

## ANIMALITY-AS-CURRICULUM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

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### **A Fracture in My Internal Armature**

In need of a microscope for an eco-arts workshop, I headed down to the old biology lab in the basement. I was hit by the potent smells of mildew, dust, and underfunding as the door opened. Unable to find the light switch, I turned on my cell phone flashlight. As I scanned the walls looking for the elusive switch, I locked eyes with a crow. A guttural expletive escaped as the phone hit the floor. From a crouched position, and with greater urgency, I spotted the switch. As the florescent light filled the room, I fixed my gaze on the crow and the other taxidermized birds. Waves of sadness and disgust followed. Each year, I spend hundreds of hours in the company of birds. They are my relatives. The crow's lifeless eyes reflected a deep-rooted speciesism in the field of education and prompted a flood of thoughts about biodiversity loss that were difficult to process in the moment and in the weeks after.

When things or people fall apart, they often disclose things. My unnerving encounter with the corvid diorama reanimated a few old coping mechanisms that I have used in the past to stay afloat in a state of eco-anxiety. For the next month, I treaded water in a roiling sea of restlessness, social retreat, and melancholy. When the feelings subsided, I reached out to trusted others in my professional network who work in the field of ecopsychology as therapists and allied professionals. From them, I was reminded that strong emotions act as friends and messengers and that our experience of pain for the world comes from our connectivity to all beings (Macy, 2021/1991). Since 1970, average wildlife populations have declined by two thirds (WWF, 2020). The current rate of global species extinction is tens to hundreds of times higher compared to the average of the last 10 million years and the rate is accelerating. Up to one million species are threatened with extinction, many within decades. (Secretariate on the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020). These are unbearable things to know. And if it is true that what we do to others, we do to ourselves, what does it mean for curriculum theorists, educators, and students to become animal amid the sixth mass extinction?

In this article, I make the case that conceptualizing animality-as-curriculum rewilds the collective psyche and centers compassionate co-existence as a central aim of education in the Anthropocene. I begin by defining animality and go on to describe some of the fears of animalizing the young in school. In the 10-minute play called *The Correction* that comprises a significant part of the article, I offer a dystopic portrayal of a teacher candidate's emergence

into the profession to make connections among educating the young, the negation of human-animality in curricula, speciesism, and other forms of oppression. Further, through the characters and the dialogue, I show how “...animality emerges relationally from material and linguistic interactions (animal performativity) that produce positive and negative effects, as well as political [...] relations” (Lloro-Bidart, 2018, pg. 28). Drawing on images and dialogue from the play, I suggest the field of curriculum studies engage with dramatic play as part of its ethical obligation to enact *becoming-with* other animals. The article concludes with thoughts on how the field of curriculum studies might orient the teacher and the child to what is worth knowing as the Earth’s habitability decreases.

We have an ethical imperative to engage others in curriculum-making about biodiversity loss, but I acknowledge this is a fraught endeavor. It reminds us of our own vulnerability, mortality, and maybe even more painfully, our complicity. Thich Nhat Hahn said, “What we most need to do is to hear within us the sound of the earth crying.” In the spirit of his comment, I invite the reader to attune to the cries of other animals because illusions of separation (nature/human, human/animal, emotion/rationality) continue to cause much suffering. Animality-as-curriculum in the Anthropocene confronts the difficult knowledge of cascading biodiversity losses, counters anthropocentric approaches to curriculum-making, and encourages children and educators to keep falling in love with their animal kin.

### **Animality and Schooling Feral Children**

Animality is understanding oneself as an animal, making other creatures a part of what psychologists refer to as one’s in-group (Climate Psychology Alliance, 2022), and engaging in cross-species listening (Abram, 2010; Jones, 2010). In the context of education, “[b]ecoming an animal means invoking intense sensory experiences that connect children through their bodies to the natural environment” (Harju & Rouse, 2018, pg. 462) to convey new knowledges about self, others, and the world through those bodily experiences (Chaudhuri & Hughes, 2014). It is through these bodily interactions that other animals are understood in cognitive and emotional terms (McClellan, 2019). Attunement to our mutuality, then, is the path to understanding ourselves as interdependent creatures who are embedded in the more-than-human-world (Farrell, 2022a).

In the fall of 2022, I was a member of the inaugural cohort of the Climate Psychology Certificate Program offered by the California Institute of Integral Studies. In one of our sessions, Knowledge Keeper and professor Dr. Melissa Nelson shared a theory to explain our ecological crisis. She said we had, “forgotten our original instructions” (personal communication, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022). The phrase stuck to my bones. It is absurd that western education systems continue to disavow their complicity in fueling consumption practices and petro-capitalism. Instead of challenging the exploitation of humans and non-humans, we continue to abstract ourselves and place curriculum in a theoretical realm less fraught with danger. Consequently, young people don’t “understand shared vulnerability [...] and that we cannot touch another without being touched” (Butler, 2022, pg. 12).

Young human-animals need a lot of time to mature in wild places to enable multi-species sociality. Nurturing animality, requires curricula that places ecological principles at the center of what educators and young people do every day. That said, my call to cultivate animality-

as-curriculum may seem somewhat misplaced because anyone who has watched preschoolers play knows how in-touch many of them are with their animality. Howls, crawling on all fours, and fingers that become claws, factor prominently into the imaginary worlds they build. But as children age through the school system, adult preoccupation with, and surveillance of, the feral child increases. What we teach, and how we teach, is currently designed to work the wild out of the child. This work is partially and powerfully done by continuing to enact curriculum that is rooted in anthropocentric assumptions (Warden, 2019). This becomes highly problematic as children grow. In the absence of being rooted in their animality, they can become psychologically fragmented and lose their capacity to empathize with other humans and other animals.

### **Rewilding Curriculum with Ecofeminism and Drama**

I come to this work as an ecofeminist. At its core, ecofeminism is concerned with the relationships between social oppressions and the environment (Kings, 2017; Mallory, 2018; Mann, 2006). As a lens with which to view curriculum, it illuminates the logics of domination in systems that exclude othered bodies (Federici, 2020). Ecofeminism situates humans as interdependent animals and it assumes the same power relations that dismiss, degrade, and dehumanize women and children are the same relations that fuel speciesism (Adams & Gruen, 2022; Estévez-Saá & Lorenzo-Modia, 2018; Gough & Whitehouse, 2020; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2016). Ecofeminism is generative in spaces of curriculum and pedagogy because it grounds human interactions among the more-than-human world and assumes that “Relationships bonded by affection, kindness and care are the source of our intelligence and strength” (Martusewicz, 2018, pg. 26). If we are to dispel the false reality of anthropocentrism, and uproot toxic speciesism, curriculum studies needs ecofeminism (Echegoyen-Sanz, & Martín-Ezpeleta, 2021). In this vein, and to contribute to the rewilding of the field, I wrote a dramatic script to enact what ecofeminist philosopher Plumwood (2002) calls *traitorous action* to problematize and work against the dominant anthropocentric tenets of curriculum-making. In the play’s dystopic world, the human/nature dualism becomes monstrous and the suppression of human animality enacts a logic of domination and abjection.

The inclusion of performance narratives in academic texts allows readers to interpret the characters’ dialogue through their own multi-sensory reality (Farrell, 2022c; Kershaw & Nicholson, 2011; Mackay et al., 2020; Rhoades, 2021; Spooner, et al. 2019; Vettriano et al., 2017), making silenced issues palpable (Lehtonen & Pihkala, 2021). My aim is to evoke spirited dialogue in classrooms and lecture halls about the difficult knowledge of biodiversity loss and the climate crisis with care, courage, and humility to ensure a livable planet for generations of animals yet to come. “Theatre and performance can offer new frames of thinking, feeling, and viewing, or tell/show us something about our current ecological situation (Woynarski, 2020, pg. 2). Playwrighting is one of many transitional spaces we can use to cultivate a custodial ethic, one that assumes “...we are not only in the world but with the world, not out of the world or above it but with it” (Thorton, Graham, & Burgh, 2019, pg. 240). The following play, *The Correction*, examines what happens to and within an education system that is hyper-focused on surveilling and controlling feral children, teachers, and curricula to protect the interests of those who profit from petro-capitalism’s pillaging of the planet.

### The Correction

*AT RISE: A sterile room containing a wooden table and two chairs. Drew a 21-year-old teacher-candidate is sitting on one side of the table. Interrogator 54.4's hands are lit, while the rest of their body is shadowy. On the table, in between Interrogator 54.4 and Drew, is a document viewer that is connected to a screen that is upstage center (UC). Photos of Drew's exaggerated and/or mismatched facial expressions are sometimes projected on screen using a document projector.*

**Interrogator 54.4** (Holding a piece of paper.) On May 14<sup>th</sup> did you say, "The older generations definitely took advantage of their resources, and they didn't think about future generations?"

**Drew** When can I get out of here?

**Interrogator 54.4** (Forces a chuckle and taps the piece of paper.) Before that can happen, we need an acknowledgement that you violated Civility Ordinance 3, which clearly stipulates that it is unlawful to speak disrespectfully about your ancestors in relation to the Problem in a public space.

**Drew** Students feel like they're screaming at a wall and no one is listening to them.

**Interrogator 54.4** Most teachers don't want to talk about controversial things in their classrooms.

**Drew** Well that's because people don't want to acknowledge the things that scare them. But if the school doesn't confront the -

**Interrogator 54.4** (Smiling big.) We can't transcend the Problem if we allow doomism to take root. The role of the teacher is to ensure children can project themselves into a livable future.

**Drew** How do I do that when the Problem moves through their pulmonary veins?

**Interrogator 54.4** Are you consistently using the recirculation feature on the HVAC system during the burning season?

**Drew** I'm not talking about a filtration issue. I'm saying there is pain because the older generations, they're not wanting to

- acknowledge their responsibility for the Problem.
- Interrogator 54.4** Some might find your animus toward your elders distasteful.
- Drew** It's just a matter of time until...it's going to swallow us all up. Aren't you scared?
- Interrogator 54.4** You seem to be vicariously experiencing the adolescent angst of your students. *(Starts documenting.)*
- Drew** The adults in their lives have become emotionally illegible to them.
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Forces a smile.)* Well then, let me take you back to the beginning of your training. When the children complain about the Problem, you're supposed to?...
- Drew** Bear witness to their suffering. Acknowledge there are so many things that we'll never be able to replace.
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Slams hand on table and with a raised voice.)* When a student expresses sadness or anger in relation to the Problem, what should you do?
- Drew** I'm expected to smile, redirect by making a relevant statement of positivity, and then offer a high five, fist bump or –
- Interrogator 54.4** *(With some verve, gets up and gives Drew a side-hug.)* Or my favorite, the side-hug.
- Drew** *(Winces. Facial expression projected on screen.)*
- Interrogator 54.4** You see? What students need is reassurance from the teacher that everything is going to be fine.
- Drew** So when a student tells me, it feels like I'm fighting a battle I already lost before I was even born, I should respond with *(Raises a hand as if to give Interrogator 54.4 a high five.)*
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Raises hand as Drew lowers their hand.)*

**Drew** They need a place to mourn the critters memorialized in their picture books. Painful, yes. But these moments could lead to more humane ways to live.

**Interrogator 54.4** Let's talk about Poppy Reddy. Take me back to May 14<sup>th</sup>.  
(*Drags their chair closer to Drew.*)

**Drew** I already spoke to the mental health coordinator, my field advisor and submitted a written report to the Dean.

**Interrogator 54.4** Poppy looked fine when she arrived at school, correct?

**Drew** Yes. I've already gone over these events numerous times.

**Interrogator 54.4** You took attendance. And reviewed the protocols for outside play in relation to the smoke forecast?

**Drew** Yes. Then the children took out their creative writing scribbles and I told them we were going to learn and write about crows.

**Interrogator 54.4** Where are crows referenced in the provincial curriculum?

**Drew** They're not specifically – I was practicing how to remember.

**Interrogator 54.4** (*Documents.*) Of course, crows are not in the curriculum.

**Drew** But creative writing is still on the books, isn't it?

**Interrogator 54.4** For now. The College of Teachers is worried this type of assignment could result in more Poppies. Now describe how the girl responded to the reading.

**Drew** Before I even had a chance to start, Poppy burst with questions. "What did they sound like? How did they live?"

**Interrogator 54.4** And you responded?

**Drew** That I once watched a crow drop nuts onto a busy street and then wait for the cars to drive over the nuts to crack the shells open. And then Poppy said, "They must have been so smart!"

(*Facial expression projected on screen.*)

**Interrogator 54.4** For the record, what was the title of the crow story?

- Drew** It was called, Once Upon a Time There Were Crows.
- Interrogator 54.4** And then, another child asked about how all the crows passed on?
- Drew** You mean, were driven to extinction? (*Facial expression projected on screen.*)
- Interrogator 54.4** (*Documents furiously.*)
- Drew** I told them the truth. The crow population declined dramatically due to cli-
- Interrogator 54.4** And this is why we find ourselves here today!
- Drew** Like existential dominoes... Look, I'm a teacher –
- Interrogator 54.4** We'll see.
- Drew** What's so wrong about telling the children about how much crows loved their families?
- Interrogator 54.4** Why did you feel compelled to make such a fuss about the crows?
- Drew** (*Facial expression projected on screen.*) If a crow came upon the dead body of one of their own, they would call out to other crows and hold a funeral. It matters the children know they existed and how extraordinary they were, that the lives of crows mattered.
- Interrogator 54.4** How did the oil men come up?
- Drew** One of the other children responded to the story by saying humans weren't fair to the crows. His granny told him the oil men kept drilling even though they knew they were heating the Earth. He asked me if I believed what his granny said.
- Interrogator 54.4** What did you say?
- Drew** Not only did I believe Granny, but I thought she was a hero for telling the truth at a time when people in power don't want us to connect the Problem to the crows.
- Interrogator 54.4** In your last field experience, supervisors certified you as an emotionally regulated teacher. So I find these recent classroom histrionics surprising.

- Drew**    Histrionics? All but 4 of the students in that class keep an inhaler in their uniform pocket.
- Interrogator 54.4**    And aren't we thankful the Ministry of Breathing supplies the children with inhalers free of charge.
- Drew**    I'd be thankful if students could play kickball without wearing a mask.
- Interrogator 54.4**    Let's talk about where your passion for one of nature's edits got you and poor Poppy. How did she slip away unnoticed?
- Drew**    I went to get the tablets for the writing exercise from the closet. As I passed them out, the empty desk caught my eye. I asked, "Where is Poppy?" Toby said she was crying and wanted to go home. I grabbed my mask, asked the teacher next door to keep an eye on my kids and then I ran. When I opened the north door, the smoke triggered the alarm. The auto lock procedure was initiated but knowing Poppy was out there, I ran into the school yard. I called out to her and nothing. I coughed and it got harder and harder to draw in a breath. That's the last thing I remember.
- Interrogator 54.4**    The fire simulator team found you 9 meters from the school. A few more minutes and you would have been edited. Isn't that something...*(Gets up and takes an instant photo of Drew. Places the photo on the table under the document viewer. The photo appears on screen.)*
- How are you feeling recently? Your file indicates the incident continues to moderately impact your quality of life.
- Drew**    It takes me 20 minutes to climb the stairs to my bedroom. Most days I'm short of breath. And I can't leave the house without my inhaler.
- Interrogator 54.4**    Exercising professional judgement is absolutely critical at the certification stage.
- Drew**    You mean life changing.
- Interrogator 54.4**    But you can take comfort in the fact that your actions, as misguided as they were, will help inform the teacher college's training programs in the future. Could you imagine where we'd be if Poppy was a real girl?



**Drew** Yes, I can, and I did. That's why I ran out of the school to find her. I was terrified she wasn't going to make it home to her mother. What happened to the children and to me was just cruel and -

**Interrogator 54.4** The data clearly shows that when teacher candidates cannot discern between the real child and the simulated child during the final field experience, the candidates' adherence to policy and procedure is 94.7% in the first year. We may have lost a few teachers and children in the beginning as we worked out the program bugs, but now, only 5% of trainees and 4% of the feral children are edited. These percentages include severe injuries as well as the deaths. And I am confident we can bring these numbers down in the future.

**Drew** *(Facial expression projected on screen.)* I'm glad you're feeling confident.

**Interrogator 54.4** Now the task before the college is to decide how to certify you. We both know you're out of the running to become a first-class teacher. And you wheeze a lot during the day so that eliminates any physical education, wellness, or vocational teaching positions. But what is most worrisome, is your deep rooted anthro-animus. You exhibit no shame when criticizing your ancestors which means it would be dangerous to have you working with the feral children in recovery. We don't want any little rebellions fomenting, do we?

**Drew** Could I ask you something? On your left wrist, you've got the Rebel Bee. It looks like you've tried to have the tattoo removed, but it's there. Were the laser treatments painful?

**Interrogator 54.4** The pain was manageable.

**Drew** *(Grabs Interrogator 54.4's wrist and pulls it under the document viewer. The image of the faded bee tattoo is projected on screen.)* It must be hard to wear the mark in this place.

**Interrogator 54.4** *(Struggles to pull arm back.)* My work in this department is critically important. I determine the certification level of the teacher candidates and I place them in their first position. Which means, I influence what and how the children learn.

**Drew** But at one point in your life, you were a member of the Rebel Bee Society. How does one go from fighting climate denialism to working for the Ministry of Education?

- Interrogator 54.4** I grew up.
- Drew** *(Facial expression projected on screen.)* No, I don't think that's it at all. The Rebel Bees were hard core climate justice workers until state agents found a way to rip the stinger out of each one of them...How did they get to you, I wonder? An affair you didn't want your partner to know about? Maybe you ate burgers and didn't want the vegan wing of the Bees to troll you on social media... Are there any baby Interrogators running around the house?
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Pulls hand away and rolls sleeves down.)*
- Drew** They used your kid as leverage. Isn't it awful when the best interests of the child are leveraged to overlook the rot?
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Facial expression projected on screen.)* Nella was outspoken and drew the attention of the early adopters of the Ministry's new curriculum. I was given a choice. Publicly disown the Rebel Bees or she would be put on a watch list.
- Drew** So they have been monitoring rebel tendencies in schools.
- Interrogator 54.4** *(Facial expression shown on screen.)* 76% of recently edited adults were once children on the watch list. And I couldn't allow Nella to be edited in the name of the Problem.
- Drew** How do you make peace with the first version of you?
- Interrogator 54.4** It gets easier the more you practice having nothing to look back on.
- Drew** There are others like me who are willing to teach about the crows.
- Interrogator 54.4** Like you, crows were very stubborn.
- Drew** We can't edit mourning. So I can't be the teacher the curriculum thinks I am.
- Interrogator 54.4** When I was little, a crow once brought me a shiny penny...
- Drew** The story of the crows has something to say about what it means to face our finitude with compassion and courage. Young people will make more life affirming decisions if education, in part, is the cultivation of a concern for life.

- Interrogator 54.4** Even if the decisions they make are merely wagers? They will hate you for it in the end if you give them a chance to feel it, but we fail anyway.
- Drew** I can live with that. And I'm wagering they can too.
- Interrogator 54.4** (*Pauses*). There is an opening at a third-tier high school. One-quarter of the students carry a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiance Disorder. Belligerent like you.
- Drew** I would take that position.
- Interrogator 54.4** (*Leans into the light with wrists under the document projector*). Of course, you will. I'll be watching.

(*Fade to black.*)

### A Murder of Crows

I wrote the first draft of *The Correction* after my encounter with the corvid diorama and during a period when I was analyzing transcripts from a series of interviews with high school students about the emotional impacts of the climate crisis. Two of Drew's lines, "*Students feel like they're screaming at a wall, and no one is listening,*" and "*It's just a matter of time before it's going to swallow us all up,*" come from the interview transcripts. In crafting the characters' interactions amid a dystopic landscape, I was able to metabolize some of the eco-anxieties of the research participants and my own fears about the cascade of intersecting environmental crises the graduating class 50 years from now will face. The creative process opened me to the entanglements between loss and temporality and made me more tolerant of the ambiguousness of anticipatory grief. This is the magic of drama. In building a fictional world, we learn something true about the human experience. As the climate crisis intensifies, students and educators are going to need many opportunities to co-create curricula to bridge their internal landscapes with the outer world and foster new meaning and perspectives.

If you are what you read, dystopic fiction beckons you to trace the tendrils of the same nightmare that may be coiling and attaching in your own world. Writing the play revealed, sometimes painfully, what ecofeminists understand as the ethical bypassing that constructs students as non-actors in education. In my own university context, I have become more aware of how the tendrils of environmental degradation are manufactured in the illusions of our species' biological destiny, faith in technology saviors, and in the monstrous addiction to consumption that frames education in terms of social mobility. I have also become increasingly conscious of the ways in which rebel tendencies are constructed as feral and in need of surveillance in academic institutions. My classroom has not been immune. Giving Interrogator 54.4 a voice heightened my awareness of the ways that I un/intentionally suppress expressions of anger in the classroom. When my students have vocalized intergenerational anger (*Older people knew and did nothing. Why didn't our teachers warn us? Your generation ran out the clock because you wanted to have your house in the suburbs!*), I would often

move too quickly from acknowledging their feelings to talk of collective action. Now I recognize the quickdraw acknowledgement of students' emotions is sometimes less about validation and more about evading my own guilt and shame.

A few weeks ago, I invited one of my undergraduate teacher education classes to engage with *The Correction*. After two students volunteered to read the parts of Interrogator 54.4 and Drew, I enlisted five other brave souls to act as mirrors of the characters' internal landscapes. While standing amid the rest of their seated classmates, the group of five made emotionally charged images with their bodies to convey interpretations of the conscious or unconscious emotional states of the characters. The rest of the class was encouraged to act as observers. In the discussion that ensued after the performance, one of the observers noted that as the tension escalated in the play, four of the five students who acted as the emotional mirrors moved farther away from the characters. This led to a fascinating conversation about how defense mechanisms emanate from the murky world of the unconscious to influence behavior. As they analyzed Drew's character, they simultaneously worried aloud about facilitating difficult conversations in their field placements. They wondered if their partner teachers or the school principal would interpret animated conversations as an inability to "control the classroom" or as permissiveness or even asociality. The end of the discussion took an evocative turn when another student remarked, "We're going to have to speak out against the Interrogators or else they'll multiply."

Dramatic work makes us more conscious of how our bodies are always oscillating in relation to one another. It recovers what we know and feel about the world and awakens the playful spirit in oneself and others. The script and performance attuned us to the sensations that emerge when a teacher injects their own ethical and moral convictions within an educational encounter. In addition, reading between the lines of the play unearthed the students' assumptions about the kinds of emotions that are dis/allowed in classrooms, the internalization of classroom management tropes, the psychological and material consequences of suppressing existential fear, and the job insecurity of Climate Cassandras. Most importantly, the dramatic event invited synchronicity, a chance to get to know each other through empathic means while honoring teacher-kinship and our unique positionalities.

### The Third Act

Playwrights create characters, insert them into a particular time and place, and write tension inducing dialogue to briefly estrange an audience from the world they know. They hope after the curtain falls, the audience views some aspect of the world with new eyes. Given the dire prospects for our climatic future, I look through Drew's eyes and distill animality-as-curriculum as the cultivation of an ability to remain present, open, and compassionate in the face of increasing ecological distress. We do this by recognizing that bodies and emotions *honeycomb*, meaning they perforate and infiltrate learning encounters. In their book, *What World is This?* Butler (2022), too, writes about the porosity of bodies. In reference to the perilousness of breathing in shared spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, they reference how one's refusal to wear a mask or one's unwillingness to get vaccinated, produced material consequences in the lives of others. The masks we wear (or don't wear) in school lay bare the

conceit of the bounded body. The bodies of animals are leaky and mutually influencing in schools.

In the fifth stanza of her poem, *To the Children of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Kakogawa (2021) asks, “Can you see a cardinal, a mynah, A crow, with your eyes closed, listening To their signature songs they sing to you In your own backyard?” Her poem ends with the provocative question, “Oh Children of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, How did you become so dead?” Kakogawa frames the disconnection from the song of the crow as a deadening force in the lives of children. It is critical to teach young people how to “see with their eyes closed” so they can focus their rewilding and renewal efforts in the right places. To rewild and renew, we must first critically examine the intersections among biodiversity loss (Farrell, et al. 2022), the climate crisis (Farrell, 2022b; van Kessel, 2020), and environmental racism. To do this difficult work, curriculum makers and scholars need to honor the intergenerational root systems of Indigenous knowledges (Delchamps, 2022) because “Indigenous peoples have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives (TallBear, 2015, pg. 234).

The bodies of young people in Western school systems suffer a triple process of mechanization. Schooling subjects them to discipline, severs learning from the body, and it fractures animal subjectivities. But if we are to survive as a species, we must animate connectivity and respond with compassion to the howls of close and distant kin. Animality-as-curriculum, then, must be committed to interspecies sociality through the development of a common language of empathy (McClellan, 2019) and operate from the central premise that all critter-bodies are entangled and worthy of love, respect, and protection. It will require the rapid transition from a human centric to an ecocentric worldview in curriculum studies at a time when educators are facing extreme pressure from fossil fueled ideologues to atomize, sanitize and control what and how students learn.

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