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ABSTRACT

One of the challenges contemporary societies faces is resistance to sharing the world. Investments in 'extremist' or 'identitarian' identity positions that desire purity and are intolerant of pluralism and difference undermine education. I explain why it is important to explore 'how ideas feel', understanding the affective investments in these positions and imaginaries, and the fear of loss of identity that can drive such closed positions. In the second part, I turn to the writings of Édouard Glissant in order to deepen this analysis, paying particular attention to unpacking the desire for purity and the fear of *métissage* or mixing that are commonplace in racism, xenophobia, and ultra-nationalism. Glissant offers another way of understanding identity-in-relation whereby sharing the world does not mean losing oneself. Finally, I draw on his poetic language of archipelagic pedagogies to suggest some ways in which education can invite students to deepen a sense of world-oriented particularity.

Resisting desires for purity, predictability, and progress

The claim that education involves an orientation to the world beyond the self is commonplace, perhaps even self-evident. It frames educational thinking in the writings of Biesta (2019) and Arendt (2008), and 'world-orientation' and 'world-imaginary' are constant refrains through Édouard Glissant's writing (2020a, 2020b). Still, it's not always clear how to foster world-orientation practically in education, or indeed, how to help (young) people come to accept that other rather obvious fact that we share our world with other humans, other living species, and with much inorganic and dark matter. Moreover, not only do we share the world, but we are part of the world, this 'vast sack, this belly of the universe' (Le Guin, 1989, p. 170). As such, at a minimum, as humans we need to learn to put up with one another and develop a rudimentary understanding of our earthly condition.

The next step is to come to understand that our existence depends and inter-depends on other humans, other species, the earth, the atmosphere, and the wider universe. A lived shift in perspective can be enabled through creative pedagogical invitations that help students to feel and experience that they are, as Spinoza (1994) puts it, part of

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nature. For example, basic gestures of touching the grass or aluminium or even the tip of one's own forefinger or feeling the temperature of the air on one's cheek give us direct experience of the qualities of the elements (fire, air, earth, water) and the sensory world of which our flesh and bone are part. This article aims to deepen sensitivity to how the desire for a closed or flat identity and hostility to difference feels at an embodied, gestural, and sensual level in education, and explores some creative pedagogies that might enable new (and non-threatening) encounters with our pluralistic world.

There are many reasons why people resist the idea of sharing the world beyond concerns about finite resources. One is the overwhelming experience of facing the world, *Naturing Nature:* the direct experience of our vulnerability, scale, and finitude can provoke a sense of existential anxiety, precipitated by a fear of losing oneself and one's individuality. Hegel, referring to Spinoza, called this 'a night where all cows are black'. So too, turning to the world disrupts the visceral and comforting centrality of self-orientation and absorption, what Murdoch (1970) called the 'fat, relentless ego'. It requires de-centring the self – a discomfiting gesture. For most of us to really countenance sharing, let alone loving, the world in all its diversity means addressing affective blocks and undoing visceral auto-socio-biographies, in particular those invested in purity and privileging of a single identity. Given the all-too-human tendencies toward one-dimensional thinking and monoexistence, our first task may be to figure out how, at a minimum, we humans can come to bear to put up with one another, suspending, for now, the maximal question of how we can live well (enough) together or live on this earth. To start we need an analytic lens that is alert to the 'referent-we' described by Sylvia Wynter, the myth-making group which includes or excludes, recognising only some as part of the same symbolic life. For instance, discourses of cultural diversity in education (in practice if not in theory) sometimes implicitly presuppose a 'we' or the 'us' (the 'same') and others who are positioned as 'different from' or diverse (Bryan, 2012). More forcefully commenting on this drive to sameness and its underside, Glissant (1997) says, '[e]ither the other is assimilated, or else it is annihilated. That is the whole principle of generalization and its entire process' (p. 49).

This analytic 'referent-we' lens can help to identify those positions in educational thought and practice that seek to impose a single truth, that seek to privilege a single people, or the views of a single people, and which deny or undermine the pluralism of the earth and/or humanity. A possible way to deepen this analysis might involve exploring educationally how and why (young) people become affectively invested in reactive and hateful positions or be/become unwilling to engage and live with difference and diversity. Another could be to look at the impact of models of evaluation that reduce the educational experience to measurable and comparable indicators.

Throughout this article, I use the term 'image-affect-concept' to remind us that ideas are experienced affectively as part of wider imaginaries. I occasionally mobilise the geographical language of landscapes to draw attention to the ways in which these image-affect-concepts resonate with or are in tension or conflict with one another. Philosophers like Gatens and Lloyd (1999), Code (2006) and Fricker (2007) argue that collective and social imaginaries orient our political, social and affective lives, and shape our concepts. With them and Spinoza, I understand imaginaries as embodied, associational, productive, constitutive of desire and affect, and capable of transformation. Images circulate and produce different kinds of affective lives and experiences, depending on the stories,

lived experience, intersections, and histories of different bodies within the social body. Images matter, and have material and existential effects, especially when citizens and students are asked to image themselves or are imagined/imaged in a reduced or one-dimensional way. However, image-affect-concepts do not 'fabricate' the Real at will nor do they operate hylomorphically by imposing their shape onto what would otherwise be an amorphous mass of 'buzzing sensations'. Rather they give or refuse attention to the material and relational qualities of what exists or has existed, and thus are both differentiated symbolically and productive of experience.

Throughout this article, I'll return to some of the regressive defences used to protect the self or loss of self, in particular affective investments in purity, anti-pluralism, identity-as-sameness, hostility to difference, intolerance of complexity, and monologics, including monoculture, monohumanism, and monolingualism. I'll indicate some of the ways in which 'identitarian' tendencies can be (unwittingly) encouraged in education and invite us to reflect together on how as educators we might unpack the perceived loss of identity prevalent in a variety of ultra-extremist, far-right, alt-right, populist, ur-fascist, and xenophobic positions. Such positions are premised on intolerance, and often hatred, of difference and pluralism (Cassam, 2021). They are hostile to the idea that one might exchange with others and in so doing be changed. Yet they do not necessarily reflect the complexity of people, their diverse motivations, and the affects that motivate ideological positions.

Image-affect-concepts, such as identitarian identities, entail and create diverse affective, existential, and embodied investments. They depend on the landscape in which they are positioned, where on the landscape they sit, how they are conceptualised, and the range of embodied personal and individual histories with which they interact. They depend on both the constellations of other image-affect-concepts with which they are in relation, and the historical and contextual position of different bodies/minds, as well as dominant power relations. In this regard, Zembylas (2021) says:

> scholars of nationalism and national identity pay attention to not only what people do but also how they feel, namely, how affects and feelings are manifested in people's embodied practices and performances, actions related to everyday objects, and embodied rituals and traditions. (pp. 4–5)

He reflects on the significance of this for life in school in divided societies where collective imaginaries are experienced and incorporated in diverse ways. Affective nationalism involves diverse affective responses amongst young students depending on where they are situated in relation to the ethno-nation. In this case when national identity is conceptualised and imagined in absolutist terms as a product of a fixed genealogy, as pure, or a natural consequence of superiority, this produces modes of existence that are closed off to those 'othered' and to difference, often resulting in practices that seek to legitimate domination, segregation, or annihilation. Zembylas (2021) describes how image-affect-concepts of ultra-nationalism, racial hierarchy, and xenophobia generated affects of fear, hate, or disgust in some students at the very thought of impurity, mixing, or loss of identity. This is increasingly visible in great replacement ideology and varieties of far-right discourses.

Moving beyond the analysis of 'affective nationalism', Gilroy (2019) says:

[v]ivid images of invasion and demographic warfare have enhanced the allure of the rebranded fascism that styles itself the 'Alt-right'. It is an unlikely and uneasy alliance of trolls, misogynists, meninists, ethno-nationalists, xenophobes and accelerationists, all dedicated to resisting the looming existential catastrophe they like to describe as 'the great replacement'. (2019, np)

Although the world inevitably 'intrudes' in educational spaces, educators can find it challenging to address potentially conflictual or painful issues, even those that are not controversial. As a young person said recently, 'Teachers react to everything. You are not sitting up straight. You haven't done your homework. And then someone makes a racist comment and there is silence, it's like it didn't happen. And they react to everything else!'.

Deploying the lens of the 'referent-we' more precisely would entail developing greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, the political, cultural, social, existential, and educational implications of those identity positions that are committed to a constellation of purity, dogmatic certainty, anti-pluralism, intolerance of difference, and identity-as-sameness and fixity. By committing to deepening awareness, it can become possible to learn how to respond educationally and pedagogically to these positions, including working with gesture, sensibility, and affect to transform the atmosphere that so often pre-reflectively accompanies and motivates uncompromising ideological positions. We'll explore the fear of loss of identity or mixing that motivates the racist later in this article.

As such, the first part of this article is both critical and analytic, offering a lens and framework to locate the kinds of affective concepts and images that may come to constitute different kinds of imaginaries. It shows some of the ways in which these imaginaries operate and in so doing aims to draw attention to some of what I have been calling image-affect-concepts that *move*, *orient,* and *create* pedagogical encounters, in particular those that are premised on identitarian categories or the 'purity' of monocultural thinking. It does so by attending to the diverse ways in which such ideas and concepts are sensed, felt, and lived. Shiva (2015) says 'I realized that humanity had cultivated a "monoculture of the mind", which created a blindness to diversity and its potentials' (p. 2) whilst Sylvia Wynter (Wynter and McKittrick, 2015) refers to 'liberal monohumanism', those discourses that speak of a common humanity but are intolerant to difference. Drawing on the ideas of Clare (2017) and Scott (2017, 2009, 1998) I describe the implications of privileging of monoculture in all its forms, the drive to sameness, the claim to progress, and the impoverishment and indeed destruction of our pluralistic world.

Yet, even from the abyss of the worst destruction, somehow life has been re-composed, re-imagined, re-created; Édouard Glissant's (1997) invocation of the slave ship tells the story of the womb-abyss and the re-composition of life through the fragments remaining from destruction (pp. 5–8). The second part of the article turns to the writings of Glissant to propose other ways of turning to the world and coming to feel oneself to be part of a shared world. Glissant's relational-ontology and world-imaginary aim to foster one's sense of belonging in the world. He explains how loving and caring for place does not mean one has to fear losing oneself or one's culture, but one must resist atavistic identities and continue to sense and imagine other worlds and existences, feeling oneself to be part of the world, this Whole-World (*Tout-Monde)* even in one's specificity.

Educational imaginaries: how ideas feel

In her essay, Todd (2021) describes teaching as formation, as gestures of pointing that invite different kinds of inclination. What follows is in this spirit in many respects but as I reflect on education, I also think about pedagogies as experimental quasi-curatorial practices. I am interested in how pedagogies can help to create the conditions for an educational experience that involves both turning to the world and sensing the world, but also give us another kind of experience, for example of ideas. A living experience of belonging to and being part of the world that engages the senses, the intellect, and the imagination can evoke, however momentarily, the embodied *experience* that we share the world. Pedagogies are not the *form* of education, understood hierarchically and hylomorphically, imposing shape on subject or student matter. Nor are pedagogies *forms* understood in the Kantian sense as the general conditions of possibility for educational experience. Finally, they are not part of those practices of *formation,* in particular when these practices do not sufficiently question problematic legacies of progress and civilisation in the Western tradition, or fail to acknowledge teleological, metaphysical, and colonial inheritances that may be shaping implicitly their concepts of formation. I suggest calling these pedagogies archipelagic: emergent, inventive, gestural, and responsive, involving open exchange and communication materially, symbolically, ethically, existentially, and so forth. I will return to this in the final section of the article.

Image-affect-concepts that populate educational, social, and political imaginaries act like figures on a map, shifting the gaze and drawing into relief certain features of the landscape whilst occluding and obscuring others. In so doing they are productive of different kinds of experiences and subjectivities. Just as the eye is drawn toward the curve of the river or the slope of a mountain, other features fade into the background, temporarily irrelevant. Image-affect-concepts are thought, felt, and sensed, including that of the world, and different image-affect-concepts move, orient and produce new subjectivities, existences, and desires, even when not brought into explicit relief.

The image-affect-concept of the archipelago offers a particular way of understanding pedagogy, as we'll see. Thinkers in the tradition of feminist philosophical thought showed how concepts are co-imbricated with images and imaginaries (Ferreira da Silva, 2007; Gatens & Lloyd, 1999; Le Doeuff, 1989). These philosophers explain how concepts involve both an *image* of thought and the trails and constellations of other concepts alongside affective inheritances and presences. For example, Ferreira da Silva describes the concept of 'transparency' or what she calls the 'transparency thesis'. On the one hand, she argues that this involves a commitment to making visible, to sovereign self-determination and mastery, that is premised on a principle of interiority without relation and exemplified by universal reason. However, in so doing, transparency makes others the racialised subaltern, the affectible 'I', and institutes the quest for globality of colonialism. It is, she argues, 'the onto-epistemological account that institutes 'being and meaning' as effects of interiority and temporality' (p. 4). Attention to image-affect-concepts like transparency that can come to operate quasi-axiomatically and pre-reflectively is particularly important when they institute the logics that then follow in their wake, opening up or closing down lines of enquiry, questions, and possibilities of existence. Fanon (2001) gave a famous psycho-existential example of the experience of exclusion from the 'referent-we' that is implicit in the 'transparency thesis'. He wrote of the pain and anger of

suddenly realising that not only does he not nor can he ever accede to the category of Universal Man, but is seen, and experiences himself, as a phobic object. Elaborating this, Wynter (2015) argues that this is non-biologically determined at the level of *mythos* and biologically or neurochemically implanted at the level of *bios;* there is a desire to belong, a neuro-chemical response to connection, and consequently pain at systematic exclusion from the 'referent-we'.

Throughout this article, I focus on a particular image-affect-concept of identity, one that privileges sameness, purity, assimilation, and fixed essence and is concerned with boundaries and protection, an individuated individual. I'll suggest (provisionally) that identity becomes problematic when conceptualised through the lens of 'substance metaphysics', a philosophical quest to understand that which makes a thing what it is and not something other, such that those properties, if lost, would mean that the thing's own essence would be lost. I'll invite other ways of thinking about identity-in-relation beyond the language of loss, and suggest that essence can be reconceptualised differently, as mobile, relational, and dynamic, rather than as fixed.

Making the same: the risks of monoculturalism

As noted above, Biesta (2015) and in many respects Arendt (2008) argue that education, specifically teaching, supports a shift from an infantile and ego-centred approach that seeks to master and control the world to a relation with the world and with the other who is different from me. This is but a first gesture that needs to be realised concretely somehow. It requires an art of pedagogical experimentation which preserves a sense of the 'beautiful risk' of education (Biesta, 2013). This asks for humility, existential attunement and a sense of perspective on the part of the educator, alongside openness to the unpredictability of education (O'Donnell, 2018). At the same time, the educator needs to be attuned to the risks of wholly destabilising the lives of her students or catapulting them into disorientation, in particular in times of crisis. This means sensing when an existential threshold will be too much, or intolerable, at a given moment for a person. So, there is a delicate interplay and equilibrium between a need for stability that can become closed off and the need for openness that can become unmoored.

Bearing in mind these challenges to provide stability and certainty, this next section explores the nature of education's affective investments in monoidentity and monothinking, firstly through the writing of James C. Scott and Eli Clare. Although neither explicitly addresses educational theory or practice, they offer an analytic lens to help to evaluate the affective investments in monoculture. Both are particularly concerned with dismantling myths of progress and development, powerful image-affect-concepts that have shaped political and educational imaginaries (O'Donnell, 2014, 2016). Scott tells a counter-story of the emergence of agriculture, sedentism, the *domos*, and the State. Clare moves between memoir, analysis, and history to think about bodies and minds, disability, and queerness. Each explores the drive to homogeneity and sameness and its relation to discourses of progress, normalcy, and 'accountability'.

Scott challenges 'progressivist' stories of human history that seek to legitimate imperial and colonial violence in the name of civilisation, including through education, with the privileging of (European) enlightenment. He tells a counter-story, describing how

people seek and sought to avoid the domesticating gaze of the State though multiple strategies of refusal, sabotage, and avoidance, claiming that early humans over tens of thousands of years tried to ward off the prospect of the State, refusing to be part of the *Domos* by preserving nomadic ways of existing and being. His account refuses the so-called progressivist and civilisational discourses that describe humans as slowly evolving by settling and building the city and the State.

Practices of domestication changed the relation to the land by privileging monoculture, predictability, sameness, the segmented, the sedentary, the segregated, and the homogeneous. Just as when citizen, educator, student, and subject are understood primarily through imperial logics (counting) and hierarchical planning (top-down administration), and when only certain kinds of knowledge, planning and administration are valorised, this dismisses the importance of local, practical knowledges and immanent forms of organisation of grassroots civil society. It undermines and corrodes the pluralism of social life through its standardising measurements – making transparent and equivalent in order to compare (for example, a civic life audit). In the economic sphere, when caught up in capitalism's abstract logics of equivalence; one commodity is rendered like any other, one worker is replaceable with another, one student with another.

For Scott (1998, 2017), the abstract logic and symbols of exchange and profit come to colonise the social world and risk destroying the earth by reifying profit and growth. With the fusion of Nation and State, this further entrenches binary logics of inclusion and exclusion of citizens/non-citizens, sedimenting legacies of slavery and settler-colonialism. When reflecting on what Scott (1998) means by 'seeing like a State', we might also consider how this mechanism operates in education across teaching, administration, and research, in particular in locating and measuring only that which can be made visible and quantifiable in terms of value and effectiveness, for example grades, research output, or retention, and can thus enable further sorting, categorisation, and classification. The State counts what it can see and compare, says Scott. Wheat was cultivated, he argues in *Against the Grain*, because of its visibility – it is easy for a tax collector to count.

To contest progressivist myths of the emergence of the State, 'Civilisation', and sedentary life that have shaped political and educational theory and practice, Scott (2017) describes the sustained efforts by humans over tens of millennia to ward off the State. They did so through their persistence with nomadic existences, planting crops *and* continuing to move and disperse in ecologically rich environments. He explains that monocrops are highly vulnerable and fragile as were the human and animal populations confined in close quarters in the early States. 'The stress and physical trauma of confinement, together with a narrower spectrum diet and the ease with which infections can spread among individuals of the same species packed together, make for a variety of pathologies' (p. 81). This challenges the idea that those who lived before the dominance of the State died younger and had less healthy lives by pointing to the importance of ecological complexity and heterogeneity in providing for multiple forms of subsistence and sustenance. It also counters the narrative of progress, of civilisation, and of public order, a narrative that has been privileged by archaeological study simply because it left ruins and traces unlike other dispersed existences. Instead, for long periods of history the art most valued was the art of not being governed (Scott, 1986, 1998, 2009). Finally, it speaks to the dangers of some discourses of *formation* that persist in education.

In political and educational spheres, it is important to remain alert to the underside of drives to uniformity which ostensibly aim to make visible, transparent, and thus accountable, but in so doing erase the plurality and differences that keep political and educational cultures alive and lively. When desires are invested in sameness, these can be blinkered to the violence wrought by a desire for purity, separation, segregation, and annihilation. At the extreme, no longer is it enough to despise others or proclaim superiority; they must be erased absolutely. Traces of this desire for absolute purity and stasis populate contemporary discourses regarding migration, including in so-called democratic States where the language of contagion, immunity, pathology, and infection is commonplace when speaking of the movements of peoples and of cultural diversity. It can be found in educational discourses that implicitly privilege 'othering' models, even when welcoming diversity, by relying on binary 'us' and 'them' logics (Bryan, 2012). However, as Scott notes, the (agri)cultures and bodies most likely to be resistant and most able to sustain life are heterogenous and plural: there is something both deeply fragile and defensive about monoculture in all its material manifestations.

Extending this analysis of monoculture to the contemporary situation, Clare (2017) examines the imposition of logics of sameness on land and amongst human bodies, drawing attention to the violence underpinning monocultures in both cases. He describes a moment in an airport after a long weekend with 300 LGBTQ disabled people – queer crips (p. 132). For a moment, struggling to keep pace with the bodies around him, he thought to himself 'they all look the same', two legs, two arms, fast-paced. Clare says that this fleeting moment reminded him of –

> monocultures – those ecosystems that have been stripped, through human intervention, of a multitude of interdependent beings and replaced by a single species. I think of a wheat field with its orderly rows of one variety of grass, a clear-cut forest replanted with one variety of tree. (p. 132)

He holds in tension the split second of thinking 'they all look the same' with his recognition and knowledge of human diversity; it's a troubling moment. Following this, he describes the experience of stepping into an agribusiness cornfield, saying 'in a monoculture, a world of damage lies beneath the obvious sameness' (p. 133).

> Pesticides, chemicals, labour … annihilation of other species and of other humans. The historic slaughter of buffalo on the Great Plains was designed to conquer indigenous peoples, corral them, kill them, place them on reservations. That theft of land led to dividing the plains, planting monocrops of soya, corn, and wheat in rows of sameness. (p. 133)

'Monocultures start with violence, removal and eradication' (p. 134) and are linked to 'environmental destruction and genocide, incarceration and voluntary sterilisation'. Clare says, 'they rise up to haunt me' (p. 135) because 'the desire for eradication runs so deep' (p. 135). The 'unchoosing of disability' (p. 135) fits into this pattern of the many tendencies that bolster the creation of a human monoculture. Rather the task is to think and imagine interdependence in all its messy complexity, with ecologies of diversity, and proliferations of bodies, movements, and senses.

Tsing (2015) and Haraway (2015) extend these ideas by examining the co-imbrication of the Anthropocene, Plantationocene, and Capitalocene. Like Clare and Scott, they point to the deep investment in homogeneity, predictability, calculability, and control but in

response imagine multi-species worlds. But what does this drive for identity-as-sameness entail? Where does it come from? What happens to those bodies and minds that don't fit its image? Why is it bound up with fear of loss or hostility to difference or mixing?

The philosophy and language of loss that accompany some claims for homogeneous identities, in particular white supremacy, are reinforced by investments in sameness, predictability, post-colonial melancholia, and so-called progress across educational, political, and social life. Lloyd (2018) brings our attention to the developmental discourses that shaped ideas of the universal based on a particular human group which was presented as universal. He draws into relief the hierarchical and developmental thinking that motivated canonical texts in political theory, philosophy, and aesthetics and argues that there has been a failure to acknowledge that their concepts of the universal were developed comparatively and developmentally; that is, devised in contra-distinction to the 'primitive' or the 'savage'. Such claims to universality are implicitly premised on racial hierarchies and differentiation, including in the writings of Kant, and, in this regard, Lloyd offers a careful examination of the problem of representation. The persistence of words like 'primitive', 'progress', 'civilised', 'developed', and 'advanced' obscures racist evolutionary stories that embed hierarchy, superiority, and progress into the very idea of the human. Accounts relying on a standard, norm or *telos* involve humans being graded, judged, and hierarchised in terms of accession (or failure to accede) to the 'ideal human' or 'referent-we'. These are *a priori* racialised, classed, and gendered and thus foreclosed to most of humanity (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015). When citizenship and belonging are coupled with filiation, lineage and blood-belonging imaginaries, as Zembylas (2021) explains, this corrodes life in schools for those children deemed not to belong.

In educational institutions, just as in political bodies, cultural diversity is often framed as a problem, a threat, a risk, or something to be managed or overcome. Even when 'diversity' is embraced symbolically, it remains institutionally non-performative (Ahmed, 2012). Glissant (2020a) problematises this further, describing as 'root 'or 'atavistic' identities, those identities that seek to trace filiation, genesis, and lineage in order to secure boundaries and enclose identity (pp. 38–40): they institute the logic of the One rather than the All (1997, p. 49), excluding otherness and seeking purity. He describes these identities as 'the disorders of the identitarian machines of which we are so often the prey, like for example the birth right, the purity of the race, the integrality, if not the integrity, of the dogma' (2020b, p. 8). What feels most visceral, certain, personal, intimate, and even natural to each of us might have been otherwise, yet it can be difficult to acknowledge not only the contingency of one's existence, but also the enduring relics, effects, and affects of violent histories and presents in one's life.

Desiring sameness: substance metaphysics and the ontologies of education

Reflecting on the fear of loss or mixing that haunts identitarian/essentialist/extremist positions, I wonder about the kinds of questions that exercise philosophers tackling the conceptual space of the metaphysics of identity: What is it that makes something what it is, and not something else? At what point does a thing become other? At the risk of simplification, if identity is understood through the lens and logic of substance metaphysics as consisting of inherent properties; for something to be and remain what it 'is' then it

must preserve such properties over time. This serves to circumscribe what is *proper* to self as well as what is *owned* or *possessed* by self. Such image-affect-concepts of personhood are bound up with property and territory. When such images of perduring sameness are extended more widely to group or nation, they often appeal to a constellation of image-affect-concepts like purity, unity, invasion, security, contagion, fuelling the drive to pre-serve boundaries and identities. Territorial borders are presented as necessary and natural and in the service of preserving and privileging sameness, homogeneity, and hier-archy. They maintain boundaries of material, symbolic and conceptual territory rather than creating sites for exchange and encounter. In many ways, the *de facto* legacies of substance metaphysics appear at play in those desires to maintain fixity or sameness, in particular when driven by fear of loss of self. Certain kinds of identity-talk, for example those linked with xenophobia, operate within a constellation of image-affect-concepts such as identity-as-sameness, stasis, sovereignty, and/or essential properties, often expressed in a 'referent we' or us/them binary. Atavistic or roots thinking, as Glissant calls it, prefers to return to blood, soil, and territory whilst eschewing the Earth, Land, Country, and the possibility of sharing the world.

In this regard, I'd like to suggest what might seem a peculiar proposition, though one consistent with the approach that I have been suggesting: some ideas, by their nature and/or due to their construction, association, and constitution, are resistant to new encounters. Some image-affect-concepts appear committed to fixed and static identity, fantasies of purity, desire for sameness or of control, and they fear change and difference. At times it seems as though they have their own ontological existence or force: they close themselves off into their own plenitude, mired in certainty and fixity, and are sealed away from the oxygen of other ways of thinking, imagining, and sensing (Deleuze, 1994; Guat-tari, 2000; Sharp, 2011; Simondon, 2007). These tendencies not only institute hierarchies of human beings, but also tend to ossify into monolithic multicultures, or what Sen (2006) has called 'plural monoculturalism', isolating and segregating people from one another. Glissant (1997) says 'difference itself can still contrive to reduce things to the Transparent' (p. 189).

This is not to deny that at times a turn inward may be needed as a moment of pause, re-gathering, resistance, stability, or respite. Ultimately, however, generic and acontextual appeals to essentialist identities, even when they aim to empower, under-mine the politics and poetics of singularity, specificity, and relation that make it poss-ible to create new imaginaries and ways of existing in plurality. Absolutist cultural identities tend to mimic the fixed enclosure of substance metaphysics and the abstraction of commodification. They cut off concrete moments of exchange and interchange, even refusing change, openness, dialogue, or conviviality. In this regard, Gilroy (2018) drily remarked, 'I dislike that US rhetoric (about anti-blackness) because it dissolves in an instant all the sticky engagements with particular histories and local ecologies of belonging' (np). Like Édouard Glissant and Achille Mbembe, he warns of the dangers of the global exportation of a generic US-centric theory of race, and the risk of supplanting the language of racism with anti-blackness. For Gilroy (2005, 2004, 1993), this means attending to ordinary moments of conviviality and soli-darity in everyday life and at the same time refusing and resisting the *denial of racism* that has become ever more prevalent as people discover their own hostility

to the immigrant, the foreigner, the denizen, and the loss of the pure (cultural) identity of the nation.

In contradistinction to identitarian logics, and in the spirit of conviviality, Édouard Glissant offers a poetics and philosophy of relation, one of relational or rhizomatic identities which involve exchange and creolisation. He invokes a poetic logic that privileges movement, experimentation and becoming, and thinking 'from below', and which fosters the kinds of inductive and creative thinking that sometimes emerge from unpredictable encounters (O'Donnell, 2013, 2015). Imagining identity as relational rather than rooted is difficult if one is accustomed to thinking about identity (personal, cultural, and otherwise) through the lens of substance metaphysics, lineage, or filiation. *Relational* identity is better communicated poetically and undertaken experimentally. It is felt, lived, and sensed without being appropriated or grasped. It shifts and changes with encounters and is open to the unpredictable and unforeseen. Relational identities evoke images of movement, relations, and exchange, such as the stories of the earth, of life, of the cosmos, and of humans. Ideas, beliefs, technologies, rituals, patterns, materials, people, seeds, plants, animals, symbols, and knowledges all move. When they are most fruitful, sustainable, and non-destructive, they do not impose themselves from above but rather enter unforeseeable encounters and reciprocal exchange.

For example, the artist Otobong Nkanga (2017) invites different ways of holding together the violence of encounter and legacies of colonialism with the movements of ideas, life, and culture and welcomes the sense of familiarity they evoke: 'Hello, little plant! I know you!'. She draws attention to the material traces of movements across the earth: a pattern of a cloth that has travelled from Indonesia to Paris, the gleam of Zambian copper on a roof in Dublin, an architectural motif that found its way from Brazil across the globe, a plant clinging to scraps of dirt thousands of miles from its origins. Everything moves, including ideas. In attending to all that moves and has moved, and the unexpected exchanges that take place as a consequence, this can motivate a deeper, even revolutionary, curiosity and interest in the rich traditions and movements of all ideas, things, and experiences in our common world, whilst never forgetting power and violence that forced exchange.

With these examples and reflections in mind, I'd like to suggest five provisional propositions before moving to think further about culture, identity, diversity, and pedagogy through the lens of Glissant's writings:

1. Refuse deductive explanatory frameworks premised on generic identities whilst remaining attentive to the cross-cutting legacies of those logics;
2. Always understand identity relationally, ecologically, and as 'more than human' rather than as a totality premised on sameness and stasis;
3. Privilege communication and encounter premised on exchange, on reciprocity, on conviviality, and on surprise;
4. Refuse transparency and mutual understanding in favour of opacity, relationality, singularity, and density.
5. Listen first.

The next section of this article suggests some ways of embodying some of these pedagogical principles that invite openness to sharing the world. How can we co-exist and

share the world without understanding one another fully? (Irigaray, 2008). And what does this mean for education?

'The racist refuses what he does not understand': for the right to opacity

What is this respect for the opacity of the other for which Glissant argues? It is not the same as liberal neutrality, blithe indifference, or monolithic cultural relativism. It does not rest on the blindness of white ignorance. On the contrary, the right to opacity actively undoes the reduction of those deemed 'other' by the referent-we group (those who are counted or count themselves in the 'we' category). Caring for the right to opacity of oneself and others means respecting the right to not be identified and classified *a priori* – to be reduced to a single dimension. The reason for this, he argues, is that

> [i]f we examine the process of 'understanding' people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency. In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons, and perhaps, judgements. I have to reduce. (Glissant, 1997, p. 190)

The right to opacity rests on an ethic of respect for the irreducible *singularity* of the student as well as for their place, their cultures, and the traditions that they embody and express. This means thinking about cultures as particular and specific *and* boundless and always in relation and returns us to the idea with which we began: sharing the world, without becoming mired in philosophies of loss.

> It is a means of reacting against all the ways of reducing us to the false clarity of universal models. I do not have to 'understand' anyone, individual, community, people – i.e. to 'take them with me' at the cost of smothering them, of losing them in a boring totality that I would be in charge of – in order to agree to live with them, to build with them, to take risks with them. (Glissant, 2020b, p. 17)

To consent to opacity means accepting the irreducible and singular density of the other. Opacity is not obscurity, and it does not promote an autarkic image of self. It resists the image of self that would seek to enlighten, clarify, or make transparent *who* one, or the other, is. In short, one need not identify oneself or consent to the identifications imposed by others, and not everything need to be revealed, made sense of, or made present. For Glissant,

> [A]s far as I'm concerned, a person has the right to be opaque. That doesn't stop me from liking that person, it doesn't stop me from working with him, hanging out with him, etc. A racist is someone who refuses what he does not understand. I can accept what I don't understand. Opacity is a right we must have. (Glissant, Diawara, & Winks, 2011, p. 14)

Education must come to better accept that often we don't and can't understand others or even ourselves, and yet we can co-exist in relation and share the world. The right to opacity does not preclude us learning as educators to experiment with pedagogies that open us and our students to the world. A key task for educators is to help the young accept that to exist is to share the world – this is not a matter for debate or a question of belief.

To be quite clear, Glissant does not say that we *must* always be opaque to one another; although opacity is perhaps inevitable, it is not an order or command. Rather I have the *right* to opacity, to refuse the injunction to identify myself, to make myself knowable to the other, and to have the other's fantasies, projections, and classifications imposed on me as they fit me into their ready-made box. It is not surprising to learn that the very idea of the right to opacity has been met with resistance. The impetus to state one's identity can also stem from a desire, or demand, to be recognised, seen, and valued when one has been hitherto invisible. This is not straightforward. To encounter each other, we must neither lose ourselves in one another, becoming fusional, nor withhold absolutely. It is a matter of understanding that the other is not me, is not the same as me, and that we need not understand one another to co-exist, to live together. We can have solidarity without sameness, and presumed sameness is not a condition for safety. To enter into relation is to accept living in a pluralistic universe.

Opacity is not a desire for mutual ignorance. Educational spaces are and must be spaces of encounter with our pluralistic universe and our pluralistic humanity. They invite complex understandings of culture, diversity, and identity as objects of study, imagination, experience, and encounter. Given their world-orientation they can serve as spaces for acquaintance and renewal, enabling recovery of histories, truths, and stories that may have been rendered invisible or systematically forgotten. I'd like to suggest that this concept of world-imaginary opens up another perspective on the question of particularity. Diawara (2017) here creates the formulation 'world-mentality'. Cultivating world-imaginary and world-mentality are preconditions for sharing the world, and this is part of what education involves – both opening to the world, imaging the world *and* deepening a sense of one's complex particularity, place, and singularity. A world-imaginary privileges images of exchange, relation, transformation, conservation, and communication. It refuses the logic of recognition, of identity, what Deleuze (1994) calls the 'dogmatic image of thought' (p. 131). By beginning with relation and with difference such that rhizomatic identities emerge so too does this 'feeling of the imaginary that we only multiply diversities by putting them into relation with one another' (Glissant & Noudelmann, 2002, p. 77). This is not a generalising gesture, adds Glissant,

> [W]ell, I say that Relation is made up of all the differences in the world and that we shouldn't forget a single one of them, even the smallest. If you forget the tiniest difference in the world, well, Relation is no longer Relation. (Glissant et al., 2011, p. 9)

'Glissant's name for the relations between all things in the world, … appears threefold: as *tout-monde* (the world in its entirety), *écho-monde* (the world of things resonating with one another) and *chaos-monde* (a world that cannot be systematized)' (Loock, 2012). This image-affect-concept of Relation for Glissant is always concrete, empirical, immanent, experimental, and inductive rather than generic, deductive, and generalising. It needs practices of poetics and experimental pedagogies that can sustain relation and openness, rather than a politics of assimilation or a search for a foundation that kills literally or metaphorically the other.

Archipelagic pedagogies: sharing the world

> *The right to opacity, not transparency.*
> *To move from History to histories.*

To say this history is both mine and not mine.
Images of archipelagic thinking and heterogenesis
Beings of Relation.
A haptic orientation.
To be touched, to be moved, to sense, to orient.
The imaginary.
All the ways that a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world.
The forgotten voices
Safeguarding the particular.

Wiedorn (2021) observes,

The characteristics in question that are most consistently referenced in Glissant's work are: an emphasis on particularity (coupled with a scorn for universality), a paradoxical combination of belonging to a particular place while sensing a relation to the entire world, and a privileging of multiplicity over unicity. (pp. 1–2)

Allow me to offer an educational example of this. D'warte's (2018) research on and practice of culturally sustaining pedagogies invites the world, in all its complexity, into the classroom. The spaces of school, home, and community inter-mingle through the voice, life, and knowledges of children and families, in particular in the training of young children as researchers who map their linguistic and cultural lives and worlds, read their local worlds, and listen to the stories of their loved ones in their interviews. This sharing of their worlds enables the teachers to see how children learn through their everyday encounters as well as in classroom. It dismantles monoculture and monolingualism in favour of linguistic and cultural exchange and openness to complexity by holding together particularity, relationality, and world-imaginaries.

Culturally sustaining pedagogies aim to avoid imposing (well-meaning) generic identities that reduce the young person to a representative of a group by developing an inductive and collaborative approach that can hold together a feeling for the particular and for place with a world-imaginary. This challenges the zero-sum logics of those philosophies of loss that tend to motivate identitarian thinking. For Glissant (2013) –

[i]dentitarian mutual slaughters will not end until these same humanities have agreed to consider the identity of everyone, individual or group, as both inalienable and changeable in relation to the other. *I can change by exchanging with the other, without losing or distorting myself.* (p. 857)

This is his key message: one does not need to give up one's identity or sense of place, but one need not cling so tightly to it. Exchange and changing does not mean one loses oneself or must make oneself transparent. By entering into relation, one can also preserve one's opacity. The idea that to be with, to live with, the other, I must understand them is worrisome. It does not let the other be and become and does not permit the possibility that we might co-exist with one another in difference. It seeks to grasp the other too fully.

Imposing transparency may force Relation to vanish into undifferentiation. The poetics (and politics) of Relation is 'a moment of awakening the world's imaginary in each of us. In other words, the moment in which we touch the world's reality. We touch what we have not initially seen in the world' (Glissant et al., 2011, p. 15). This invites us to institute all kinds of relations. '[Glissant's] idea recognizes and enables a relation between different people and places, animate and inanimate objects, visible and invisible forces, the air,

the water, the fire, the vegetation, animals and humans' (Diawara, 2017). When encountering one another, if we begin with the principle of opacity, rather than transparency or mutual understanding, this may (though not always) constitute a fruitful starting point to think about our relations to one another and the world in educational spaces. It can enable a more delicate and nuanced sensitivity to the singularity of one another, greater awareness of the ways we each live out and through complex histories and biographies, and acceptance of the fallibility that accompanies this. Opacity opens up alternative ways to think about culture, identity, and diversity as always in relation, whilst helping to tell stories of diaspora, interdependence, creolisation, and movement: the stories of life on earth since its inception. Life itself is movement, openness, communication, and becoming. Nothing alive can be insular. To exist, everything and everyone must be in relation, enfolding, breathing, exchanging.

How then can we hold particularity *and* world-orientation or world-imaginary together in education? In education, our concern is with our shared and pluralistic world, learning about the world, encountering the world through its diverse manifestations, and fostering a feeling for the world, in particular in the young. Education ideally fosters 'world-mentality' (including world-orientation and world-imaginary), but it requires more. It means coming to terms *existentially* with the fact that we share the world, that we are vulnerable, that we can never close ourselves off. This is why I draw on the image-affect-concept of the archipelago as described by Glissant as it privileges Relation over territory. For him, territory is enclosed and opposed to place, which is always open for good or for ill. In this respect, territory is aligned with continental or systematic thought. He thinks that 'to live the world-totality from the place that is one's own means to establish a relation, not consecrate exclusion' (1999, p. 120). The stranger, the foreigner or the migrant is the one who I need so that I can change in exchanging, *whilst also remaining myself* (Glissant, 1999, p. 81, my italics). The image of the physical and geographical reality of the archipelago might, he thinks, offer a different concept-affect-image and reality for politics, society, thought, language, and culture.

The 'moment when one consents not to be a single being' (Glissant et al., 2011, p. 5) is thus a vital one. The task is to consent to the idea of being one and multiple, oneself and the other, the same and different. He explains,

> Creolization requires the heterogenous elements put into relation to 'intervalorize' themselves: that is to say, there must be no degradation or diminution of the being, either from outside or within, in this contact and intermixing. And why creolization rather than hybridity ['métissage']? Because creolization is unforeseeable, whereas one can calculate in advance the effects of hybridity. (2020a, p. 8)

Creolisation is a sign of change, but so often what paralyses us and shuts us off from others is that 'we're afraid of losing ourselves. We tell ourselves. If I change, then I'll lose myself. If I take something from the other, then my own self will disappear … [W]hat racists fear most of all is mixing' (2011, p. 7). If we recall, the images of identity that I drew from substance metaphysics, these tended to view change as loss and conflated identity and purity.

Humans compose and re-compose the world and themselves, even in the wake of the horror of suffering and the abyss that was the Middle Passage whose descendants do not have the luxury of re-tracing lineage back through generations, Hartmann (2007) and

Sharpe (2016) write of this impossibility of history, the imposition of forgetting and silence and the corrosive legacies of slavery. History is drowned. There can be no search for origins or genealogies, but this does not mean that one's particularity or place is lost. There are geographical ways of thinking, like archipelagic thinking, that are oriented towards the world in such a way that one imagines a fabric, alliance, or weave of living differences. The imaginary of the world allows us to touch a sense of difference just as Relation can be sensed even if not readily conceptualised or grasped. Again, this is not a matter of making ourselves more transparent to one another, of dispelling misunderstanding, of comprehending one another; it is precisely this drive to understand the other that undergirds the reductive logic of monoculture, domination, and assimilation. Rather, there is a right to opacity; that is, a right to resistance. This means listening to what the other wishes to reveal or not reveal.

Archipelagic thinking acknowledges that by virtue of being alive one is always necessarily in relations of exchange with others and the world, even if one pretends otherwise. The challenge is to make these more reciprocal and to confront the pain of an impossible demand for/denial of assimilation, alongside the logics of sameness that govern such a demand. This is particularly important when people are confronted with practices of racialised 'othering' and binary functioning of the inclusion/exclusion dyad, with the zero-sum calculus of assimilationist conceptions of identity. Archipelagic thinking takes seriously contemporary questions facing so many, like 'how much do I have to give up to belong, to be included?' or 'Why must I be forced to lose myself if I want to belong?'. To be alive is, of necessity to be in exchange (Simondon, 2007).

Archipelagic politics, pedagogy and thinking are not systematic but rather decentred, provisional, and quivering, uncertain of themselves. '"[A]rchipelagic thought" [is] a non-systematic inductive thought that explores the unforeseen of the world-totality' (Glissant, 1999, p. 120). It is diffractive, fractal, fragile. It offers an immanent, fragile, provisional, experimental, gentle, and creative way of thinking that is born of encounter, sustains becoming, and begins with relation. It teaches us something about how to approach pedagogy as an act of exchange and encounter, with humility, with curiosity, with attention to detail, to careful observation, to sensibility, to materiality, to context, to deep listening. Glissant (2009) suggests a formula 'Act in your place, think with the world' (detail and totality)' (p. 46, *my trans*.). This is not a generic approach. It is resonant with those approaches to cultural diversity or culturally responsive pedagogies that begin with place, and thus difference and singularity, whilst remaining in contact with the world and sustaining a world-imaginary. This approach allows us to imagine other ways to engage educationally with philosophies and ideologies of loss and resentment such as those that have fuelled hateful ideologies that are intolerant of difference or which promote the notion that belonging requires sameness. From there, as Haraway says,

> I want to nurture – to somehow force, if necessary – the attachment sites and contact zones so that all of the players have to somehow learn each other's idioms in a way that changes everybody so that no one remains the same as they were at the beginning and can perhaps find more collaborative, decolonial ways to address urgent problems. Often, Indigenous people are forced to learn southern idioms, but the reverse is much less true. That is not tolerable. (Haraway & Tsing, 2019, np)

Archipelagic pedagogies are approached through the lens of philosophies of becoming and involve becoming sensitive to the immanent logics and dynamics of creative invention. They work with an image-affect-concept of education as a 'theatre of individuation and individualisation' which involves incessant and co-constitutive exchange between individual-milieus that are part of, dependent on, and creative of the world. They unpack, dismantle and re-direct monocultural and monodirectional tendencies in education. These pedagogies involve a different set of ontological, epistemological, sensible, and existential commitments in education. The educator is, in many respects then, a transducer, supporting the translation of elements from one domain into another, aiding in

> tracking processes that come into being at the intersection of diverse realities. These diverse realities include corporeal, geographical, economic, conceptual, biopolitical, geopolitical and affective dimensions. They entail a knotting together of commodities, signs, diagrams, stories, practices, concepts, human and non-human bodies, images and places. They entail new capacities, relations and practices whose advent is not always easy to recognize. (MacKenzie, 2002, p. 18)

The educator is also one whose gestures, as detailed beautifully by Todd (2021) (see also O'Donnell, 2012) orient and re-orient attention.

Education involves noticing and creating opportunities for joy, exchange, and connection, ordinary moments of conviviality, and opening the senses to the world. Sustaining a feeling for and knowledge of the pluralism and diversity of our shared world is education's vocation. Our pluralistic universe is one of becoming, relation and exchange. As educators, we also deepen our awareness of those positions that demand purity, fixity, or segregation of groups, or who wish to eradicate the diversity of species life, including the human. This does not mean closing the world in a new form of 'liberal intolerance' or shutting down dialogue with those who are held by or hold these perspectives. Rather one does precisely the opposite whilst maintaining a stance of solidarity with those excluded and persecuted, who are denied a place in the world, the part who have no part, in particular those who face the risk of assimilation or annihilation.

Let's now attend once more to 'how ideas feel' in education. Rather than turning too quickly to conceptual analysis, critical thinking, and argumentation, we might begin to explore how these concepts are experienced and imagined and embodied in the lives of young people. For instance, feel now your own embodied response to the word: 'nation', 'justice', or 'gender'. Education requires paying attention to 'how ideas feel', the kinds of commitments ideas entail, and the actions they prompt or provoke. It means developing sensitivity to the plurality of responses we each have to the matter of the world with our different socio-cultural-historical biographies. A space becomes an educational space through the commitment by educators to creating opportunities for students to encounter the complexity, plurality, and richness of our shared world, and the creation of different pedagogies can open up the world in many ways. This does not mean that students need to lose themselves, their identity, their sense of place, and inheritances. It does mean moving beyond a 'single story' to a feeling for, and knowledge about, the richness and plurality of existence, creating opportunities for surprise and encounter. (As an aside, my mother once shared with me one of her scribbled notes when I, as a five-year-old, said I felt sorry for God who could never be surprised by anything.) Without doubt, moments of stability and a feeling of identity as

sameness may be needed existentially, in particular in times of crisis, but they become problematic when privileged as the *telos* of education and existence. Moments of surprise (but also anxiety) happen 'when the world comes in'.

Archipelagic pedagogies offer a way of imagining pedagogies of difference and encounter that values opacity whilst also being open to the creative institution of experimental relations with the world. In some respects, pedagogies are compositional exercises in poetics, revealing the world in new ways and instituting new relations. Again, this does not mean treating with sanguinity or neutrality the enduring legacies of racism, religious or ideological hatred, white supremacy, settler-colonialism, or contemporary versions of empire that circulate in educational spaces. Educators cannot be part of the denial of racism in all its forms. Indeed, what matters, particularly in our times, is to challenge those tendencies to and desires for assimilation, absolutism, certainty, domination, and expropriation that are compelled by a desire for sameness and closed identity. But educators must approach these matters delicately *and* educationally, creating opportunities to encounter the rich diversity of the world, refusing the logics of monoculture and fixed identity, to help students to create new forms of existence in our shared world, and new ways of imagining and encountering the past and their place in the world. They can do so by instituting pedagogical possibilities for encounter, telling and imagining the stories of the world in terms of movement, sensibility, imagination, and relation, rather than territory and History, and by inventing new relations, heterogenesis, new forms of sensibility, including through the education of the senses. This may involve creating the conditions for encountering the world through embodied and sensory pedagogies that help us to sense the 'more-than-human' in our existences, our affinities with all life, organic and inorganic, and a deep sense of connection with the earth, world, and cosmos. So perhaps we can all come to *feel* our ideas differently, even with a sense of perspective, bemusement, or humour, and in feeling them and no longer being identified by them, come to understand them and allow them to transform themselves. We could begin with a first gesture of sharing the world beyond discourses of inclusion: 'Can we have two-way exchange, where you invite me into your world, and I invite you into mine?'

Disclosure statement

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