

## Thinking *With* Death: An Educational Proposition in the Interest of Publicness

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The reign of death already spread through our naivety in believing that we could control and dominate earth systems should be enough to dissuade us from pursuing this path any further.

—Heather Davis, *Life and Death in the Anthropocene*<sup>1</sup>

Summer 2022 marked another sweltering season of anthropogenically-driven megadroughts, flash floods, wildfires, poisoned waters, and species decimations. The ecocide catalogue of the times is growing thicker by the minute. Manifestly, “the reign of death,” as Heather Davis rightly puts it, has not been persuasive enough to re-orient the necrophiliac route we are on. I open with her potent quote to set in motion the educational issue of this essay: *What if death turned into a pedagogue to face rather than flee?* With this provocation, I propose that we think about what it means to learn *with* death rather than against it and formulate renewed conceptions of death beyond finality and dualism in order to open up pedagogical possibilities in a more-than-human world.

Within the humanities, death has become an inevitable topic of study in response to intensifying social and ecological crises. Provoked by such critical contextual motivation, the emerging, transdisciplinary, and experimental formations of Queer Death Studies and The Collective for Radical Death Studies express the pressing demand for new conceptual work and narratives that can better account for the complex problematics of death, dying, and mourning. These two formations aim to debunk the death/life binary by unsettling philosophical articulations of death that predominantly center on white, able-bodied, heteropatriarchal subjects. These are some of the themes these two formations have explored, which the philosophy of education has only begun to negotiate.<sup>2</sup> In *Dark Pedagogy*, Stefan Bengtsson claims that death as a site of study remains neglected and under-theorized in educational theory and practice—with a few noteworthy exceptions in Environment and Sustainability Education Research.<sup>3</sup>

Specifically within philosophy of education, Peter Roberts begins to trace from a Western standpoint the linkages between death, education, and philosophy. He concludes, speculatively, that in the times ahead greater attention will be given to death in this field.<sup>4</sup>

This essay seeks to contribute to the need to reconceptualize death by drawing attention to the affinities between death and education while focusing on worldly ecological threats. It constitutes an initial step for fleshing out alternate modes of relations with death, offering a critique of problematic public engagements that are orientated toward its avoidance and proposing an educational response underlined by an ethics of affirmation.<sup>5</sup> Death, as I argue, is a matter of public concern simply because it is not a uniquely private affair; it is a collective issue, netted into the fabric of day-to-day life. However, death is often used in a way that erodes any sense of the collective, that is, if we understand public interest in those terms: as attention to perspectives other than the dominant norm. Here, I follow educational theorist Sharon Todd's expansive reconstruction of Gert Biesta's conception of "pedagogy for publicness," which she situates beyond the tropes of modernity, traditionally relying on "Eurocentric and anthropocentric conceptions of the public which are founded on separation and independence from the so-called 'natural' world."<sup>6</sup> She suggests that for public education to make sense, a widened conception of "public" ought to be considered. She revisits "the publicness of education in a way that *faces* these exclusions, separations and violences, while seeking new forms of affirmation (Braidotti, 2019) that allow us to live well, or at least better, as the entangled creatures that we are."<sup>7</sup> My aim is to explore new grounds for rethinking the relationship between death and education as a crucial task for facing times of extinctions and ecological destructions. It is crucial for building intergenerational solidarity for the purpose of "being worthy of these times for passing on to future generations a world that is liveable and worth living in"—and this, *in itself*, is an education.<sup>8</sup>

Structurally, this essay proceeds in three phases. First, I consider common representations of death in Western public discourses, and how they

signal a lack of discussion regarding death and dying in educational settings. On the basis of education's public quality, the public sphere inevitably shapes how education takes on this question.<sup>9</sup> However, as much as education might perpetuate the logic of the public uncritically, it can also be a site for resisting it. Second, drawing on posthumanist perspectives, I delineate one possible conceptual shift for relationally engaging with death that is in conversation with contemporary environmental humanities scholarship. Finally, I return to education in order to map one way in which we can re-orient our educational responsibilities toward an acceptance of death.

### DEATH FOR THE PUBLIC?

In the public sphere, it is mainly religious officials, medical professionals, and those instrumentalized by the military-entertainment complex whose perspectives circulate when it comes to the themes of death and dying.<sup>10</sup> Medical and psychological industries, for instance, have been leaders in defining death as a private issue and a source of anguish that is centered around human mortality. They shape a vision of society that is in "death denial," whereby individuals deploy strategies to shield themselves against the emotional turmoil that death and dying is said to cause.<sup>11</sup> However, within secular Western publics, death is becoming increasingly present through emergent forms aiming to recreate and mediate links between the living and the dead (for example, death cafés and dark tourism, such as the Body World exhibition).<sup>12</sup> Humanist assumptions pervade these death narratives, setting the modern subject against other-than-human and fueling, rather, individualistic contemplations of mortality. Given the environmental problematic of my present concern, I turn to key critics of Anthropocene discourses who offer new ways for considering the public reception of death and dying.

Public discourses and political theories mobilizing sacrificial, apocalyptic, and life-denying language, often framed under the banner of the Anthropocene, have been challenged by a range of scholars committed to decolonial, feminist, and more-than-human ethics. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, pleads for "the need to resist scholarship of anxiety that tends to either mourn or celebrate the cause of a new humanity, united in and by the Anthropocene."<sup>13</sup> Implicit in her claim is

Davis's critical commentary on the ecological crisis's euro-centric, technological, and masculinist outlooks that strive to build a shared sense of vulnerability at the prospect of an anthropological catastrophe (for instance, the apocalyptic projection of total (human) death).<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the term Anthropocene, while useful for marking deep planetary transformations, is highly problematic because of its reliance on *Anthropos*—on “man” in its narrowest and dominant iteration—conferring undifferentiated responsibility to all humans regardless of their political locations, thereby brushing off the realities of the ecological collapse modernist ideologies initiated and continue to perpetuate. Similarly, Ursula K. Heise analyzes the powerful cultural representations circulating in the public of either “imagined pastoral past or nightmares of future devastation,” which are indeed capable of galvanizing imagination, strategically instilling the idea of a shared fatal destiny, but limited in their scope for interrogating the enmeshment and realities of harrowing and complex human-nonhuman relations in the context of death.<sup>15</sup> Along these lines, Davis also highlights that the logic of finitude and linear time embedded in these discourses falsely appeals to “a clear, clean and defined end, rather than the much more probable scenario of ongoing devastation, species extinction, and mutation towards a future that will become increasingly toxic but otherwise difficult to predict,” hence, only perpetuating further irreversible loss, harm, and injustice.<sup>16</sup>

My point here is not that death creates these inequalities; rather, it exposes them. This exposure is a critically important issue for education to attend to. A range of critical theorists have highlighted the discrepancy between losses worthy of recognition, excessively mediatized and judged unacceptable, and those other bodies left to die or unauthorized to die—affecting both human and non-human populations.<sup>17</sup> By way of example, to the highly visible Covid-19 related-deaths, with statistics meticulously monitored and saturating daily news, another list of victims ceaselessly unfolds in the background: those due to toxic wastes and plastics, climate disasters, air pollution, habitat, and land destructions, to name only a few. The sustained, traumatic environmental damages of yet intense affections exhaust already precarious communities—a phenomenon conceptualized by Rob Nixon as “slow violence,” clashing with

sensationalist death imageries at the forefront of collective consciousness.<sup>18</sup> In the midst of cataclysmic loss, the public indifference toward certain deaths is ever-present and points toward a seeming acceptance (or, at least, a lack of questioning thereof) of the inequalities and social-ecological harms. Whose life counts and whose does not? As Braidotti stresses, we may all be “human,” but “some humans just happen to be more mortal than others.”<sup>19</sup> The necropolitical production of human death is deeply intertwined with the fate of trillions of nonhuman species. The project of modernity and ongoing settler colonialism continues to teach some of us, mainly those enjoying the unearned privileges gifted by neoliberal orders, to believe in human superiority against the nonhuman living world and those deemed less-than-human, the “sexualized, racialized, naturalized others.”<sup>20</sup>

Peta Hinton writes, “political efforts gathering around a shared sense of vulnerability—viewed through the prism of human mortality only are working in the direction of *avoiding* death.”<sup>21</sup> Following Hinton, I consider these views as un-educational responses for facing death, as such disturbing and disturbed articulations may only carve out a wider void for not engaging with it, which is precisely the issue I am raising. Indeed, although death is certainly a matter of public interest in contemporary cultural and political discourses, they do not afford the kinds of transformative possibilities I am interested in. Thus, I pivot to Braidotti and Queer Death theorists for the call for a more complexified, refined conceptual approach to death. Such re-conceptualization is solicited in this essay as an anchor point to further disrupt the current barriers that are impeding the reorientation of our educational responsibilities toward an *acceptance of death* to recognize our embeddedness in more-than-human worlds.

### CONCEPTUALIZING DEATH AS RELATIONAL

To conceptualize death as relational, I mobilize two distinct theoretical approaches that are nonetheless conversant and overlapping. First, Braidotti’s posthuman death theory interrogates the interrelation of human and nonhuman forces that disrupt ego-centered, privatized notions of death. Second, insights drawn from the environmental humanities discourse strengthen a view of death *as* relational and underscore co-implications of heterogeneous human

and non-human subjectivities.

Braidotti's initial move is the demarcation between personal and impersonal death—a foundational distinction for post-humanizing death anchored in affirmative ethics. She explains personal death to be an event individually experienced, known as the “physical extinction of the body,” which corresponds to the “dissolution of the subject.”<sup>22</sup> Impersonal death refers to the relentless flow of nonhuman and generative energy that merges into the eternal flow of becoming at one's personal death. These two modes (impersonal and personal) intersect at a point in time: at personal death. Personal death is momentary in nature. Energy is given up as something leaves a physical body, only to engage in other energies of decomposition and the cycle of fertility. As Margrit Shildrick explains, “although, the death of a human being is in an important sense the final dissolution of a singular existence,” it is “not an absolute closure.”<sup>23</sup> This distinction blurs the clear-cut death-life divide “existing in a flat continuum” and confronts nihilistic perspectives that equate death to the wall of mortality and nothingness.<sup>24</sup> Thinking with this double structure is helpful for addressing death beyond reflecting on one's own dying, probing into the intertwined transformative forces of death and life and opening other ways of exploring the whole terrain of mortality. This calls forth a different kind of humility toward life: it is not individual to me but shared with all living beings that have come before me, as well as those that will thrive after my death. Another Braidottian move is to locate death not at the end of the horizon where the drama of life begins to close but, instead, preceding it. “Because humans are mortal,” she says, “[d]eath as a constitutive event is behind us.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, built into our pre-conscious landscape, death has always already happened. The recognition that death is behind affords the ability to “free us into life.”<sup>26</sup> This radical, and indeed quite odd, temporal inversion presents mortality as the condition that must be accepted before living can begin.

The second conceptual point, implicit in the distinction between the impersonal and personal, is a view of death construed in relational terms. This is important because when death is viewed as mere process, and relationality is excluded from discussions on phenomenon like multispecies extinction, we risk

falling into relativism, such as, to put it colloquially, “if biological annihilation is part of a natural process of terrestrial/universal nature, then we can’t do nothing about it.” Braidotti reminds us that “one’s view on death depends on one’s assumptions about Life.”<sup>27</sup> Following Lynn Margulis and Donna Haraway, my ontological position assumes life to be plural in form, generative, interconnected, and interdependent.<sup>28</sup> Extending these perspectives, Todd writes that “our inseparability from the world as humans is not only an aspect of experience but is part of an ontological condition of the world itself.”<sup>29</sup> We are not merely in the world; we are of it. This relational move is helpful for rearticulating a view of subjectivity as entangled, situated, and embodied; it belongs not only to one, but an assemblage of intricate webs of human and more-than-human relationships, moving along/with/in the multiple assemblages of which it is a part.<sup>30</sup> From an ontology of relations, the death of the other, *any* other, is always already related to my life, even at its most minimal and imperceptible level. “The deathscapes of the anthropocene,” write Deborah B. Rose and Thom van Dooren, ripple through us, “they spread and we’re all implicated in them.”<sup>31</sup> The reality of a damaged planet bluntly reveals a new facet of human mortality: the fact that we are “interwoven into a system in which we live and die *with* others, live and die *for* others.”<sup>32</sup> On the one hand, human lives are dynamically co-constituted by and unavoidably dependent on others to exist. On the other hand, these networks of interdependencies expose our differentiated implication in “impossibly complex presents,” thriving on the back of exploitative and extractive modes of relations and scripted within uninterrupted traces of colonial and modern “unbearable pasts.”<sup>33</sup> Against this backdrop, to return to Biesta’s notion of “publicness” by emphasizing the necessary dependence upon others for one’s freedom to be enacted, my conceptual detour reveals our own vulnerabilities to what happens to others. Indeed, only *with* others is a world possible; from this fact, the kind(s) of world(s) to create becomes a question for education.

#### ROOTING MORTALITY AS AN AFFIRMATIVE, EDUCATIONAL GESTURE

This essay opened with a provocation requiring a dose of imagination and speculation: could death’s teachings guide us to navigate planetary troubles

and damaged terrestrial milieux better? I contend that thinking *with* death is not merely a practice for complicating a theory of death but one that calls into question the educational value of death: Is there something valuable in facing it? What does it allow us to see? What might it offer us?

This first raises the question about modernist conceptions of education that are sedimented into anthropocentrism and often framed through a separation of life and death. In schooling contexts, for instance, posthuman educationalists observe that:

This taming civilization is propagated in schools where we learn a whole host of humanist ideas about human exceptionalism . . . while learning to ignore both the ways some humans are treated as “more human” than others (which then justifies some humans waging all sorts of horrors against other humans) and also the concrete ways that humans and other animals actually relate in schools: dissections in biology class, eating dead animals and the by-products of their killing in cafeterias and hallways, wearing animals on our feet, tossing balls made from their skins in gym class.<sup>34</sup>

From this human exceptionalist critique, the language of death that is used to describe aspects of the modern school supports the inexorable implicatedness of our entanglements with death, the dying, and dead others, which resonates with Patricia MacCormack’s remark that “[l]iving well as a privileged human in Western excess necessitates myriad kinds of death, for individual lives, for living systems.”<sup>35</sup> From this standpoint, it appears that learning (and teaching) to live well requires ignoring certain deaths, activating processes of normalization and disavowal.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, thinking *with* death is less an individual affair than a pedagogical question that exposes what has been made invisible, what drives our investments in educating for denial and the aberrations of ontological inequality and hierarchy. Ramsey Affifi and Beth Christie point to a strenuous globalizing culture that encourages the illusion of immortality and obscures



any meaningful reflection on one's own mortal fragility as knotted to the thick and sticky tapestry of death-life ecologies. They write: "Many grieve the loss of the natural world in a way that actually evades thoughts of personal destruction. We grieve with the assumption that we will continue to live."<sup>37</sup> Not only are some deaths deemed unworthy of attention, but some existences—those shielded from the everydayness of death, loss, and violence—delink personal death from ecological ones, which helps to maintain, rather than nullify, the infamous nature-culture divide.

At this stage, I have far more questions than answers. While addressing the inevitability of our demise may seem as trite as it is obvious, the theorists I have engaged with here remind us that humanist thought is at loss for finding ways to relate to mortality affirmatively beyond modernist conceptions of linear time, of life and death, and the separation of self and other. Thinking *with* death is a complex venture indeed, and the conceptual work charted above could actually be considered educational. Death is at once a condition for becoming and a weapon of power to exterminate worlds and lives. Instrumentalized and perverted to separate, it reveals empirical interconnectedness; it highlights downright violence as much as the beauty and the sensate worlds we are losing in often unconscious ways. Death kills but also gives life. As much as Life kills, and needs death to thrive. The question is: could the aporias and ambivalences death enfolds inaugurate a new discourse, an ethics for our living together as a productive act of resistance to the desire of domination and killing?

Reorienting our educational responsibilities and practices might begin here: to bring ourselves to acknowledge that death inhabits us all, to work towards its acceptance rather than avoidance, because we owe our existence to those of others, human and nonhuman, the already dead and the not yet born. Rose details the potential for such an acceptance:

To accept mortality is to accept one's creaturely fate, and in the empathy of fate, to enter into call-and-response. Further, crossovers affirm the participatory quality of ethics. And even further, they affirm an Earth-based solidarity that embraces all

of us—we whose bodies arise from the only ground we will ever know, ground that is saturated with the blood of birth as well as death.<sup>38</sup>

To accept mortality—or to refuse immortality—becomes an immanent and relational gesture that takes seriously the entangled subjects that we are, tackling the necessity to re-examine death “not outside or beyond the scope of lively generation,” but through “its productive role in engineering and orienting forms of sociality.”<sup>39</sup> The catastrophic processes of loss and intensified threats of co-extinctions act as intense reminders of the fragile web of life we are a part of, and force us to contemplate—as uncomfortable as it can be—the brevity and vulnerability intrinsic to all matrices of relations, attachments, and multispecies kinships. “Staying with the trouble,” as Haraway puts it, is not merely spiraling downward into confounding darkness reflected in timely tragedies or succumbing to naïve hope and techno quick-fixes, but an opportunity for building new modes of solidarity manifested in-holding space for caring, responsible gestures towards the vulnerable dying-other. In Shildrick’s words, “If the event of dying were seen as the recomposition of life under new relations of communality, then mortality itself would not be an abject failure—grievable or otherwise—but rather the opening to new and productive interconnections.”<sup>40</sup> To conclude with my initial provocation to think *with* death as a life-affirming activity, that is both essential and almost entirely overlooked in public narratives, and as such deficiently theorized in education, working with the fact of our mortality may alternately constitute an impulse for generating new forms of sociality between humans and more-than-humans, and attending more carefully to the fuzzy lines that fail to separate us.

Thinking *with* death is germane terrain for education insofar as it refuses and transgresses practices and attitudes of a culture that believes denying, avoiding, or defying death is life-enhancing. Productively re-integrating death within (educational) life embracing western responsibility and inflicted harm may be enacted as a public pedagogical practice of a kind, acknowledging the multiplicity of situated and embodied subjectivities and experiences. In that regard, I read Jessica Lussier’s mourning-*with* through this perspective of death

as pedagogically significant for it can expose the possibilities for solidarity and transformation, coupled with our ongoing implications in the very destruction we are grieving.<sup>41</sup> Accepting mortality then does not negate the reality of atrocities, rather, it aims at reworking such reality, acknowledging the burden it places on us, in an effort to affirm the vital powers of healing and compassion and adhere to the continued need for building collective capacity to reflect on the role of education for attending to ecological devastations underway and announced. Indeed, to accept mortality as an opening up for imagining and activating an ethos of “earth-based solidarity” whereby one can feel the hospitality of an earth to be shared and reinvented, enacts a concern for publicness.

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## REFERENCES

1 Heather Davis, “Life and Death in the Anthropocene: A Short History of Plastic,” in *Art in The Anthropocene*, eds. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (Open Humanities Press, 2015), 354.

2 This is not to say that educational philosophers have not attended to death, but that they have done so in perhaps more oblique ways. Some examples, which are cited in this essay, are Jessica Lussier, “Relearning Our World: Grief, Loss, and Mourning-with,” *Philosophy of Education* 77, no. 2 (2021):143-159. <https://doi.org/10.47925/77.2.143>; Jason Wallin, “Dark Pedagogy,” in *The Animal Catalyst: Towards Ahuman Theory*, ed. Patricia MacCormack (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 145-162; and importantly, the works of Helena Pedersen on human-animal education.

3 Stefan Bengtsson, “Death,” in *Dark Pedagogy*, eds. Jonas Lysgaard, Stefan Bengtsson, Martin Hauberg-Lund (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 65-66; See, for instance, Ramsey Affifi and Beth Christie, “Facing Loss: Pedagogy of Death,” *Environmental Education Research* 25, no. 8 (2019): 1143-1157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2018.1446511>; David Greenwood and Margaret McKee, “Thanatopsis: Death Literacy for the Living,” in *Ecological Virtues*, eds. Heesoon Bai, David Chang, and Charles Scott (University of Regina Press, 2017), 179-198.

4 Peter Roberts, “Philosophy, Death, and Education,” (Oxford Re-

search Encyclopedias, Education, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1271>.

5 Rosi Braidotti, "Affirmative Ethics and Generative Life," *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 13, no. 4 (2019): 463–481. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dlgs.2019.0373>; Care and compassion are the core of Braidotti's affirmative ethics. She directs care and compassion toward collective action to process negativity and dystopian visions, and to build conditions for empowering human/nonhuman relations.

6 In Gert Biesta, "Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere," *Social and Cultural Geography* 13, no. 7 (2012): 683–697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2012.723736>, publicness is a mode relying on human togetherness, endorsing plurality and difference as the foundation for freedom to be enacted. Thus, rather than seeking common ground, publicness is a quality expressing an interest in a common world; Sharon Todd, "Expanding the Publicness of Education: Worlding the World in a Time of Climate Emergency," in *The Publicness of Education: Democratic Futures After the Critique of Neo-Liberalism*, eds. Carl Anders Saïfström and Gert Biesta (London: Routledge, 2023), 2.

7 Todd, "Expanding the Publicness of Education," 5; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 351.

8 Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 351.

9 Biesta, "Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere," 683–697.

10 Allan Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87–105; Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 335–339.

11 For an in-depth study of death denial in twentieth-century western society, see Ernest Becker's seminal work, *Denial of Death* (Free Press, 1973); From a psychoanalytical perspective, Freudian approaches regard death anxiety as a main point of analysis.

12 See, for instance, Philip R. Stone, "Dark Tourism and the Cadaveric

Carnival: Mediating Life and Death Narratives at Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds," *Current Issues in Tourism* 14, no. 7 (2011): 685-701. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2011.563839>

13 Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, (Polity Press, 2013), 85.

14 Davis, "Life and Death in the Anthropocene," 353.

15 Ursula K. Heise, *Imagining Extinction* (The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 12. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226358338.001.0001>

16 Davis, "Life and Death in the Anthropocene," 353-354.

17 Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no.1 (2003): 11-40. In *Manifestly Haraway* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 231, Donna Haraway speaks of "making live" to refer to the vast numbers of flesh and blood realities kept in life with the view to be killed through mechanisms of control that yet always destroy what is alive about them (for example, in the context of computerized, industrial farming).

18 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061194>

19 Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, 72.

20 Walter D. Mignolo, "Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 43 (2017): 38-45; Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 270. <https://doi.org/10.1086/692552>

21 Peta Hinton, "A Sociality of Death: Towards a New Materialist Politics and Ethics of Life Itself," in *What If Culture Was Nature All Along?*, ed. Vicki Kirby (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 334. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474419307-013>

22 Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 343-364.

23 Margrit Shildrick, "Queering the Social Imaginaries of the Dead," *Australian Feminist Studies* 35, no. 104 (2020): 182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2020.1791690>

24 Nina Lykke, *Vibrant Death* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2022), 7.

25 Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 340.

26 Peta Hinton, "A Sociality of Death: Towards a New Materialist Politics and Ethics of Life Itself," 344.

27 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), 131.

28 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016), 56-72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw25q>

29 Sharon Todd, "Creating Aesthetic Encounters of the World, or Teaching in the Presence of Climate Sorrow," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 00, no. 0, (2020): 7.

30 Subjectivity is a question of central significance in educational theory that, I shall argue elsewhere, has far-reaching implications for how we understand the continuities between the living and the dead and, thereby, learn to live better with dead-others.

31 Deborah B. Rose and Thom van Dooren, "Death of the Disregarded in the Time of Extinctions," in *Violent Ends: The Arts of Environmental Anxiety* (panel discussion delivered at National Museum of Australia, Canberra, June 11, 2009).

32 Deborah B. Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction* (University of Virginia Press, 2011), 32.

33 Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 8.

34 Nathan Snaza, et al., "Toward a Posthumanist Education," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 30, no. 2, (2014): 45.

35 Patricia MacCormack, "Embracing Death, Opening the World," *Australian Feminist Studies* 35, no. 104 (2020):104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2020.1791689>

36 My intention is not to make general claims about death denial on behalf of teachers and students but to advocate for a need to engage with questions of

death instead of working toward its social indifference. As a matter of fact, death enters the lives of children and young people in many different ways. School shootings loom over the American school, youth suicide, and Covid-19 (as well as environmental catastrophes) are all instances in which schooling is squarely linked to mortality. One pedagogical orientation I am after is the normalization of spaces where students can talk about their fears, heartbreaks, or worries so as not to be haunted by them.

37 Afffi and Christie, "Facing Loss: Pedagogy of Death," 1152.

38 Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming*, 165.

39 Hinton, "A Sociality of Death: Towards a New Materialist Politics and Ethics of Life Itself," 226.

40 Shildrick, "Queering the Social Imaginaries of the Dead," 182.

41 Jessica Lussier, "Relearning Our World: Grief, Loss, and Mourning-with," *Philosophy of Education* 77, no. 2 (2021): 143-159. <https://doi.org/10.47925/77.2.143>