so, we can create a more vibrant and dynamic educational landscape that enables students to engage fully with the sinuosity of lived experience. Accordingly, it is important to "re-wild" our rivers and "re-wild" education.

Rewilding our rivers is an important step towards restoring the balance and awe that is necessary for a healthy and sustainable world. We must take this same approach to rewilding education and recognize the value of incorporating lived experience and aesthetics in a learning environment. We cannot afford to surrender our sense of awe or allow apathy to erode the banks of direct experience. We must release our imagination and allow it to be an inextricable part of our lived experience in education. This will evoke the joy that allows us to truly appreciate the educational journey and to seek out the right balance for our journey, just as the rewilding of our rivers is essential for the health and balance of our natural world.

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Desire, Interspecies Love, and Becoming-Animal
Reading "*The Overstory*" in Social Studies Education

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> The pedagogical task is to make the "worlds" in literature available.
> —Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (1978)

> He feels himself become another species.
> —Richard Powers, *The Overstory* (2018)

FREDERICK STARR, JR. BELIEVED the millions of trees damaged during the Civil War deserved care and rehabilitative love, as if they were soldiers (Tackach, 2019). For Starr, Jr., reconciliation exceeded society and culture; it also exceeded the human. He said, "Every part of the land suffers together" (as quoted in Tackach, 2019, p. 102). Trees suffer. And so, as Thoreau's (1858) pines "lift their evergreen arms to the light with perfect success" (para. 1), in the Amazon Basin,

> the Achuar—people of the palm tree—sing to their gardens and forests, but secretly, in their heads, so only the souls of the plants can hear. Trees are their kin, with hopes, fears, and social codes, and their goal as people has always been to charm and inveigle green things, to win them in symbolic marriage. (Powers, 2018, p. 394)

On the other side of the world, Tjipel—a young girl in northern Australia—lies face down in a sandy creek. Tjipel is the creek. "First, Tjipel was an adolescent girl who dressed up as a young man. Then she became a creek. These morphological mutations did not kill her. Quite the contrary. They allowed her to persist in a different form" (Povinelli, 2016, p. 94). *Let me sing to you now, about how people turn into other things*.

Braidotti (2013) theorized death as a metamorphosis, a conceptualization that rejects death as an inanimate, entropic journey of "return" to a "natural" state. Building alongside Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Braidotti (2013) reconfigured death as overflowing with plentitude; within death, there is life, a way of being they call becoming-imperceptible, an interconnected "vital relationship" (p. 137). The *Tachigali versicolor* is a tree found in old-growth forests in Central and South America. Once a sapling has succeeded in gaining root, thriving in its parent's shadow, the elder *Tachigali versicolor* embraces death, becoming-imperceptible to let the light in, slowly decomposing into a lode of sustenance. With(in) death, the young tree is made to thrive, and with(in) death, the binary between life and death—or what matters and what matters only in relation to lack, to an indifferent state of nothingness—is reconfigured. Revealed, here, is the "frontier of the incorporeal" (p. 137), a realm in which what is "me," what is "you," and what is "other" is flattened into a relational state of interconnected mattering (Braidotti, 2013). In our reading, Braidotti's death theory is not an erasure of the divide between the human and nonhuman. As Kohn (2013) reminds us, obliterating this divide solves nothing—it will only reappear elsewhere. Rather, life and death, language and thought, remain bound up with issues of representation. Kohn (2013) writes, we need to "decolonize thought … to see that thinking is not necessarily circumscribed by language, the symbolic, or the human … reconsidering who in this world represents … and what counts as representation" (p. 41). So, we suggest that what Kohn (2013) calls "an anthropology beyond the human" (p. 41) might decolonize the "living thought" of the *Tachigali versicolor*, a symbol commonly translated (and surely misconstrued) as "suicide tree" to something other, something beyond the limited bounds of human representation. Within this, what we call death and life are opened up, disclosing a few provocative questions: what might signs look like beyond the human, and what does a serious attendance to nonhuman representation provide? (Kohn, 2013). Following this, we position *Tachigali versicolor*, Tjipel, and the Maine woods as pedagogues; other *kinds* of living beings, but beings that *are* in ways that are *other*—embodying different ways of swaying, dying, feeling, even thinking (Hage, 2015; Kohn, 2013). Taken seriously, this thought opens up new pathways for how we might imagine living with one another—human and nonhuman—in more just, life-giving ways, what is—in our view, and in agreement with Garrett (2017)—the *raison d'être* of social studies education.

Introduction

This article answers Tarc's (2020) call, in the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, for engagements with texts that have jolted us awake, precipitating sudden swerves in new directions, "making us think and feel alive" (p. 40). We take *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018) as a jumping off point, and as social studies teacher educators, our theorization is attuned to how affective texts, like a novel, might be used to guide students down some of the pathways we imagined above. This article is also aligned with a larger, ongoing project we, along with many others, are engaged in: Responding to the unfolding climate catastrophe in interdisciplinary and critical ways in social studies education, theorizing—and aiming to embody—teacher and student dispositions that are more ethically attentive to our entanglements with nature, with matter. This is no small task. It requires onto- and epistemological adjustments regarding what it means to be human, and these shifts, we suspect, will not be accessed through a single, cherished portal that will magically bring about new ways of being and knowing. Rather, we see this work as rhizomatic, defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as a process connected at many junctures and points, allowing for ceaseless

connections to be made "between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances related to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (p. 7).

To this end, this article extends our prior efforts to disrupt normative curricular and pedagogical representations of the human and nonhuman beings and material things in social studies education (Nelson & Durham, 2022; Nelson et al., 2021), an ongoing project that engages with philosophy and theory (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Berlant, 2020; Povinelli, 2016; Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012) to build alongside the critical work of our colleagues in the fields of curriculum studies and social studies education (Baildon & Damico, 2019; Helmsing, 2016; Jarvie, 2019; Kissling & Bell, 2020; Sonu & Snaza, 2015). Ultimately, this amounts to an allied effort to continue imagining how the project of education can access new ways of being and knowing in the world. One more connection in the rhizome, this article explores how affective aesthetic texts are another entry point into the work of becoming *other*, and our theorizations usher forth from our readings and re-readings of the novel *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), a text that moved us and changed us. Beginning with an interpretive overview of the novel itself, we tease apart three vibrant threads and put them into conversation with theory—desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), interspecies love (Haraway, 2016; Kohn, 2013), and becoming-animal (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 2014)—to theorize a social studies education that is radically open to the living thought of the nonhuman other (Kohn, 2013).

The Overstory: A Plateau in the Branches

There is a point in *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), about midway through, when two of the book's nine human characters (one, a college pothead-turned-arbor-prophetess who goes by the moniker Maidenhair; the other, the last in a line of farmers-turned-occasional-artist named Nick) are in an old-growth forest in California, perched hundreds of feet above the ground. It is early morning, or maybe late afternoon, but they are sleeping, held safe by the massive boughs of a sequoia, one of the book's primary nonhuman characters (The novel is, at its core, about diverse tree lives—sequoia, chestnut, aspen—and the human lives entangled with their roots, branches, leaves, and towering trunks.). Having endured high winds and lightning, driving rain and heat, the two humans, now *wild*, or what we might jump to call, perhaps without thinking, *feral* (and what is it we really mean by either descriptor?), are able to expertly navigate the rickety plywood crisscrossing uneven branches, even in thick darkness. They have been in the tree for two months. Or has it been a year? The sequoia—at least 2,500 years old—is, somehow, under their protection, or at least this is what we assume; it is a "logic" that feels numbingly familiar. Doomed by its "usefulness," the sequoia has been tagged, in a queue to be felled. The two tree-huggers, as they are derisively labeled by the workers employed by a large lumber corporation, are the only "things" standing between the tree and a chainsaw. But they are not, quite importantly, "things" like the sequoia is a "thing," accorded value and rights by the State (what we reverently call "humanity")— rights not extended to the sequoia, nor the millions of other creatures entangled within its vast rhizosphere—the two humans "live" (surviving and coping) upon, in between, and with(in) the organism they are, in the eyes of the State, "protecting." Their very presence, then, is the only reason the destruction of the other thing (an operation that would take less than seven minutes)— a vast living organism more than two millennia old—has been delayed. But in this moment, at this point in the novel, the prophetess is awakened by a powerful, unnatural wind; chopper blades glimmer in the sun, blinding them—the blare of a megaphone fades in and out with the gusts made

by the mechanic bird. *We are ordering you to vacate this tree. Your presence here is illegal. This tree is being destroyed tomorrow morning.* And under the guise of usefulness, violent chaos is unleashed.

The inevitable attack upon the sequoia-human assemblage resonates with us because it stands as an exorbitant, anecdotal moment (Gallop, 2002), a moment in which we were affected and moved, by the text, towards theory and our everyday work as social studies teacher educators—one way of grappling with what the text was *doing* to us and had been doing all along. This article is an outgrowth of collaborative theorizing and sense-making, and it is also an attempt to join Tarc (2020) in bidding farewell to forms of reading and writing divorced from feeling. Instead, as Tarc puts it, we might "be like children only choosing objects that appeal to and move us," texts that, following Klein (1952, as cited in Tarc, 2020), "help us dream, speak, imagine, and revolt" (p. 35). Following this, rather than beginning this article with what might be expected—a summary, a list of characters, major plot points—we have offered an exorbitant moment (the sequoia-human assemblage) as a jumping off point, an affecting, albeit introductory, demonstration of our vibrant engagements with the novel. Massumi (1987) posits that the very point of reading is also the primary challenge of the text: "To pry open the vacant spaces that would enable you to build your life and those of the people around you" (p. xv) upon new plateaus, a fabric of life woven and constituted by the intensities that *become* the book itself. A book's function, then, does not dwell in the realm of understanding but rather the production of intense afterimages that linger, an *opening up* of the virtual. Like the pulsating yellows and reds that persist in the darkness, texts like *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018) do more than "stay with us"; they quite literally disclose new plateaus upon which *multiplicitous possibilities* can flourish, spaces in which new futures arrayed in difference and intensity can be imagined (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

The pedagogical implications provided by theorizations of "the book" that move beyond the human, what Snaza (2019) has called "animate literacies," are immense. First, attending to the affectivity of a book—and to affect more broadly—uncovers reading and writing practices that are constituted by interconnected vitalities, morphing the classroom into "an omnipresent, more-than-human scene of affective collisions and communications among entities and agencies" (p. 82). So, rather than literacy practices driven by understanding, completion, and other value-added measures that saturate many classrooms, "animate literacies" embrace the inherent ambivalence of affect, the possibilities for bewilderment and disorientation, movement and more-than-human relationality. Here, we want to emphasize the *ongoingness* of a book's transmission of intensities and connections between students, teachers, and the numerous other things (e.g., affects, objects) in a given classroom. The book, as it "exists only through the outside and on the outside" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4), is *already* metamorphosizing; that is its function, regardless of pedagogical objectives or whatever else. What is provided, then, is an invitation; less a daunting, (im)possible overhaul than an adjustment—a reattunement to phenomena already occurring. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are even more blunt: "We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with … what bodies without organs it makes its own converge" (p. 4). In other words, the book-assemblage, as a deterritorializing machine, does not function according to humanizing desires; rather, we argue it can work to disrupt the disciplined movements that characterize teaching and everyday life in schools—an agentic, vibrant "thing" always functioning *outside*, always more vast than the sum of its parts (Snaza, 2019). Taken further, then, a more-than-human conception of "a book: might ask teachers to discontinue varied projects of reterritorialization; instead, and along

with their students, they might run and leap with(in) the book, carving out new plateaus and imagining new futures and new politics.

Second, and following this, we offer the social studies classroom—a location well-versed in the reproduction of statist norms and humanizing politics—as a particularly well-positioned site for affective, more-than-human literacy practices. Following Snaza (2019), "Politics does not need assemblies, voting blocs, identifiable coalitions, and large aggregate groups. To assume that politics requires this is to prop up statist politics of recognition" (p. 150). In our view, Snaza's declaration highlights a crucial absence in (social studies) education; read generatively, the issue is not what a voting bloc can do or not do—rather, it is a matter of which beings (human and nonhuman) remain (un)recognized within normative statist voting blocs. Here, we can glimpse how reductive, humanizing definitions of "the political" erase the *always* more-than-human relationships that sustain us (e.g., trees, critters)—living things embedded a "public: that is inherently more-than-human (Bennett, 2010; Snaza, 2018). Crucially, and herein lies the primary offering of this article, *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018)—an agentic, intense assemblage—is always-already functioning, metamorphizing visions of humanizing politics into something more-than, leaving intense after-images that not only resonate but can shift the deepest parts of us—how we are, feel, see, relate, and so on. Powers's (2018) affecting representation of a sequoia-human assemblage under attack from statist/corporate power demonstrates how "it is only when the very borders of the political are drawn for and around the fully human Man that being a thing, an object, an animal, and so on carries with it violent and devastating consequences" (Snaza, 2019, p. 47). So while our prior work (Nelson & Durham, 2022; Nelson et al., 2021) offered visions of social studies curriculum that invite our more-than-human entanglements into classroom inquiry— invitations that aim to shift "the politics of recognition" (Snaza, 2019, p. 54) to nonhuman beings and inanimate objects—this article extends this work by theorizing how "a book," an agentic assemblage, might further open up teacher and student imaginaries to alternative (nonhuman) ways of being, feeling, and representing.

Aesthetic Texts in Social Studies: Confined to the Past and Undertheorized

Briefly, we want to situate this article alongside recent scholarship that has explored the relationship between social studies education, the arts (aesthetic texts), and classroom inquiry. It is evident social studies teachers commonly use a wide range of aesthetic texts to teach about the past—the historical inquiry often equated with social studies education (Christensen, 2006; Clark & Sears, 2020; Desai et al., 2010; Suh, 2013; Suh & Grant, 2014). Aesthetic texts like film, poetry, music, literature, art, and photography are used by teachers for a number of purposes: to represent past events in unique, engaging ways (Barton, 2001; Crawford et al., 2009); to enrich students' historical understandings (Epstein, 1994a, 1994b; Singer, 1991); and to produce affect in social studies—cultivating wonder, empathy, and other resonant responses (Garrett & Kerr, 2016; Helmsing, 2014; Segall, 2021). Indeed, for centuries—and until relatively recently—most people learned about the past and present through the arts, whether in school or in everyday life (Segall, 2021). From statues and monuments to stained-glass windows and sprawling historical novels, aesthetic texts were *more than* fanciful addenda to an authoritative historical narrative; on the contrary—the arts represented "truth." It should come as no surprise, then, that numerous articles and books have explored the integration of the arts in social studies education (Clark & Sears, 2020; Christensen, 2006; Desai et al., 2010). And yet, as Garrett and Kerr (2016) suggest, the use

of aesthetic texts in social studies education remains undertheorized, meaning that what aesthetic texts can *do* in social studies classrooms (what imaginative futures they might open up) and *why* they are used is often reduced to a sort of commonsense instrumentalization—in short, aesthetic texts as a means to an end—the acquisition of historical content knowledge.

We position this article as participating in, and extending, the conversation surrounding aesthetic texts in social studies education. In our view, the primary matter at hand is what we will call textual invitation, what amounts to an openness—on the part of teachers (and students) across social studies' many disciplines and iterations—to unusual, or weird, aesthetic texts, texts that seem, at first glance, to be out of place in a social studies classroom (like *The Overstory* [Powers, 2018] perhaps). And while recent scholarship (Clark & Sears, 2020; Segall, 2021) has demonstrated the prevalence of certain aesthetic texts in social studies education (particularly in history classrooms), we call for more textual openness across the field's many disciplines. In other words, while it makes sense to us that film and photography, art and literature (mainly historical fiction) make frequent appearances in history classrooms, we wonder why aesthetic texts are relatively absent from the Civics or Geography courses down the hall. One hunch we have follows Garrett and Kerr (2016); it is a problem of theory, or a lack thereof—what aesthetic texts might provide *all* social studies classrooms, what they might open up and uncover, remains unimagined. This article aims to take part in such work.

Digging deeper, we can see how, even in history classrooms, the most conventional home for aesthetic texts in social studies, it can be difficult to realize textual openness—a meaningful embrace of textual spontaneity or surprise. For example, we suggest that when historical content—usually delivered in a chronological fashion—guides curriculum, the textuality of the classroom can be dictated by periodization and a focus on particular events and figures, an approach that can potentially reduce textual possibilities (importantly, a thematic or nonlinear approach could achieve quite the opposite effect). And when teachers use aesthetic texts to teach a history lesson, perhaps juxtaposing an aesthetic text with an expository text to foster student engagement, interest, and analysis, the aesthetic text often remains positioned with(in) a marginal relation to the "main text" of the historical narrative; the former utilized as a *way in* to the more important work—rigorous, evidence-based analysis of the latter (Donoghue, 1983; Greene, 1991; Segall, 2021). Here, we can see how the instrumentalization of the aesthetic text functions within a framework defined by lack (in relation to the "true" expository text), whether that means lacking in "truth" or "correctness," thus, cultivating the grounds for its eventual dismissal—an aesthetic text used and relegated back to the margins (Segall, 2021). Moreover, the classroom subordination of an aesthetic text to an expository text (however implicitly it might occur) furthers a Cartesian division between the cognitive and affective registers (and the primacy of the former), a far cry from views of teaching and learning "as a relation, one that unfolds in moment to moment encounters between teachers, students, objects, and texts as teachers create spaces of interaction rather than spaces of knowledge transmission" (Garrett & Kerr, 2016, p. 523). In this sense, the issue is not the content, per se, but whether students are being turned towards texts that, with(in) a text-student relation, might shift how they *are* and *feel* in the world, a pedagogical embodiment of textual openness we suggest could occur in any social studies classroom. Ultimately, we conceive of the social studies classroom as a location ripe for textual experimentation, and we follow Garrett and Kerr (2016) in imagining how texts of all kinds can bring students to life in social studies classes, representing ways of being, feeling, and knowing that move far beyond the conventional, Anthropocentric semiotics of social studies education.

Theoretical Framework: Desire, Interspecies Love, and Becoming-Animal

Literature, like *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), is, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "an assemblage" (p. 4); comprised of lines of articulation, lines of flight, measurable speeds, and movements of deterritorialization and destratification, a book—an assemblage—"is a multiplicity" (p. 4). Our readings of *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018) overlapped with other readings: a range of affect and more-than-human theories. Through this, we were, and still are, struck by moving repetitions, varied attitudes and orientations characterized by playful risk, unbound possibility, zig-zagging imaginaries, and unpredictable desires. In this section, we work through three concepts that, rather than *defining*, *translating*, or *explaining* our readings of *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), unspooled it, a generative disassembling that continues even now as we write and rewrite. While these concepts (desire, interspecies love, and becoming-animal) may not be common lenses through which (social studies) educators view their curricula, we suggest that the homogeneity of the lenses they *do* use is, in part, what has led to the climate crisis that engulfs us. Therefore, we offer our readings of *The Overstory* (2018) not as a lesson plan for how to use this text in a classroom, but rather as an example of how being aware of, and attuned to, the *potential* this text and others possess to affect readers in powerful, unpredictable ways.

Desire

For centuries, desire has been theorized as *lack*; a want or need—a longing for something we do not have (Graeber, 2007). From Plato to Freud, Western thought has often coupled desire with sexuality and the libido, positioning desires—particularly desires deemed taboo—as phenomena to be repressed under social, cultural, and representational norms—what amount to methods of control. Deleuze and Guattari (1977) reconceptualized desire, conceiving it as a process of production, of creation. In this way, what they called desire production is tied to materiality, to reality—never confined (or reduced) to the cerebral and theoretical. A Deleuzoguattarian (1977) conception of desire breaks free from the repressive representations that limited past theorizations. For example, and in a classic turn of phrase, Deleuze and Guattari (1977) argued that desire *qua* lack cannot explain "the satisfaction the handyman experiences when he plugs something into an electrical socket" (p. 7). Rather, the satisfaction of the handyman is a *product* of desire—what they call a desire-machine. The handyman is a part of the desire-machine assemblage and so is the socket, the plug, and the many other interconnected parts positioned to create something new.

In their attempt to reveal the cacophony of desire machines around us, Deleuze and Guattari turn to the example of a schizophrenic unencumbered by the cultural and social pressures that might repress non-normative ways of thinking, feeling, and experiencing. On a walk, free from religious dogma and familial responsibilities, the schizophrenic perceives that "everything is a machine" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 2). Consumed by "a feeling of endless bliss to be in contact with the profound life of every form, to have a soul for rocks, metals, water, and plants, to take into themself, as in a dream, every element of nature," the schizophrenic is part of "a photosynthesis-machine, or at least (can) slip their body into such machines as one part among the others" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 2). In this way, the schizophrenic revels in their freedom, allowing the connections, of which they are a part, to be revealed naturally, authentically—

embracing entanglements with the world around them, not as a sovereign overseer, but as an equal and important part.

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari (1977) declare, "There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together" (p. 2). Desire-machines trouble oppressive, normative representations that reinforce the separation between the human and nonhuman. Instead, desire-machines disclose what has always-already been, revealing that "the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever" (p. 2), producing new conceptions of the world that are interconnected, entangled, and blurred in ways not previously thought possible nor deemed acceptable.

Interspecies Love

We conceptualize interspecies love as a response-ability (Haraway, 2016) "for the differential constitution and differential position of the human among other creatures" (Barad, 2007, p. 136), a relation that seeks "to inhabit an inter-subjective world that is about meeting the other in all the fleshly detail of a mortal relationship" (Haraway, 2003, p. 34). Neither paternalistic nor naively unconditional, interspecies love emerges from chance encounters, moments of *noticing* the messy, more-than-human entanglements that sustain us. Interspecies love is fostered in shared moments of vulnerability and beholdenness, smallness and humility. Upending human-centered notions of domestication and cultivation, interspecies love is nourished by practices that slow things down, make us pause to look around, to *notice*. Tsing (2012) practices a style of *wandering and noticing* in the woods near her home, a habit that fosters chance encounters with fungal companions; the "orange folds of chanterelles pushing through the dark wet or the warm muffins of king boletes popping up through crumbly earth" cause her to "well up … alight with the sweetness of life itself" (pp. 141–142). Love is embedded in such practices, and we call it "love" because of what it demands of our *noticing*, or as Carstens (2020) puts it, "what we are called to" (p. 79) in response.

A few examples: as Tsing (2012) is wandering in the woods near her home, she *notices* how "a mycorrhizal fungus is not just selfish in its eating. It brings the plant water and makes minerals from the surrounding soil available for its host" (p. 143), a noticing with numerous implications for herself and the more-than-humans that sustain her, and vice versa; in the midst of a landslide in Ecuador's Upper Amazon, Kohn (2013)—panicked, running, and looking for safe haven—is, all of a sudden, pulled up short; there—a small bird sits in a bush, staring at him. He writes, "That crisp image of the bird sitting right there in those shrubs grounded me again in a shareable real" (pp. 60–61), what he calls the us-ness of life, the "triadic of community" (p. 61); and in another scene, Kohn (2013) is walking in the forest and trips on a stump; reflecting later, he suggests that, while a habituated and flawed way of walking is good enough, it is not growing. He writes, "Perhaps that day … I had become, for a moment, more like matter—'mind whose habits had become fixed'—and less a learning and yearning, living and growing self" (p. 65). Taken together, we offer these small noticings as examples of interspecies love—a response-able attentiveness that disrupts our habits and old relations, an opportunity to "remake ourselves, however momentarily, anew, as one with the world around us" (p. 63).

Becoming-Animal

The notion of becoming something *other*, something *more-than-human*, builds from an idea "dominant Western philosophy has blocked and suppressed" (Morton, 2016, p. 5): that being human does not require acquiescence to the human-made hierarchy, a hierarchy that positions the human as sovereign. It follows, then, that becoming something *other* than human requires an onto-epistemological shift, recognizing that "nonhumans are installed at profound levels of the human—not just biologically and socially, but in the very structure of thought and logic" (p. 159). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explore *becoming* in detail, characterizing it as uninterested in a sense achievement and unconcerned with the finite and specific. They write, "becoming is the *movement* by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible" (p. 294, emphasis added). In this way, becoming cannot be advanced by following a pre-determined sequence or pedagogically-planned path; it is too complex for that—especially when considering cross-species becomings. "The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of a wasp," posit Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "it forms a map *with* the wasp" (p. 12, emphasis added). Becoming in this way implies the process is characterized by "simultaneous movements," by "a block of alliance" (p. 292) that includes the human and nonhuman alike. In this way, becoming-human is tied up, entangled, and contoured by becoming-animal; the human and animal forming a map of becoming together.

"If the writer is a sorcerer," write Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc." (p. 240). In other words, *writing* about something other than the human is itself an act of becoming something *other than human*. Pushing further, Massumi (2014) playfully calls this practice "writing like an animal" (p. 62). Massumi positions writing like an animal as an ethico-aesthetic response to norms, what he calls "the leaden demands, so frequently heard, that one's actions be 'relevant' at all cost, that 'they contribute to society' in a way that is already recognizable" (p. 40). We offer this article as an exercise in writing like animals, consisting of a dual resistance to "the imperatives of already expressed importance" (p. 43) and an adoption of schizophrenic dispositions freed from the normative and non-weird. By recognizing the movement that characterizes becoming, we push toward what Massumi (2014) calls "lifeways to come" (p. 88)—situations unfolding into ever-unfolding situations.

Desirous Threads in *The Overstory*

Our readings and re-readings of *The Overstory* (2018) were fueled by desire. Prior to our readings, we found ourselves feeling lost, active players in an Anthropocene responsible for destruction on a scale not yet realized in human history and, as a result, desired something different, an "attunement to ecological reality more accurate than what is habitual in the media, in the academy, and in society at large" (Morton, 2016, p. 159). Our desires were pushing us to participate differently, to *be* in the world in ways that are less destructive and more open to what we can learn from the things around us—learning to *be* with the more-than-human in more loving and attentive ways. But these were not ways of being we *knew*; perhaps, then, we had to use the desire-machines emerging around us to create them.

The trees in *The Overstory* (2018) became partners in our quest, even, dare we say, our leaders. We plugged into the trees, and the resulting desire-machines continue to fuel our becoming closer to them, forcing us to be more attuned to *their* desires and more open to how, together, we

might map more livable futures. One character's arc in *The Overstory* (2018) captures the revelations and consequences of a similar desire-machine. Neelay Mehta's story begins just as home computing was becoming possible. He and his father built their own computers, machines that would become important parts of the desire-machine fueling Neelay's life. Akin to the walk of Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) schizophrenic, Powers (2018) removes an all-too-human feature from Neelay's worldly experience—he frees him from the confines of normative existence. After getting in trouble with a teacher in grade school, for rejecting the prescribed pedagogy the teacher had prepared, Neelay, afraid of the shame he had brought upon his family, climbs an encina tree near his school. The tree beckons him upward:

> There, he takes stock in his ruined life.
> He must suck things up, go home, and take his punishment. He leans out for a good look at the big picture, his last for a while. His parents will ground him for months.
> He sighs. Steps down onto the branch below him to descend. And slips. There will be years to wonder whether the branches jerked. Whether the tree had it in for
> him. Limbs slam him on the way down. They bat him back and forth like a pinball.
> Earth rushes up. He lands on the concrete path and bounces on his coccyx, which cracks the base of his spine. Time stops. He lies on his shattered back, looking upward. The dome above him hovers, a cracked shell about to fall in shards all around him. A thousand—a thousand thousand—green-tipped, splitting fingerlings fold over him, praying and threatening. Bark disintegrates; wood clarifies. The trunk turns into stacks of spreading metropolis, networks of conjoined cells pulsing with energy and liquid sun, water rising through long thin reeds, rings of them banded together into pipes that draw dissolved minerals up through the narrowing tunnels of transparent twig and out through their waving tips while sun-made sustenance drops down in tubes just inside them. A colossal, rising, reaching, stretching space elevator of a billion independent parts, shuttling air into the sky and storing the sky deep underground, sorting possibility from out of nothing: the most perfect piece of self-writing code that his eyes could hope to see. Then his eyes close in shock and Neelay shuts down. (pp. 102–103)

In this moment, we witness how Neelay's recognition of the increasing assemblage (that had always been there) begins to inform his desire-machine. It includes the sky, the sun, the tree, the rain, the twigs, the roots, the leaves, the rings, and it includes, though we are not yet sure how, Neelay himself. His injuries are permanent. He will never walk again. He becomes rooted to the ground just like the tree from which he fell (or was he pushed?)—the two beings now sharing more characteristics than those that separate them. But now, the code of the tree becomes the inspiration for the computer codes Neelay goes on to create. He dreams/desires computer codes that will one day be "living things," "self-learning, self-creating," "so fast, they'll think we're not even here" (p. 107). In short, the codes he desires are the codes already embedded in the trees, already written in nature.

It would be easy to describe the natural world, and trees therein, as Neelay's inspiration, his muses—but the situation is far more complex. In our reading, Neelay is navigating the world *alongside* the trees—seeking guidance, advice, and yes, inspiration. Above all, Neelay is an innovator, not only through the code he writes for the computer games he creates, but in how he lives his life, recognizing his role in the assemblage around him and open to the pleasure he receives from the trees around him, pleasures similar to Deleuze and Guattari's (1977) handyman

and socket. For us, what once seemed absurd within a human-bound view of human and more-than-human relations becomes possible *through* Neelay—his shift from the discreet ones and zeroes of computer code to a more-than human-tree relationship.

The depth of Neelay's connection to the trees around him is revealed one particular evening. Anxious about a major business decision he has to make, Neelay—instead of seeking out a peer or colleague—drives to Stanford's inner quad to think.

He spins 360, surveying, surrounded again by those otherworldly life-forms the way he was six years earlier. All those creatures from another galaxy, far, far away: dove tree, jacaranda, desert spoon, camphor, flame, empress, kurrajong, red mulberry. He remembers how they whispered to him about a game he was destined to make—a game played by countless people worldwide, a game that puts the players smack in the middle of a living, breathing jungle filled with potential only dimly imaginable.

Tonight, the trees are tightlipped, refusing to tell him anything … . He wills the menagerie of trees to give him a sign. The extraterrestrial beings wave their bizarre branches. The collective tapping in the air nags at him. Memory rises inside, like sap … .

The trees wave him on, to another tree, high in the mountains. Neelay drives around, back and forth, up and down, but cannot find it. Then he sees it, woven into the other shadows less than a dozen yards in front of him. He knows why he missed it: It's too big. Too big to make sense of. Too big to credit as a living thing. It's a triple-wide door of darkness into the side of the night … . And up the trunk runs, straight up, beyond comprehension, an immortal, collective ecosystem—Sempervirens. (pp. 195–197)

Sempervirens is a Latin term meaning always flourishing, vigorous. It is what Neelay names this redwood tree, and it is what he will name his coding company. Moreover, it is how he envisions his own existence; not separated from, but alongside—with, and connected to, Sempervirens. This new way of being drives his work and coding, his desires and decisions. It is a desire-machine that reveals to us, in a visceral sense, how *we* might also be plugged into to the natural world in ways that lead towards more-than-human flourishing. It is crucial to remember that it was Neelay's rejection of more traditional classroom practices (e.g., the identification of a lack (of knowledge) followed by activities aiming to erase the lack) that led him to the recognition that vigorous flourishing lay beyond such a structure. Indeed, it is a similar conundrum we confront as teacher educators. But now, our own desire-machines are beginning to produce conceptions of classrooms that are *other*, that are *more-than* what we have previously experienced. Different, even weird, ways of being in social studies classrooms that might lead towards more supportive, less destructive futures. Next, and to further this vision, we explore how affectations usually reserved for our human companions might be extended to the nonhuman beings we are always-already with.

Interspecies Love in *The Overstory*

For the human and nonhuman characters in *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), the concept of love is a transcendent throughline, escaping frequent attempts to categorize, confine, and territorialize. The numerous human and nonhuman representations of interspecies love in *The Overstory* moved us in at least two different ways. First, they exceed the human, showing how

trees, human beings, and other living things can enter into pedagogical relationships of love and response-ability. Second, the text imprinted afterimages that still linger, rearranging our habits of noticing, the patterns of (in)attentiveness we consider foundational to ethical interspecies contacts.

This section is divided into two resonant, interconnected afterimages, snippets of text that continue to grow in size with(in) our imaginations, afterimages that color how we see ourselves—as writers and teacher educators—in ongoing interspecies contact, as well as how we imagine social studies curriculum and teaching responding to Tsing's (2012) crucial point: all humans and more-than-humans are, inescapably, interspecies.

Afterimage I

There is a fleeting moment in *The Overstory*, about one-third in, when Olivia Vandergriff, one of the book's human characters, is sitting in an old sedan. Her car is in park as a train crosses the road.

> A long, slow, heartland freight rolls through on its way north to the superhub of Gary and Chicago. The steady *ka-thump* of the wheels through the intersection sets up a dub tune in her head. The train is endless; she settles in. (Powers, 2018, p. 164).

It is important to mention that Olivia has recently returned from the land of the dead; just weeks earlier, her heart fully stopped after being electrocuted in her college dorm room—an immoderate life put to rest. "She is dead for a minute and ten seconds. No pulse, no breath" (p. 157).

But she was returned, and now she thinks she is going crazy. "Beings of light" keep appearing to her, swarming her mind. "Something's watching—huge, living sentinels who know who she is" (p. 158). They hum, "*You were worthless … but now you're not. You have been spared from death to do a most important thing*" (p. 163). Frightened, she leaves town, both enthralled and terrified by their sublime beauty and strength. She drives west, not aimless, but unsure of her final destination. She is being guided, led by the beings of light towards something—something pressing, something larger than herself—something they want her to do. Can it be possible she was *meant* to do something with her life? That morning, the beings of light invaded her car—they were everywhere.

> Unbearable beauty … passing into and through her body … they speak no words out loud. Nothing so crude as that. They aren't even *they*. They're part of her, kin in some way that isn't yet clear. Emissaries of creation … dying has given her new eyes. (p. 163)

She pleads with them to tell her what to do, "*just a sign … just say what you want of me*" (p. 163). Waiting with a pencil and a scrap of cardboard, she waits, ready to record their commands.

And then, stopped at the train crossing, Olivia *sees*; indeed, her eyes adjust (or have they been slowly adjusting?) and she finally *notices*—in front of her is a forest, chopped and butchered.

> Car after car clicks past … a rolling river of wood cut into uniform beams streams by without end. She begins to count cars, but stops at sixty. She has never seen so much wood. A map animates her head: trains like this, this very minute, thread the country in every direction, feeding all the great metro sprawls and their satellites. (p. 165)

And as Olivia sits, her sight continues to shift; what she notices is expanding, becoming more capacious—affective attachments are being cultivated. What she cares about, what she will choose to love and fight for—even to the point of death, her own becoming-imperceptible (Braidotti, 2013)—extends to more-than-human creatures, to trees, living things that "make significance, make meaning, as easily as they make sugar and wood from nothing, from air, and sun, and rain" (Powers, 2018, p. 168), "living thought" that usually escapes human eyes (Kohn, 2013).

Interspecies contact is inherent to all relations (Tsing, 2012), but in our figuring, interspecies love requires an attitude of habituated noticing that is steeped in care and response-ability. Indeed, it is a new way of seeing—a kind that reorients future movements. Present, here, is a sort of enchanted animism, and we follow Kohn (2013) in looking for ways in which the world's enchantment might be continually rediscovered. He writes, "The world is animate, whether or not we are animists. It is filled with selves—I daresay souls—human and otherwise" (p. 217), so whether we think of *The Overstory*'s (Powers, 2018) beings of light as the living thought of trees, the "spirits" of the trees, or something else entirely, the magical weirdness of more-than-human representation remains—radical possibilities are opened up, by the text, with(in) our imaginations as readers.

For example, in social studies education, representations of past-present-future realities are decidedly human-centered; the human sits, sovereignly, atop a hierarchy, and an Anthropocentric reality is made real (and continually reified as such) because its representational currency is human-bound—a cyclical and systemic regime governed by rationality and the already-recognizable. Indeed, these are habitual ways of being, knowing, and noticing in social studies education, ontoepistemologies that reproduce *decidedly unenchanted* realities. Here, we are suggesting that textual afterimages like Olivia's moment at the train tracks—her sudden shift in seeing show how realities are multiplicitous—illuminate "more than that which exists" (Kohn, 2013, p. 216), so even as we cannot help but engage in the world in specifically human ways, Kohn (2013) reminds us there is still "a living world that lies in part beyond the human" (p. 216). Kohn continues,

> Spirits are real. How we treat this reality is as important as recognizing it as such; otherwise we risk taking spirits to be a kind of real—the kind that is socially or culturally constructed—that is "all too human" and all too familiar. (p. 216)

In our reading, Kohn is highlighting an important difference between matters of kind; for example, Olivia's beings of light *are* real, but they are real in a more-than-human sense—a kind of realness that escapes "all too human" attempts to colonize with "understanding." Moreover, to acknowledge the existence of more-than-human realities demands a particular disposition—an open humility similar to how Olivia adjusts her sight, a *becoming* that is attuned to the beings of light and open to relations that are weird in how they exist with(in) realities that are human but also lay "in part beyond the human" (Kohn, 2013, p. 216). One implication, then, is that engaging social studies students with this textual moment might be *enchanting*, meaning the text's renderings of trees' living thoughts have the affective capacity to reconfigure students' ever-present interspecies contacts, perhaps opening them up to Olivia-like adjustments. An *enchanted social studies* is more-than-human in how it centers students' imaginations, inviting realities into the classroom that "lay in part beyond the human" (p. 216); not an abdication of "the human" but rather conceiving of "human" as *always-already* more-than-human—one way of helping students

flourish by acknowledging and attending to, rather than denying, our interspecies contacts in creative and response-able ways.

Finally, we find Olivia's *noticing* of the murdered trees compelling because of its suddenness; as a vivid, resonant afterimage, it jolted us awake, moving us to break from the page and look around—a kind of "looking" that was invariably altered. Importantly, *noticing* functions in the realm of tweaks and adjustments, not overhauls or born-again resets. Olivia's noticing—a moment in the book covered in less than a paragraph—demonstrates that what we love and care about, what more-than-human living thoughts we choose to notice and whom we choose to care for, is always an open question.

Afterimage II

We are still at the train tracks. Olivia has not moved. And suddenly, her mind is invaded by a stark vision: *A circle of human beings, chained together, encircle a large sequoia*. On a different plane of reality, cars begin to honk and then peel out around her, drivers yelling at the enchanted woman—a woman attending to the living thought of trees. The living thoughts of the trees radiate: "*The most wonderous products of four billion years of life need help*. She laughs and opens her eyes, which fill with tears. *Confirmed. I hear you. Yes*" (p. 165). In these few moments, Olivia's mattering map (Grossberg, 1992) is being rearranged; new habits of noticing disclose more-than-human relations, relations that are, in the text, reciprocal, in a quite literal sense. By "provincializing language" (Kohn, 2013), room is made for other kinds of thought, "a kind of thought that is more capacious, one that holds and sustains the human" (p. 224). Again, we can glimpse how an attendance to more-than-human thought *increases* the flourishing of the human, as though human-bound ways of being and knowing actively reduce our more-than potentialities. Following this, more capacious conceptions of "thought" do not run against the human; rather, other kinds of thought can "hold and sustain the human" (p. 224), a life-giving recognition of our interspecies beholdenness.

The ramifications of Olivia's noticing are steep; compounded with other small happenings, Olivia's *becoming* in the first half of the novel leads her to the boughs of the sequoia we discussed above, perhaps the book's most moving representation of interspecies love. By dwelling with(in) this afterimage, we can see how Olivia's noticings vault her into the sky; they literally move her into loving interspecies contact with a massive rhizo-sphere thousands of years old. For us, these afterimages continue to percolate, generating visions for how similar noticings, however inconsequential they might seem, can be cultivated in social studies classrooms—how the many trains we have watched pass hundreds of times, phenomena previously unnoticed or dismissed as meaningless, have the capacity to rearrange our mattering maps. Over time, Olivia *becomes* Maidenhair (just as Nick *becomes* Watchman and the sequoia *becomes* Mimas), and, in our interpretation, the interspecies love between Olivia, Nick, and Mimas is reciprocal because the sequoia's living thoughts—its capacity to represent ways of being and swaying that are *other*— are acknowledged by its human companions. And throughout their "triadic of community" (Kohn, 2013, p. 61), questions like who is protecting who, who is domesticating who, and who is teaching who are provocatively blurred.

Following this, the interspecies love between Maidenhair, Watchman, and Mimas is reciprocal in a pedagogical sense—yet another disruption of modernist conceptions of the teacher

(and curricular representations more broadly) *qua* exclusive to the human. When the two humans first meet the sequoia, it is evident Maidenhair is *be(com)ing* in a new kind of way. She says,

> "Nick. We're here. In Mimas." She speaks the creature's name like it's an old friend. Like she's been talking with it for a long time … . A kerosene lamp illuminates her face. He has never seen her look so confirmed. "Come here." She takes his wrist and guides it to her. "Here. Closer." As if farther away were an option. And she takes him like someone who's sure that life has need of her. (Powers, 2018, pp. 262–263)

We see, here, that Maidenhair is *be(com)ing* upon multiple realities, an affecting example of how interspecies love can erode the mono-reality made hegemonic by modernity (Hage, 2015). And while Watchman remains stuck in a familiar mono-reality, Mimas is intent on teaching him other ways of being and knowing, "an archetypal form of teaching, namely that of *showing*" (Biesta, 2017, p. 44, emphasis added). In this afterimage, the two humans have lived with(in) Mimas for just a few weeks. Night is approaching, and Maidenhair turns to Watchman (Nick):

> Can you feel it?" she asks, under the mayhem in the western sky early one evening, or perhaps the next. With no more explanation, he knows what she means. He can read her mind now, so many hours have they passed together in purposeless contemplation, knee to elbow, elbow to knee. *Can you feel it lift and disappear? That standing wave of constant static. The distraction so ubiquitous you never even knew you were wrapped up in it. Human certainty. The thing that blinds you to what's right here—gone.* He can—*can* feel it. The tree, like some tremendous signal beacon. The two of them, turning into something powered by the spots of speckled sun that reach them through the dozens of feet of Mimas's branches still above them. (Powers, 2018, p. 294)

Rendered in the text as a "signal beacon," Mimas is teaching Watchman and Maidenhair by *showing* its human companions how to be, know, and feel in ways that are *other*, how "human certainty" flattens life's multiple realities into a mono-reality, a "standing wave of constant static" that obscures other planes and possibilities, even versions of themselves that can begin "turning into" something more-than they are, "something powered by the spots of speckled sun"—just as they were a moment before, but positioned differently in relation to one another, human and nonhuman.

More-Than Human Pedagogies: Teaching as Showing

Mimas's pedagogy of showing is crucial, here, and we follow Biesta (2017) in making a critical distinction between two teaching archetypes: teaching as showing and teaching as explanation. For Biesta, education is not about a teacher "facilitating expression but about bringing children and young people into dialogue with the world … turning them towards the world and about arousing their desire to be in the world and with the world, and not just with themselves" (p. 37). Teaching as showing is an interruptive gesture—a turning of the student towards something the teacher believes is worth engaging with. Moreover, an interruptive showing is, quite radically, followed by risky openness—a literal "Look!" that is invested in student freedom and the infinite, uncoerced possibilities that might follow. It is important to note that Biesta (2017) does not

position teaching as explanation as the negative side of the same coin; rather, the ambitions of both archetypes differ in critical ways. Explanation is about bringing someone into reason, into "a domain of sense-making or, in more abstract terms, into a world—a world in which some things make sense and other things don't make sense" (p. 45), and we want to emphasize the oft-needed place of explanation within the complex, ever-unfolding pedagogical scene. And yet, we are struck by the human-boundness of teaching as explanation; it is a pedagogical archetype we all recognize—the social studies classroom as a landscape of rationality and sense-making, not bad aims, per se, but aims that work, in turn, to reproduce an Anthropocentric mono-reality. What is lost, here, are more-than-human approaches to teaching—following Mimas, pedagogies that turn students towards strange, enchanting encounters.

Teaching as showing requires form and thought, what Van Manen (2015) calls pedagogical tact—generative, meaningful interruptions do not (usually) simply happen (A point that holds numerous implications for forms of "student-centered inquiry" we have observed in many social studies classrooms, approaches that, unfortunately, are lacking in form, thought, and tact.). Teaching is "not (just) about facilitation, flourishing, letting emerge, or even letting learn, but it is always involved in the more difficult question concerning the quality of what is arriving or emerging. This makes the work of the educator fundamentally risky" (Biesta, 2017, p. 88). In other words, tactful *showing* requires risk from both the teacher and student; showing is not an abstract interruption, but an interruption one person (the teacher) has decided is worth turning the student towards—an intimate and "profoundly relational gesture," the prelude to what Biesta (2017) argues art can *do* in education:

> Art can offer resistance, art can slow down, art can make people stop in their tracks, art can make us think, art can make our heads turn, art can make our hearts skip a beat, art can offer us something to get our hands on. (p. 89)

In our view, Mimas's more-than-human pedagogy exemplifies Biesta's (2017) vision on at least two levels: one, as a teacher in relation with Maidenhair and Nick, Mimas's is *showing* their students an alter-politics (Hage, 2015) freed from human certainty and a mono-reality; two, Mimas teaches us, present-future readers, within and through the affectivity of *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018). On multiple planes, then, Mimas's branches reach out and touch us, revealing new realities.

Ultimately, Mimas's pedagogy succeeds in *turning* Watchman and Maidenhair towards the world, and Biesta's (2017) use of "arousal" and "desire" capture the primal nature of the triad's pedagogical scene. Quietly, or perhaps silently (After all, Maidenhair is adamant the beings of light do not "speak"; the trees' living thoughts are communicated with(in) a strange, undefinable resonance.), Mimas teaches the two humans by *showing* them an ontology that is *more-than* the distracting static of human certainty. The tree does not lecture them; neither does Mimas explain how, or what, a human-bound mono-reality is lacking. Rather, Mimas, "like some tremendous signal beacon" (p. 294), simply *shows* Watchman, turning him towards other realities, realties that have *always-already* been *more-than*. Taking a tree's pedagogical capacity seriously opens up multiple realities, alter-worlds that multiply beyond the text, beyond our readings and re-readings; again, the textual theorization of Mimas as a more-than-human pedagogue in *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018) resonates and lingers in powerful, affective afterimages, coloring how we see Mimas's leafy relatives in a walk around the block or on a wooded path, as well as how we continue to (re)imagine ourselves in relation to a world that, if we are turning towards it, continues to unfold in multiplicitous, unpredictable ways—all beginning with a book, with the living thoughts of trees.

Dwelling with(in) the shimmering afterimages of Mimas *qua* teacher, we imagine social studies classroom futures in which the teacher, as a shower, might think about arousing the desires of their students to be *in* and *with(in)* a more-than-human world in new ways, a project that follows Spivak's (2001) conception of the very purpose of education: The "uncoercive rearrangement of desires" (para. 16). And as Biesta (2017) reminds us above, art—and specifically affective aesthetic texts like *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018)—can *do* this work with us, texts we turn our students towards in tactful, risky, and provocative ways.

Becoming-Tree in *The Overstory*

During the process of becoming, the dynamo of desire picks up with energetic speed. Powers, the sorcerer writer, renders *tree* with such magic that he—and we as readers—are always-already *becoming* with(in) the book-machine, becoming-animal, becoming-tree. Writing in reviews of the novel, other readers touch on this phenomenon. Shapton (as quoted in Dwyer, 2018) suggests that "Unlike the Lorax, who spoke for the trees, Powers prefers to let them do their own talking" (para. 11), and Kingsolver (2018) writes,

> Using the tools of the story, [Powers] pulls readers heart-first into a perspective so much longer-lived and more subtly developed than the human purview that we gain glimpses of a vast, primordial sensibility, while watching our own kind get whittled down to size. (para. 3)

Both commentators highlight the affective impact Powers' "writing-tree" has on the reader—Shapton (as cited in Dwyer, 2018) underscores the trees' more-than-human forms of representation, and Kingsolver (2018) describes a generative sense of self-diminishment that can accompany "glimpses" of nonhuman tree-sensibilities (para. 3). Returning to *The Overstory* itself (Powers, 2018), the human character Dr. Patricia Westerford best illustrates the process of becoming-human/animal/tree and how those processes are one and the same. Aside from her father, Patty's most loyal and constant childhood companions were the twig creatures she created. Of course, the "twig creatures could talk, though most, like Patty, have no need of words" (Powers, 2018, p. 112). Her connection to the natural world was cultivated by her father, the two of them even conducting a decade-long experiment in the back yard to figure out from whence beech trees gain their mass (the answer is from the air). But Patty did not feel comfortable until graduate school; it was there, in the woods around Madison, Wisconsin, that Patty discovered something remarkable was happening with the maple trees she was studying. The maples, under "full-scale insect invasion" (p. 125), responded.

> The trees under attack pump out insecticides to save their lives. That much is uncontroversial. But something else in the data makes her flesh pucker: trees a little way off, untouched by the invading swarms, ramp up their own defenses when their neighbor is attacked. Something alerts them. They get wind of the disaster, and they prepare. Only one conclusion makes any sense: The wounded trees send out alarms that other trees smell. Her maples are signaling. They're linked together in an airborne network, sharing an immune system across acres of woodland. These brainless, stationary trunks are protecting each other. (pp. 125–126)

Protecting each other? In our first readings, this notion struck us, jolting us awake (Tarc, 2020)—a lingering and strangely resonant afterimage. The idea that seemingly-individual and stationary (literally rooted) entities act beyond themselves, showing concern (can we say this?) about the well-being of others was a proposition we had not expected. The very fact we are considering (and writing about) the caring motivations of maple trees is significant evidence of multiple *becomings* taking place—something creative and productive. Following Carstens (2020), when care is rendered immanent, when it is freed from human-exclusivity and extended to Patty's maple trees, opportunities to care become radically available, and a more-than-human ethic begins to take shape. To *care* for another requires a first step—a noticing, a response to a need or harm. By reconfiguring care as more-than—as beyond the human—opportunities *to care* are multiplied, an ever-expanding ethics of care that is bountiful in what, and who, we can respond to in caring ways. Once again, we can glimpse how a human-bound mono-reality reduces concepts like care by confining them to the human realm. So, rather than excluding Patty's maples and her twig figures, an immanent conception of care imagines responses borne out of reverence and knowledge—what becomes a mutual, more-than-human respect for the caring responses we might begin to notice are *always-already* happening around us. In our readings, this moment generated a sort of respect for trees, even feelings of *wanting to be more like them*. What the text did (and continues to *do* as an afterimage) is to productively trouble sentimental characterizations of trees. The text provides escape routes for the trees, varied ways of leaving the mono-reality of human metaphor to plant roots upon multiple planes. And the text helps us escape, too, offering numerous becomings—human, tree, other—that continue to affect how we see our maple companions (and other diverse tree lives) in our own neighborhoods and woods.

Throughout *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018), Patty is writing her own book, *The Secret Forest*, and through each new chapter of her book, resonant instances of "writing-tree" occur. In all of this, both Powers and Patty embolden and energize the becoming-tree of the reader, fueling curious meanderings. And over time, we are no longer sure of the boundaries that separate the tree from "the human world" or what, in fact, it means to be tree and/or (not) human. The lines blur as the language used to describe both adopts a unified timbre. Powers and Patty write that if you "join enough living things together, through the air and underground … you wind up with something that has *intention*" (pp. 283–284). Because the concept of intention has always, in our prior readings of the world, been confined to humans, applying intention to trees struck us as weird. That a tree, or, in the case of aspens, an entire forest even, could act with intention continued to chip away at the human-bounds governing our mono-reality. And yet, we know we are joined *with* trees, for example, through the air we exhale as poison, air taken in as nutrition by trees, and then reconstituted and given back to us—again and again—as life-sustaining oxygen. As we linger with(in) the knowledge that we (us/me/you) are entangled with diverse tree lives—indeed, one cannot live without the other—it becomes evident that more-than-human intentions are (or should be) informed—and shaped by—our interaction. In fact, according to Powers and Patty, "the gap between trees and people is nothing at all" (pp. 394–395). In her last appearance in *The Overstory* (2018), Dr. Patty Westerford challenges the reader by describing humanity's changing notions of the sentience, and subsequent value, of nonhuman beings as compared to trees. Through this moment, we starkly realize trees have been "speaking" to us all along, but we have not been attending to their living thoughts.

> We scientists are taught to never look for ourselves in species. So, we make sure nothing looks like us! Until a short while ago, we didn't even let chimpanzees have consciousness,

let alone dogs or dolphins. Only man, you see: only man could know enough to want things. But believe me: trees want something from us, just as we've always wanted things from them … . Men and trees are closer cousins than you think. We're two things hatched from the same seed, heading off in opposite directions, using each other in a shared place. That place needs all its parts. (pp. 453–455)

Risking anthropomorphism, *The Overstory* (2018) asks us to see ourselves in and through other species, illuminating how we ought to care for them in response-able, loving ways, and to become *with* them—just as we have since the beginning of time, whether we *noticed* or not. Dr. Patty Westerford demonstrated—through *becoming* with her companion trees, her conspirators in research—that a human-bound separation between human and tree does not exist. And so, if we consider *becoming* an important part of any educational endeavor, we cannot ignore the infinite more-than-human relations that are always-already a part of such becomings. Certainly, becoming-human has tragically affected the *becomings* of trees in our backyards, our communities, and our interconnected world. We wonder how many other aspects of our shared becomings we have ignored—how unaware we remain of other opportunities to respond, in caring and loving ways, to more-than-human need and harm. Through its magical affectivity, *The Overstory* (2018) produced desires in us to understand the role trees play in our individual and collective lives, and it has begun—with(in) our theorizations, our writing and re-writing—to reconfigure our dispositions towards trees, towards each other, and towards the more-than-human. This is just one derivative of the ontoepistemological shifts our desires have produced and *The Overstory* (2018) has hastened: that our becomings are always-already more-than-human, not separate from the many other becomings of the nonhuman beings and things around us; that attending to our entanglements with the other (both human and nonhuman alike) can lead to the more supportive, less destructive ways of being we ultimately seek.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article has, in many ways, aimed to answer Tarc's (2020) call "to experiment with the 'literary pedagogy' of texts that bring us closer to feeling for our own world and those of others" (p. 40). *The Overstory* (Powers, 2018) is a text that made us *feel* far beyond ourselves, feelings that, while self-perceived, shape-shifted (and continue to shape-shift) as we plugged our desire-machines into this strange text. Our feelings became more-than ourselves, a sense of self that was both diminished (in a humble sense) and expanded in how our sight had changed. We had become—and are still becoming—better at noticing; more attentive to the more-than-humans that sustain us and that we can, in turn, care for also. Of course, these shifts have started to emerge in various ways in our practices as social studies teacher educators, and one larger hope for this article is that it might nudge social studies teachers and teacher educators to begin thinking more *expansively* about how affective aesthetic texts like *The Overstory* might be invited into our classrooms in creative, experimental ways. The varied pathways this article offers are ones we hope readers might take up, reconfigure, steal, and re-shape to fit their own practices in meaningful ways.

Finally, we position a text like *The Overstory* as a potentially joyful intervention into climate discourses that are, for many good reasons, overwhelming, depressing, and seemingly

hopeless. In discussing his novel's potential as an affective text, Powers (as quoted in Klein, 2021) suggests,

> If the arts take up this story of kinship, connectivity, the relocation of meaning outward into a shared process of rehabilitation, what seems like a depressive set of sacrifices to very little end could instead begin to be represented as a sort of joyful assertion of purpose, a kind of leverage of diversity and difference. (n.p.)

In our view, in this time of ongoing (and worsening) climate crisis and mass extinctions of species, the work of social studies teachers and teacher educators must be responsive, full stop. Disavowing pedagogical responsibility according to arbitrary (and made up) disciplinary boundaries in a field as richly interdisciplinary as social studies cannot continue. We encourage the many social studies educators already engaged in this critical work to continue becoming, to continue experimenting and playfully challenging mono-reality curricular norms. All texts, no matter the genre, ought to be invited into our classrooms. After all, we never know what a text can *do* until we turn our students towards it. Until we show them.

Epilogue

> *The Greeks had a word, xenia—guest friendship—a command to take care of travelling strangers, to open your door to whoever is out there, because anyone passing by, far from home, might be God. Ovid tells the story of two immortals who came to Earth in disguise to cleanse the sickened world. No one would let them in but one old couple, Baucis and Philemon. And their reward for opening their door to strangers was to live on after death as trees—an oak and a linden—huge and gracious and intertwined. What we care for, we will grow to resemble. And what we resemble will hold us, when we are us no longer.* (Powers, 2018, pp. 498–499)

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Book Review of Saarinen's *Affect in Artistic Creativity*: *Painting to Feel*

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IN THIS ESSAY BOOK REVIEW, I examine what the role of painters' affective experiences can generate for curriculum. As a working artist and art educator, I found Saarinen's (2020) remarkable book, *Affect in Artistic Creativity: Painting to Feel*, offers not only theoretical perspectives into painting and feeling but also wisdom about processes of self-fulfillment and co-creative, interpersonal enrichment that can both explain and further advance the practices of teaching and curriculum building. Saarinen brings relational psychoanalytic ideas to bear upon questions of art and creativity. Through this nexus, meaningful human experiences can be explained and comprehended in ways relevant to curriculum theorizing and classroom experience. That is to say, by being a book about artistic creativity, *Affect in Artistic Creativity* also speaks educational truths. There is something "artistic" happening in education and perhaps something "educational" in artistic practice. The targeted readership includes artists, art educators, art researchers, psychoanalysts, and psychoanalytic scholars. I argue that fields of education, particularly curriculum studies, could benefit from Saarinen's book by considering the role of affect in creativity in curriculum design, inquiry, and classroom teaching practices.

The book's greatest strength is the rich interdisciplinary union of theories Saarinen weaves together about "affectivity in painting" (p. 143). These ideas are outlined in Chapter 1. In his study, "affects" are a general class of feelings that occur in painters' experience with their artwork and a meeting point between bodily and subjective experience. Saarinen's theoretical framework merges the contemporary philosophy of emotion and affect as he examines Colombetti and Krueger's (2015) affective scaffolding and relational psychoanalysis, drawing mainly from Winnicott's (1965/2006, 1971, 1977) theories of creativity, unconscious dimensions of artistic creativity, and the mother-infant relationship. The connection of Winnicottian ideas, how the mother-infant relationship significantly impacts the adult artist's relationship to their painting work and creativity later in life as a means of exploring how painters create niches and scaffold feelings through their creative painting process, is of high value. Chapters 2 and 3 detail these ideas and are addressed in the following.

In Chapter 2, Saarinen discusses *affective scaffolding* applied to painting. Affective scaffolding describes how our environmental resources sustain our affective states (e.g., our connections with people, spaces, and objects). Saarinen (2020) forms an open philosophical

position pragmatic to scaffolding—a view that people live in a world, "a multiform niche" (p. 16), that they must participate in to have an impact on their affective states. Saarinen says, "we find ourselves in niches that scaffold the way we feel" (p. 17), meaning that a niche is a particular space in which alterations or transformations can occur to one's feelings and emotions in the level of intensity. Saarinen further explicates various dimensions of affective niches and scaffolding relating to painting, including temporality, reciprocality, individual/collectivity, trust, individualization, entrenchment, and intent. Saarinen argues that painting is a process of "expressing or giving form to experience, or about communicating certain contents" (p. 28), and creating niches is essential for the artist to enable and explore feeling.

Metaphorically speaking, I believe readers can make connections to visual arts education, general education, and theorizing about creativity in Saarinen's book, particularly, Saarinen's account of the artist's perspective. The experience becomes a scaffolding process, one which has bidirectionality between the artist and painter, or in the case of education, the curriculum and teacher. One can develop an awareness of how paintings, or creative assignments, can be material objects that draw painters, or teachers, in, allowing for the focus to be on a frame the artist, or teacher, has designed—"painterly niches" (p. 19). Saarinen writes that painterly niches can refer to an individual's place of engagement with a painting—the materiality of painting materials the artist uses to create the painting, canvas size, distinct qualities inherent within the painting and more. Also, one can focus on the way paintings, or creative assignments, can "scaffold specific feelings" (p. 20) in the artist, or teacher, how they bring about affectivity through their materiality and how artists, or teachers, can see their paintings, or curriculum work, as "living others" (p. 20). Saarinen means the concept of living others can refer to the artist's deepened relationship and connection with their work of art, as not just a material object, but relational where an inner communal and reflective dialogue can occur.

In distance learning, teachers and students are often seen as part-objects on the computer screens during Zoom or Google Meet calls, heads and half bodies—it is hard to make eye contact, arduous to connect, just as expressed in the clinical setting when psychoanalysis and psychotherapy are online (see Isaacs-Russell, 2015). Subjectivity and individuality can become compromised by our technologies, with immediacy taking precedence over the value of human contact, conversation, and relationship building (Pinar, 2015). Teachers and students must connect in the online curriculum by sharing creative work together, co-creating lessons and activities, empowering students' decision-making, and making the time to talk with each other to feel alive, bringing valuable in-person classroom pieces to online platforms. Chapter 3 is advantageous to this idea. Saarinen (2020) explores creativity as "a way of *being* or *existing*" (p. 34), knowing ones "*environmental provision*" (p. 34), and that the start of creative development happens in the earliest "infant-*mother* interaction" (p. 35), drawing upon Winnicott's (1971) theory of creativity. Saarinen adopts Winnicott's (1971) and Wright's (2009) ideas that artistic creativity is about the artist navigating the self into being—to "*feel real*" (Saarinen, 2020, p. 43); in this case, life is "more real" (Saarinen, 2020, p. 44) when an artist invests in their art object, developing an understanding of themselves through their art object, as opposed to not engaging in a creative act which might withdraw the artist from this heightened state.

Saarinen's framework illustrates how early object-relations significantly shape the artist's creativity in adult life. At birth, and in infancy, developmental niches form. The infant learns affective scaffolding from their caregivers. The mother or caregiver responds to the infant's needs, feelings, and emotions. Ideally, trust builds in these affectively charged two-way experiences. The infant's developmental journey includes interactions with objects, transitional objects, and their

environmental resources during which they form niches involving affective scaffolding. These affective scaffolds influence their painting work in the search for feeling later in adult life.

I believe Saarinen's connection of how one scaffolds feelings from being cared for in infancy and early childhood has an impact on ways in which they approach their creative work in adult life to be the most compelling in the book. Saarinen clearly draws from Winnicott's (1977) theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship, which theorizes the journey of the infant and mother from the period of absolute dependence, relative dependence, to independence. From Saarinen's perspective here, we can further consider how *holding*, a Winnicottian concept, as an early formed niche, might draw relationships to how the artist holds their artwork in adult life. If we examine this idea from a curriculum perspective, we can think about how this concept might travel to how a teacher or art educator might hold their curriculum. Several suppositions I thought Saarinen could help confirm and elaborate in Chapter three are about Winnicott's holding concept—the importance of the early holding of an infant physically and emotionally and how this experience might apply to artists in their adult life in the ways in which they think about creativity, being with their materials, spaces they create in, surfaces they create on, and affects that are produced. Winnicott (1977) argues maternal care is essential for early infant ego development, including and stabilizing the id; furthermore; in early childhood development, being creative as a human being and having creative play experiences all bear unconsciously on how the adult artist engages with their creative work.

Saarinen's (2020) Chapter 4 looks at the concept of vitality and "vitalistic fantasy" (p. 56), drawing from the work of art historians, art critics, and psychoanalysts, looking at the living "human attributes" (p. 56) of an artist's painting—how the painting works to complete itself (e.g., Isabelle Graw), the "flesh-like" (p. 65) qualities of paint (e.g., Peter Fuller), and metamorphosis (e.g., James Elkins). Saarinen discusses artists' lived-experiences with their paintings, detailing that artists see their paintings as "living 'others'" (p. 55), forged by the creative experience of making art. Saarinen argues this particular *feeling* of the artist's painting as living has historical origins, that painting as a practice is relational and affectively grounded in rich histories, traditions, and cultural contexts, and also developed in early unconscious infant interactions—the infant's engagement with objects and caregivers (Bollas, 1987, 2018; Winnicott, 1965/2006).

Saarinen (2020) accounts for how the artist profoundly listens to their painting, an object that is alive, creating itself, as the "aliveness of one's paintings also enables *oneself* to feel more alive and connected" (p. 55). Just as these "animistic depictions of art-making are always just metaphorical" (p. 54), I believe, as Saarinen believes about some artists and their painting work, that teachers can see their curriculum-in-progress as a living, breathing being, one that writes itself, open to teachers' lived-experience and the historical moment they find themselves in, no matter how difficult or strange. To this point, teachers can listen and be with their curriculum's "aliveness" (p. 54)—the emergence of their student's interests and voices, what is affecting them, and hard-to-discern histories of the world and society. As such, complex topics of war, racial oppression, environmental calamity, injustice, climate change, mental health, and more are waiting to be worked through, felt, and known, like the artist working on a painting.

Chapter 5 describes oceanic feeling in the creative process, primarily drawing upon Anton Ehrenzweig (1953, 1967) and the history of the oceanic feeling concept from many psychoanalysts, scholars, thinkers, and artists. Saarinen elaborates on three key elements, the first "a feeling of self-boundary dissolution and/or fusion" (p. 87), "fusion" that can be the feeling of oneness between painting as object, connections to the material world, and self-experience. The second idea Ehrenzweig (1967) was enamored by was a circulation between "differentiated and

undifferentiated types of perception" (p. 295), maintaining a balanced ego state in the artistic process, becoming more tolerant of unpredictability and bewilderment. Lastly, oceanic states can have positive and negative affective states. Artists can access and scaffold oceanic feeling with perception or tap into how their creative process can generate many feelings and affects. The main point for education is whether teachers can tap into oceanic feelings when they become immersed into their curriculums—projects, lessons, and teachings with their students and becoming aware of the fusion, perception, and affects—the ability for teachers to listen to their inner and outer worlds and the many feelings at play as they work with their curriculum as parts develop and fuse.

Chapter 6 draws mainly upon the work of Townsend (2019) and Hagman (2005, 2010). Saarinen (2020) develops rich connections on the artists' "responsive engagement" (p. 103) with their work in connection to self-experience and subjectivity, how artists get their painting work to make sense for them. Saarinen writes, "the grounds for rightness often change and develop as the creative work progresses, and may become established only after lengthy periods of trial and error" (p. 102). As the artist works to find a space and a vision for "rightness" in their painting work, such is true for the educator in a curriculum piece or project. It might take trial and error, review and revision, or working through with colleagues to achieve a feeling of rightness. When does a curriculum project *feel* finished or "right" to an educator in their inner world? What does that feeling do for the educator?

In the final chapter, Saarinen examines how "art-making can have a profound effect on the artist's overall sense of being" (p. 121). First, he elaborates on Milner (1950/1957, 1987), who taught herself how to paint freely, discovering new ideas about her "being," thus, arriving at Ratcliffe's (2008) existential feelings theory for further analysis. Saarinen (2020) says existential feelings have two main components—"*pre*-intentional background feelings that structure experience" (p. 133) and "*bodily* feelings," (p. 133) which he connects to a painter's art-making experience. "Existential feelings are *feelings of being*" (p. 136) that structure artistic experience in a profound manner. Art-making can shape this state and lead to "a new *existential orientation*" (p. 137).

Returning to my initial question of what can the role of painters' affective experiences do for curriculum? Saarinen's book can inspire scholars in curriculum studies and related education fields. Education must focus on the subjective lived experiences of educators and students involving trust, care, and affective scaffolding in curriculum work. According to Saarinen's (2020) ideas, this can look like how educators develop relationships with their students and other teachers in their curriculum work and how their relationship evolves and grows also with "inanimate things" (p. 59) and scaffold feelings as a curriculum developer as in writing, projects, and the ways in which teachers set up their classroom atmosphere and discussion spaces for their students. It can also simply be being aware of how early interactions with one's caregivers and surroundings shape the way teachers might engage their curriculum.

Affect is an essential part of Saarinen's book and grows in complexity with varying aspects of affect in artistic creativity. One aspect of affectivity that future research could examine would be to what extent "occupant affect" could be teased out. I thought that Saarinen could do more to explain this term as it is used sparingly in his book. The concept makes me wonder how an artist might be cognizant of the affectivity that occupies their creative mental, emotional, and physical spaces relating to painting processes, subject matter, and technique. Further elaboration on Winnicott's holding and creative play concepts in connection to affective scaffolding in later life for the artist remains for further investigation. Overall, existentially speaking, Saarinen (2020) examines the "potential space" (p. 49) in painting—a type of experience where one can witness

the dynamism occurring between the subjective and objective world, discovering the self through painting and the materials in which the artist uses to paint. Like the artist paints to feel, having a profound relationship with their painting work, teaching and curriculum work can evoke similar truths—Saarinen's book provides us with "feelings" that we can cultivate, especially concerning learning about one's self, through artistic expression or otherwise.

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