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Chapter 7

Neoliberal and (Post-)Pandemic Irruptions: Reconceptualising Critical Pedagogies for More-Than-Human Crisis Times

Evelien Geerts and Delphi Carstens

Abstract

This strong collaboration-rooted (Choy *et al.*, 2009a and 2009b) essay experiments with a so-called irruptive methodology to weave together the authors' (post-)pandemic critical pedagogical experiences and praxes from within the contemporary neoliberal higher educational landscape. These experiences and praxes are mixed with irruptive philosophical snippets, conceptual passages, and narratives, each informing one another while addressing the many challenges attached to theorising and teaching in these more-than-human crisis times.

Building on the work of critical pedagogical (see Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2008 and 2022), posthumanist (see Braidotti, 2013), and new materialist thinkers (see Barad, 2007; Puar, 2007; Cooper, 2008; Chen, 2012; Alaimo, 2016; Haraway, 2016; and Geerts and Carstens, 2019), the necessity of analysing these neoliberal (post-)pandemic times of crisis in their more-than-human complexity is then explained. This is done by sketching out a philosophical genealogy of "irruption", presented here as a methodology (also see Gray *et al.*, 2021) and in the form of "neoliberal (post-)pandemic irruptions". By reconceptualising these irruptions as events that challenge our teaching praxes but also simultaneously have the potential to reorientate us (also see Deleuze and Guattari, 2000; Koro-Ljungberg, 2015), this essay provides the reader with a situated critical pedagogy fit for more-than-human crisis times.

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Introduction: Critical Perspectives and the "(Post-)Pandemic New Normal"

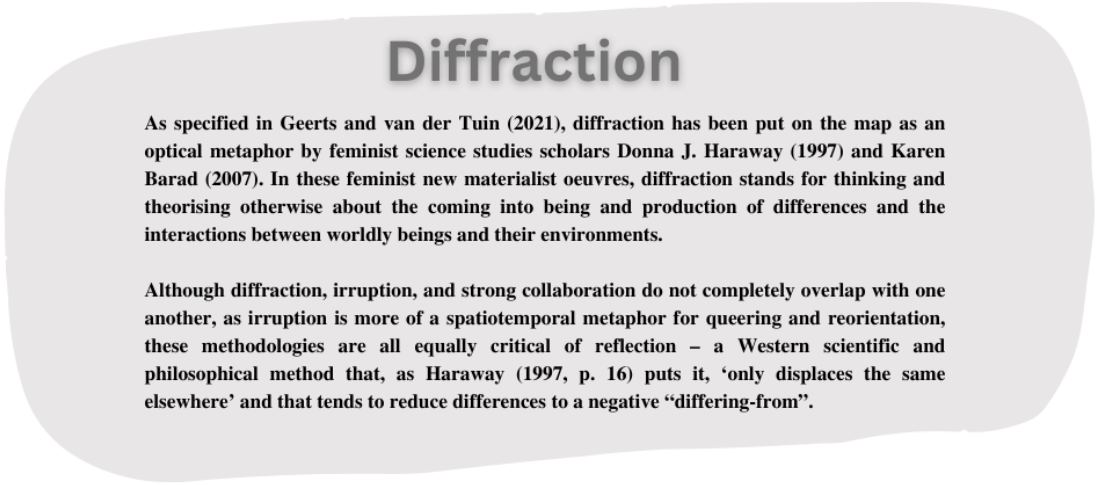
United by our shared interests in critical posthumanist and new materialist philosophies, while immensely frustrated by the pandemic's impact on our critical pedagogical praxes, the two of us set up monthly Zoom meetings between the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2022.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, one of the authors all of the sudden found themselves stuck in Belgium, having to lecture online to groups of students from various disciplines at a large international-oriented Dutch research university, while transitioning into a research-based post at a UK institute of higher education. The other author continued lecturing at the same underprivileged students-catering South African university where they have been teaching on a contract for almost 20 years. This particular author was also forced to go fully digital – a sudden transition that engendered different yet surprisingly similar irruptions for both authors, as will be discussed later. Our monthly conversations, during which we talked through the effects of this more-than-human pandemic crisis on an already highly neoliberalised and corporatised academic environment, motivated us to "keep going". This painfully demonstrates that we, as pedagogues critical of the ongoing neoliberalisation of higher education, have also managed to interiorise a neoliberal work ethic and type of resilience that prioritises working 24/7, together with the commitment to immediately "bounce back" after illness, personal matters, or other disorienting events…

Packed with our own lived experiences translated into critiques of the just-mentioned neoliberalisation process, this co-authored essay is shaped by an irruptive methodology – partly comparable to a diffractive approach.

Figure 7.1 Irruption: Diffraction

Geerts, Evelien & Carstens, Delphi. 2024. "Neoliberal and (Post-)Pandemic Irruptions: Reconceptualising Critical Pedagogies for More-Than-Human Crisis Times." In J. A. Bustillos Morales & S. Zarabadi (eds.), Towards Posthumanism in Education: Theoretical Entanglements and Pedagogical Mappings, pp. 101-120. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003365693-9.



Aside from experimenting with the idea and methodology of irruption, we were also strongly influenced by what the multidisciplinary Matsutake Worlds Research Group calls an ethos of "strong collaboration":

> 'Our concept of collaboration requires a reflexive methodology for working across and with difference. Our collaboration is not data gathering under a common theoretical umbrella. Instead, our collaboration requires negotiation across epistemologically diverse terrains and partially "articulated knowledges" (Choy, 2005); this is collaboration with friction at its heart (Tsing, 2005). Following Sandra Harding's (1993) term "strong objectivity", we call this strong collaboration. The methodological work of collaboration should not be hidden; the knowledge we gain depends on it' (Choy *et al.*, 2009b, p. 198).

This collaborative research and co-writing model focuses on multiperspectivism, learning to attune oneself to more-than-human and non-human agencies, enacting a slower, more attentive mode of knowledge production, and building 'connections across different geographical sites' (Choy *et al.*, 2009a, p. 399). The latter aspect in our case refers to our differently situated – and for at least one of us regularly shifting – academic environments and geopolitical positionalities: Both authors are equally committed to critical pedagogical praxes of emancipatory co-learning but because of their specific intersecting identities, the concrete materiality of their own bodies, their students' bodies and environments, and the particular embeddedness of their academic institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a different impact on their teaching philosophies and praxes. To give one example: It is of course a lot easier to go fully online when most of

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your institution's students are privileged enough to have access to computers or smartphones, a stable Internet connection at home, nutritionally adequate meals, and a safe, private environment in which to study.

When recently talking through the specificities of how the countries where we live(d) and work(ed), tackled the pandemic, we kept coming back to the idea of the (post-)pandemic. The prefix "post-" here refers to a process of working through and beyond, meaning a continuity with the past (here the pandemic past, which is still very much haunting the present) is carried over. This echoes Freudian (1950) *Durcharbeitung* or the therapeutic process in which a patient learns to move beyond the resistance they initially had toward their own consciousness. This process also plays a role in postmodernist Jean-François Lyotard's 'Re-Writing Modernity' (1987), where Lyotard conceptualises "post-"modernism as a (re)working of the narratives of and on modernity. The "post-" prefix can also indicate a "returning to", however, much in the same way as postmodernism styled itself as a return to "reality". We must be extremely wary, though, of framing such a return to reality nostalgically. While conceptualising the future in utopian terms, as modernism did, was unrealistic, dismissing the future, as happens in certain types of postmodern thinking, is not only irresponsible but dangerous. As critical posthumanist and new materialist philosophies teach us, we must search out grounded and messy future dreams; hopes being generated by people, living beings, and other agents.

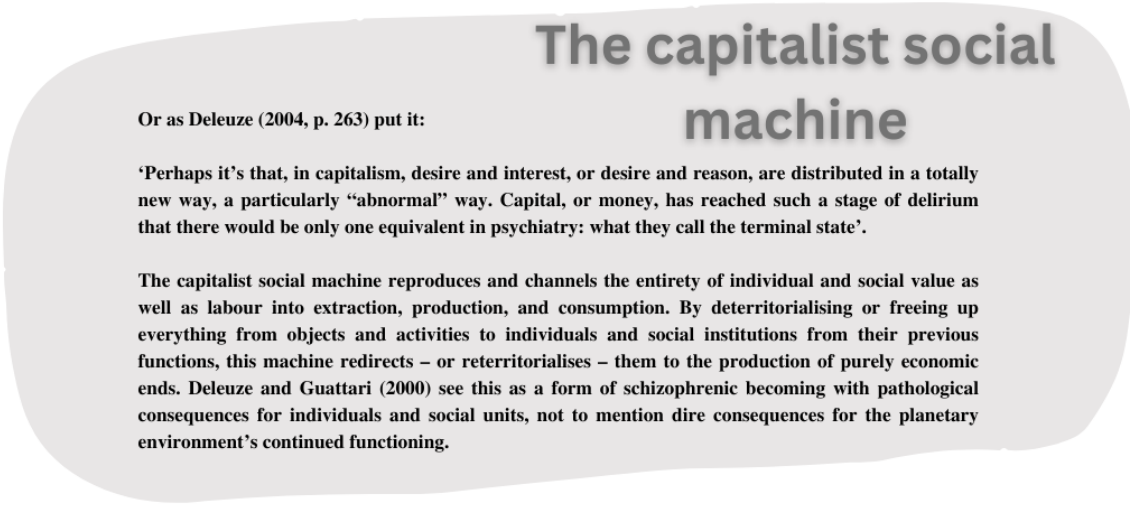
It is actually quite shocking to see how the COVID-19 pandemic already has been crafted into something of the past. International consultancy agencies, such as Ernst & Young and McKinsey, in tandem with leading American newspapers like the New York Times, in fact started speaking of "a post-pandemic future" and "the era of post-pandemic freedom" as early as 2021. Predictions ranged from the New York Times' forecast of 'a post-Covid boom' (Casselman, 2021, n. p.) resembling the Roaring Twenties to McKinsey's dossier on post-pandemic higher education best practices (see McKinsey, 2021).

While the forecast boom abruptly came to a halt due to war-driven global inflation and new COVID variants disrupting the labour market and higher education, McKinsey's best practices conveniently left out the pre-pandemic damage already done by neoliberal marketisation. Judging from these and other examples, it seems that the sloganesque "post-pandemic new normal" is not that "new" at all. Consider the reality on the ground for a moment: we are confronted with an intensification of global inequalities (see Butler, 2020), all-encompassing ecological destruction, extreme funding cuts in an already heavily workforce casualisation-

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driven higher educational landscape, and, to make things even worse, interlinked increases in vaccine nationalism, populist post-truth politics, and distrust in Western modern science. Taken all of the foregoing into account, isn't the "post-pandemic new normal" suddenly starting to look a lot like the "pre-pandemic normal"? To reformulate the foregoing in philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (2000) words: We seem to be more enslaved to the capitalist social machine than ever before.

Figure 7.2 Irruption: The Capitalist Social Machine



This "machine", propelled by a dangerous combination of late capitalist extractivism, the hyper-commodification of living and non-living matter, and algorithms-driven neoliberal governmentality has found its way into both our public institutions and private lives and is currently dominating 'all aspects of existence' (Brown, 2015, p. 17). The all-encompassing forcefulness of neoliberalism has also been underlined by critical pedagogue Henry A. Giroux in *Against the Terror of Neoliberalism* (2008, p. 10-11), where he states the following:

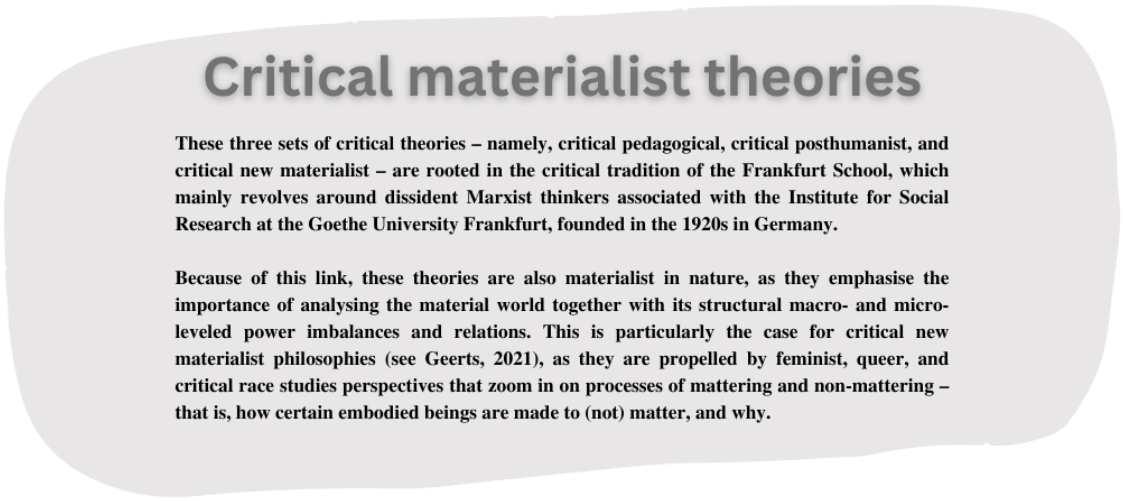
> 'Neoliberalism has indeed become a broad-based political and cultural movement designed to obliterate public concerns and liquidate the welfare state, and make politics everywhere an exclusively market-driven project. But neoliberalism does more than make the market "the informing principle of politics" [...]; its political culture and pedagogical practices also put into play a social universe and cultural landscape that support a particularly barbaric notion of authoritarianism, set in motion under the combined power of a religious and market fundamentalism and anti-terrorism laws

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> that suspend civil liberties, incarcerate disposable populations, and provide the security forces necessary for capital to destroy those spaces where democracy can be nourished.'

When it comes to higher education, the neoliberal capitalist social machine is at least co-responsible for the hollowing out of academic institutions through excessive budget cuts, the creation of overpaid management positions and promoting educational consumerism. And it is the schizophrenic operations of this machine – manifesting itself more clearly than ever in these (post-)pandemic times – that critical pedagogical (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2008 and 2022), posthumanist (Braidotti, 2013), and new materialist (Barad, 2007; Puar, 2007; Cooper, 2008; Chen, 2012; Alaimo, 2016; Haraway, 2016; and Geerts and Carstens, 2019) perspectives call into question.

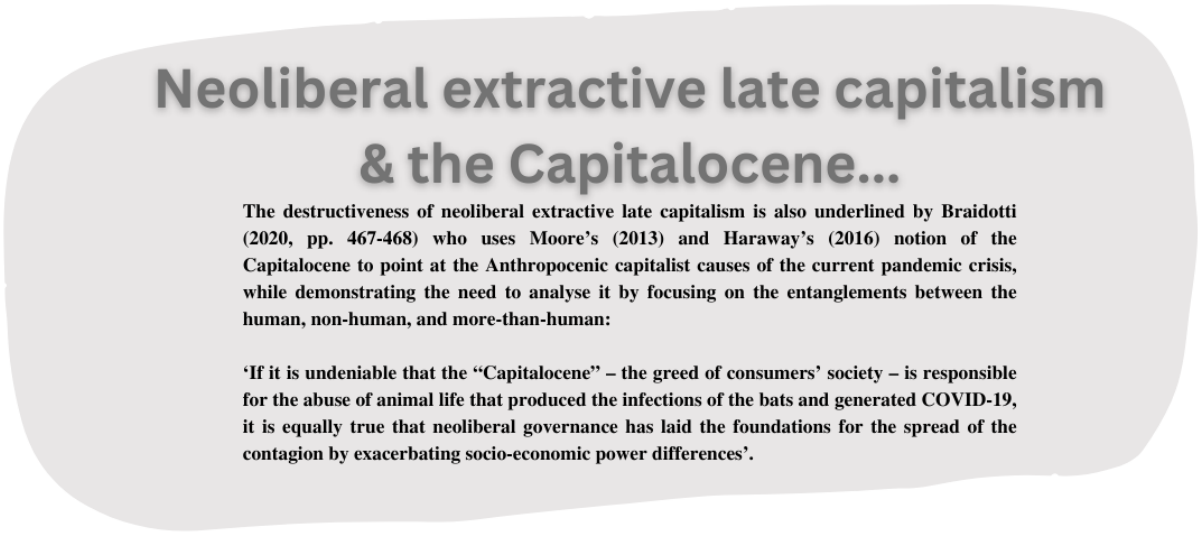
Figure 7.3 Irruption: Critical Materialist Theories



In addition to hammering on the necessity of analysing the root cause of the ongoing more-than-human COVID-19 crisis – that is, neoliberal extractive late capitalism – these critical materialist theories are all broadly invested in the Frankfurt School-praxis of emancipatory, worldly action-provoking critique (see Horkheimer, 2002) or "troublings" (see Haraway, 2016; Zarabadi *et al.*, 2019).

Figure 7.4 Irruption: Neoliberal Extractive Late Capitalism & the Capitolocene…

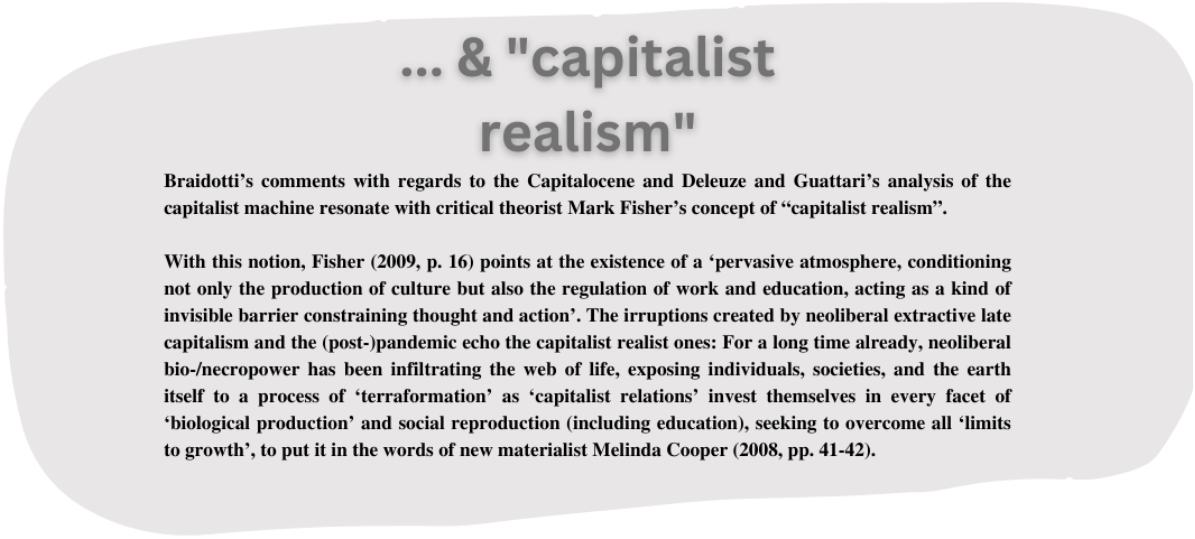
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Critical pedagogues Paulo Freire (1970) and bell hooks (1994) have long criticised the capitalist machine-driven banking model of education that downplays '[e]ros […] as a [pedagogical] motivating force' (hooks, 1994, p. 194) and the importance of strong collaborative, slow scholarship (see Choy *et al.*, 2009a and 2009b). Critical pedagogue Henry A. Giroux (2008, p. 114) has expanded on the foregoing by claiming that such a banking model of education is in fact guilty of reproducing a neoliberal type of authoritarianism-engendering public pedagogy that is not only antithetical to critical thinking but by now has moved far beyond the confines of the classroom thanks to 'unprecedented electronic technologies that include high-speed computers, new types of digitized film, and the Internet'. And that all driven by neoliberal extractive late capitalism.

Figure 7.5 Irruption: …& 'Capitalist Realism'

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Yet, looking at our own (post-)pandemic lived experiences as critical pedagogues and teachers, this neoliberalisation of higher education (also see Geerts, 2019) seems to have really reached its apex over the past two and a half years, and that thanks to the affective combination of pandemic despair, pre-existing political resentment, increased polarisation, and fascist post-truth politics.

The type of pandemic, post-truth-countering crisis mode-teaching (see Carstens, 2019) that we were forced to take on, created multiple "neoliberal (post-)pandemic irruptions" or violently disorienting breaks with our pre-pandemic teaching praxes. It is from this set of challenging, but seen through our critical theoretical viewpoints simultaneously revitalising, irruptive moments that we then map out a situated critical pedagogy fit for more-than-human crisis times. While examples of such disorienting, and, eventually, reorienting, breaks are woven into the text, we must first examine the intriguing philosophical genealogy of irruption.

The Neoliberal (Post-)Pandemic University: The Power of Irruption

Irruption stems from the Latin *irruptiō*, referring to a sudden bursting in or an attack, and therefore is often compared to the act of interruption – from the Latin *interruptionem*; breaking into something or interrupting someone. Yet, irruption comes across as a more forceful phenomenon, and not just because of its military connotations: Irruptions in fact seem to queer

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the spatiotemporal, forcing us to pause in the here and now and reflect upon where we were going.

This queering aspect becomes apparent when unveiling irruption's philosophical genealogy: Although often philosophically attributed to Deleuze and Guattari, irruption as a concept already pops up in the works of proto-existentialists Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas: Whereas irruption for Heidegger (2008) points at the revealing of *Dasein*'s – or the embedded subject's – authenticity vis-à-vis other beings, Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* (2015) uses it to refer to the crushing feeling that falls over us when we come face-to-face with the wholly vulnerable Other. Levinas' interpretation underlines the doubleness of irruption quite well: Being confronted with the Other halts us in our tracks, but it at the same time points at the affective push to take concrete action by responding to – or blatantly ignoring – the Other's call.

Philosopher Jacques Derrida in *Writing and Difference* (2001, p. 131) discusses this Levinasian 'irruption of the Other' as well, while connecting irruption to his own project of deconstruction that signifies a radical break with the Western philosophical tradition. As a binaries-unravelling methodology, deconstruction disorients, while reorienting the theorist and reader alike towards something new that came into being via the deconstructive process. Philosophically speaking, one could say that Derridean deconstruction is not that far removed from Harawayan-Baradian diffraction or the irruptive methodology experimented with in this essay: These methodologies, each in their own way, zoom in on the creation – and potential destruction – of meaning, and do so by taking into account the role power has in processes of meaning-making. They also share an investment in the ethico-political: The unravelling of dichotomised binaries – or the challenging of crisis-ridden events (irruption) and the rethinking of knowledge producing practices (diffraction) – in the end forces us to reimagine the world and everything in it...

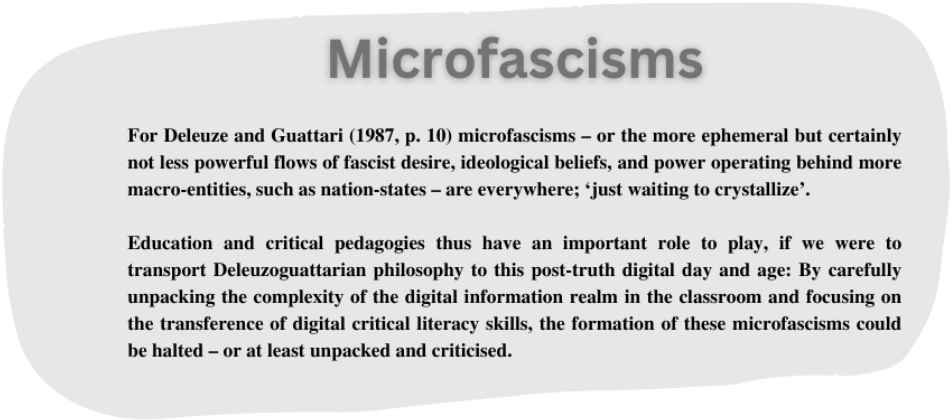
The most affirmative meaning attributed to the phenomenon of irruption can be found in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (2000): Linked to their schizoanalysis-based critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis and world that is in the process of becoming more exploitative and fascist through the late capitalist socio-political regulation of desire, *Anti-Oedipus* touches upon irruption in the context of desire and revolution. Led by the May '68-inspired question where 'the new irruption of desire [will] come from', Deleuze and Guattari state the following:

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> 'Desire is an exile, desire is a desert that traverses the body without organs and makes us pass from one of its faces to the other. Never an individual exile, never a personal desert, but a collective exile and a collective desert. […] The actualization of a revolutionary potentiality is explained less by the preconscious state of causality in which it is nonetheless included, than by the efficacy of a libidinal break at a precise moment, a schiz whose sole cause is desire which is to say the rupture with causality that forces a rewriting of history on a level with the real, and produces this strangely polyvocal moment when everything is possible' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2000, p. 377-378).

Schizoanalysis is intended both as a critique of and remedy to the normative models of capitalist society and its schizophrenic socio-political and eco-social pushes and pulls. As Guattari (1996, p. 132) writes, schizoanalysis is not about promoting 'a didactic program'; instead, it is about 'escap[ing] the systems of modeling in which we are entangled and which are in the process of completely polluting us, head and heart'. Desire in Deleuzoguattarian philosophy is not connected to lack; desire is seen as a pure, positive reality, consisting of multiple crisscrossing flows – which does not exclude desire from having or receiving 'a fascist determination' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 215), as also explained in *A Thousand Plateaus* when referring to macro- and microfascisms.

Figure 7.6 Irruption: Microfascisms



Like the Levinasian irruptive appeal of the Other, desire according to Deleuze and Guattari always announces itself through irruption, and each new irruption of desire always comes from

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within desire itself. So, that what "irrupts", causes disorientation, while at the same time carrying the potential actualisation of revolutionary change.

The above interpretation of irruption as affirmative and redirectional is central to post-qualitative thinker Mirka Koro-Ljungberg's (2015, p. xviii) understanding of irruptions, which for her are energy-filled moments and events that 'question linearity and normativity'. This queering aspect becomes clearer if we think of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as a more-than-human irruptive event, propelled forward by neoliberal extractive late capitalism: When the first lockdowns were introduced, it soon sank in that the pandemic crisis was not merely interruptive. The assumption that things would go back to normal, that is, as they were before, by simply traveling back in time, instantly became non-sensical. The scale of this event, together with its speed, was almost unfathomable: A zoonotic disease provoked by the non-human SARS-CoV-2 virus latching onto as many hosts as possible to survive, whether animal hosts, humans, or unventilated spaces, dirty doorknobs, and other surfaces; exponentially spreading because of late capitalism's global infrastructural grasp. A viral disease that eventually also re-impacted the environment due to the mass production of protective discardable face masks, new global supply chains needed to deal with the online shopping demands, and the brutal culling of infected mink colonies in various countries.

In this sense, the pandemic, as well as the "post-pandemic", are characterised by a specific more-than-humanness, or as critical posthumanist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2020, p. 468) so aptly describes it, the "(post-)pandemic" has emphasised 'the agency of non-human forces and the overall importance of Gaia as a living, symbiotic planet'. Because of its environment-destroying origins and ditto effects, the more-than-human COVID-19 pandemic proved to be more than a brief interruption of normalcy; it was irruptive in the sense that it disorientated us by taking away the actual and even imaginary places we could go to. The pandemic moreover also forced us to think about the paths we were – individually and collectively – walking down, and that as part of an assemblage of human, more-than-human, non-human, and dehumanised beings.

And it is the above self-reflexive aspect that adds a doubleness to irruptive disorientation, as can also be seen in the following passage from critical theorist Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*:

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> 'Moments of disorientation are vital. […] Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one's sense of confidence in the ground or one's belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 157).

At the same time, Ahmed (2006, p. 5) also shows us how we 'must first experience disorientation' 'to become orientated' or reorientated. Irruptions, such as the neoliberal (post-)pandemic irruptions we as critical pedagogues and practitioners have been – and still are – experiencing, then, do not just immobilise us; they create spacetime for new directions by queering the perceived linear progression of time and taking us out of our spatial environments, how uncomfortable of a process that may be…

The Neoliberal (Post-)Pandemic University: Teaching-with(in) More-Than-Human Crisis Times

If anything, the irruptions that the neoliberal (post-)pandemic represents and engenders, should serve as a wake-up call for higher education to catch up with the most alarming of these disturbances, that is, the earlier discussed 'environmental catastrophe' – which, as Fisher (2009, p. 18) observes, 'feature[d] in late capitalist society', including in classrooms and syllabi, 'only as a kind of simulacra'. This catastrophe's 'real implications' (p. 18) – appearing as a thousand tiny-yet-all-encompassing, interlinked catastrophes, and, at this stage, multiple entangled permacrises – have been too traumatising to discuss. Until now, when it is almost too late…

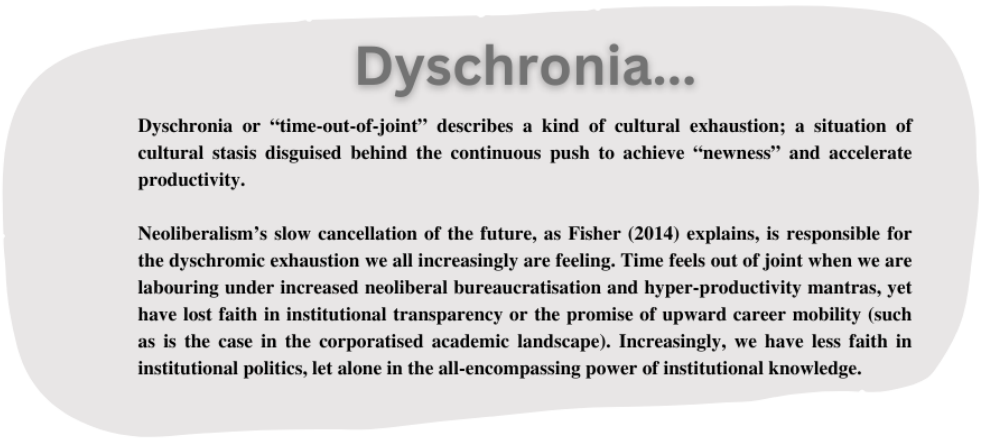
"Playing catch up", "slowing down", and dyschronia within the neoliberal academic landscape

Combining the two aforementioned meanings of the prefix "post-" as a working through and beyond process, plus a type of "returning to", the notion of the (post-)Anthropocene possesses a similar doubleness: It on the one hand articulates how the assemblages of humans, non-humans, the dehumanised, and the more-than-human are currently still very much embedded in the permacrises engendered through and by human extractive capitalist endeavours, while simultaneously making space for what could await these assemblages beyond the current

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Anthropocenic crisis situation. The post-Anthropocene, then, could be best compared to Haraway's (2016, p. 2) idea of the Chthulucene, or the more-than-human times in which the just-mentioned assemblages are potently '[l]iving-with and dying-with each other'.

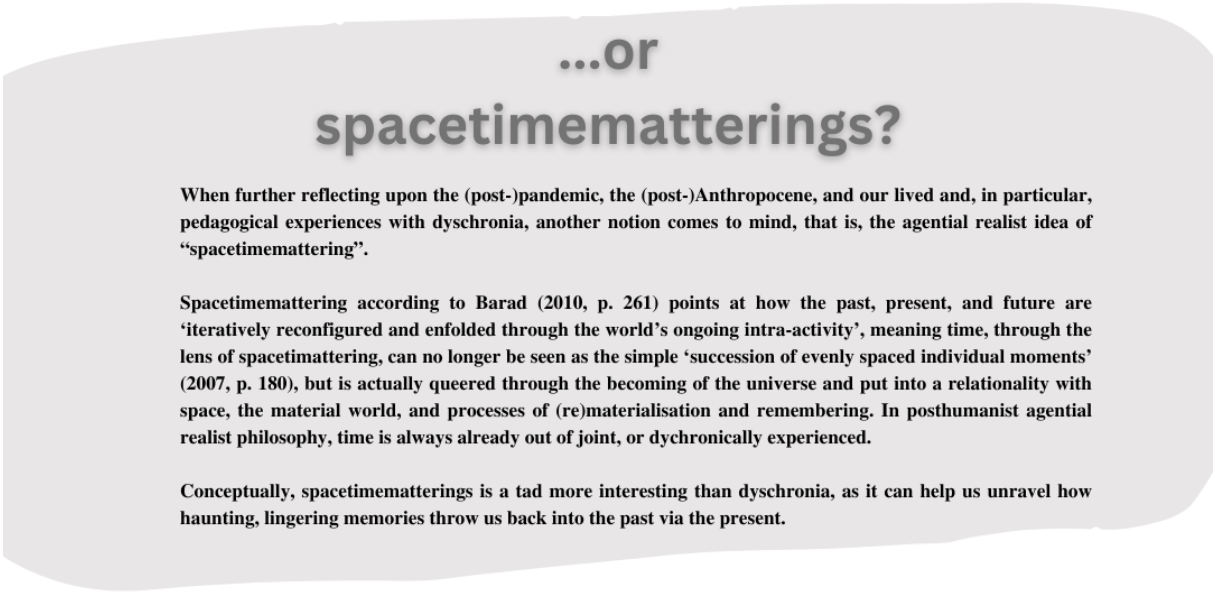
Figure 7.7 Irruption: Dyschronia…



The idea of an almost (post-)Anthropocentric apocalyptic "lateness" guides us towards our first co-experienced neoliberal (post-)pandemic irruption, that is, the weird ways in which we, together with our students, lived through pandemic time. Pandemic time in fact caused quite a shock to our system. Right before the crisis hit, there was never any time to spare, meaning it was already tricky to contemplate upon our lived experience of time – time's successive flows or our individual day-to-day doings – and the conceptualisation of temporality – or time as a collectively shared historical past, present, and future. Both lecturers were already drowning in work in the pre-pandemic era; a situation that worsened as the crisis hit and then intensified. When you are constantly trying to "play catch up" with the ridiculous temporalities-shattering speed of neoliberal academia, designing and practicing slow pedagogies, unfortunately, seems unrealistic.

Figure 7.8 Irruption: ...or Spacetimematterings

Geerts, Evelien & Carstens, Delphi. 2024. "Neoliberal and (Post-)Pandemic Irruptions: Reconceptualising Critical Pedagogies for More-Than-Human Crisis Times." In J. A. Bustillos Morales & S. Zarabadi (eds.), Towards Posthumanism in Education: Theoretical Entanglements and Pedagogical Mappings, pp. 101-120. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003365693-9.



Combine this with the fact that neither lecturer had a permanent position at the time (or have one presently) and both were, like most academics, haunted by the forced cultivation of what queer theorist Jack Halberstam (2011, p. 3) calls neoliberal 'toxic positivity', it should not come as a surprise that we were already long drained before being forcibly transformed into "Zoom-bies".

As Halberstam (2011, p. 3) explains it in more detail in *The Queer Art of Failure*:

> 'Positive thinking is offered up in the U.S. as a cure for cancer, a path to untold riches, and a surefire way to engineer your own success. Indeed believing that success depends upon one's attitude is far preferable to Americans than recognizing that their success is the outcome of the tilted scales of race, class, and gender'.

This underlines how neoliberal capitalist realism focuses on the hyper-responsibilisation of individual subjects and not structures of oppression, discrimination, and privilege that equally – if not more – impacts subjects' lives. Interestingly, Halberstam with this book goes against the American mantras of social mobility and eternal optimism, and by doing so, opens up a queer(ing) space to rethink the interconnected values of reproductivity, productivity, and normalcy.

The disorienting shock that the pandemic administered to us, also revealed a weird dyschronia: The ever-accelerating speed of neoliberal academia – pushing towards a faster service (never a better service), more bitesize ways to deliver course materials (never more high-quality ways

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of delivering materials), more students as consumers (never more teachers and students as co-learners), … – clashed with the "slowing down" that was said to be all around us during the pandemic and its first lockdowns.

Neither of us personally noticed this "slowing down" gesture, however, in fact, many of us were forced to "keep on going", while creating hybrid lesson plans and being forced to take on twice as much care and emotional labour than before. Fully aware of the painful fact that for many – mostly already underprivileged folks – time had in fact completely stopped, the critical pedagogical question of whether we can ever "slow down" within the context of a neoliberal academic landscape still needs to be asked. Who has the bargaining power within these institutions of higher education to actually "slow down" and turn the extra time received into produced goods with the goal of eventually taking themselves higher up the faculty ladders?

A thousand tiny-yet-all-encompassing catastrophes and solutions

Looked at from a critical pedagogical perspective infused with critical posthumanist and new materialist thought, multiple individual, social, and environmental catastrophes have an affirmative irruptive side to them; an ability to guide our critical pedagogical praxes in new directions.

In both authors' praxes, the catastrophic components of the (post-)Anthropocene have in fact been mobilised into creating novel teaching situations. Whereas one lecturer teaches modern Western political philosophy by means of an open-ended syllabus that makes space for the dehumanised, the non-human, and the more-than-human, plus the students' own situated input, the other lecturer uses the environmental register plagued by the catastrophic as a starting point for their introductory liberal arts course: Exposing students to the importance of the environmental register is of course relatively easy in a country such as South Africa where extreme water shortages, catastrophic flooding, droughts, wildfires, and a burgeoning energy crisis exacerbate perilous social and economic divides – although these issues are of course also currently noticeable on a global scale…

Another example that stresses this, but less visibly so, is the (post-)pandemic attention to the burgeoning mental health crisis and accessibility issues: Connected to the rise of the neoliberal capitalist social machine hyper-responsibilising individual subjects, adolescent mental health became a hot topic at the start of the pandemic, and that mostly in countries were higher education students' basic needs are, on average, met. As higher education went online in 2020

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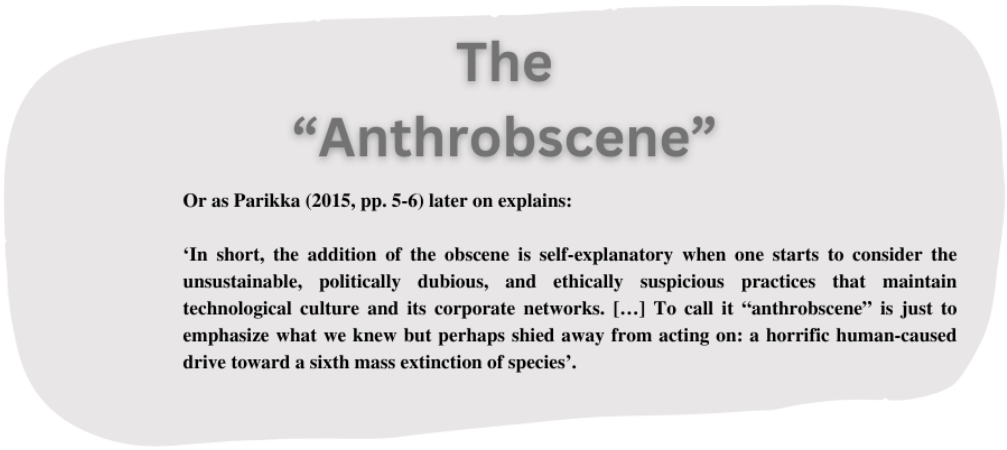
(when infrastructurally possible), educators all over the world found themselves encountering the affective disorders of capitalist realism even more than usual; 'an invisible plague of psychiatric and affective disorders' that haunt the black mirrors of smartphones, Zoom meeting spaces, and digital discussion boards; a reflection of capital's own bipolar 'lurching between hyped-up mania and depressive come-down' (Fisher, 2009, p. 35). Both lecturers noticed the gradual absence of a significant percentage of students from online pedagogical spaces – the pandemic and its lockdowns made them feel rendered surplus on so many levels.

Online spaces, surrounded by such rising levels of economic and environmental precarity on the ground, have amplified capitalist realism's pre-existing mental health pandemic. This appears to have led to privileged students isolating themselves in bubbles of technological addiction and echo chambers, while simultaneously exposing the precarity of students with no or interrupted access to the Internet and social media. Critical pedagogies that focus on more holistic analyses through critical posthumanist and new materialist approaches have to make this particular precarity more visible. At the same time – and this is where we see an affirmative reorienting glimpse appearing in this irruptive moment – the combination of more online lecturing and attunement to mental health issues, turned accessibility and inclusion into hot topics. The reason for that was nonetheless partly perverted: There were of course many critical pedagogues that became even more invested in accessibility and inclusion praxes, yet the attention did also increase because many able-bodied and able-minded folks were suddenly demanding more accessible ways of participating academically (also see Geerts *et al.*, 2020). Some strategies, such as taped and live video materials (that are now more and more automatically captioned), as well as digital and hybrid conferences, have nevertheless increased overall accessibility and inclusion – although taped materials also run the risk of being used by the political extreme right to harass and intimidate lecturers and by the university, as an easy replacement for ill or striking lecturers…

While online teaching and conferencing spaces do indeed open up new territories for learning and teaching, we need to be aware of the fact that there is no green post-industrial space for online education to occupy. Jussi Parikka has playfully reconceptualised the (post)Anthropocene as the 'anthrobscene' (2015, p. 5), connecting what has been termed the "4th Industrial Revolution" (4IR) to the myriad of crises currently haunting us.

Figure 7.9 Irruption: The 'Anthrobscene'

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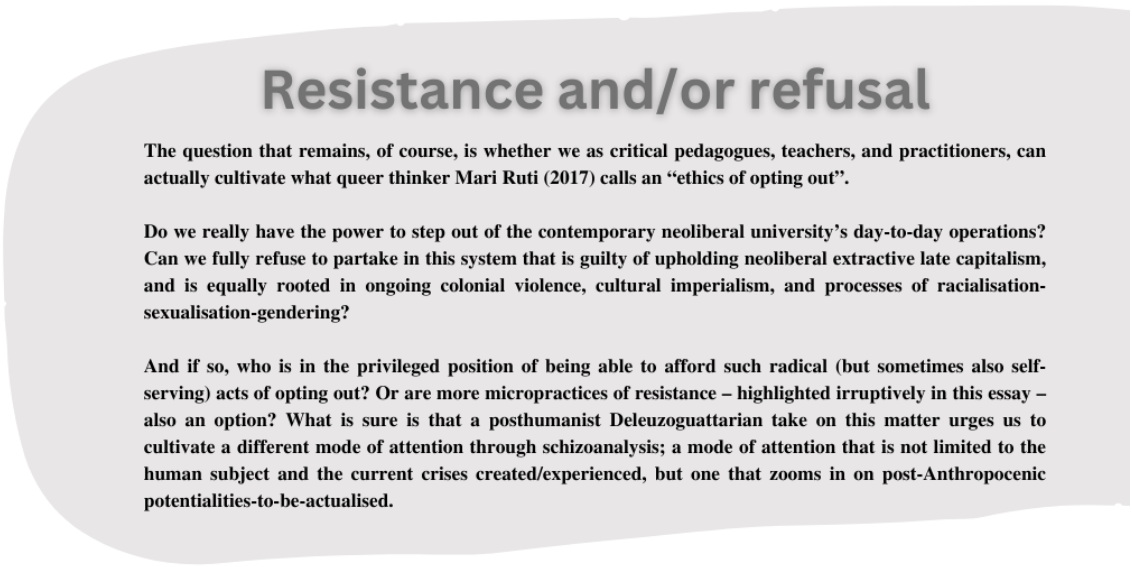
The harmful residues of 4IR capitalist realism are driven by processes of racialised (post)colonial-capitalist accumulation, extraction, and expulsion (also see Chakravartty and da Silva, 2012). Online spaces cannot be separated from the despoiled environments, the sweatshops, and sinister resource supply chains that keep them running, or the mountains of leaking e-waste quietly dumped in the derogatorily-labelled "Third World" backwaters. Once we as co-learners grasp the interconnectedness of these thousand tiny-yet-all-encompassing catastrophes, irruptions bring about a true "Aha!"-moment: If the economic and ecological, macro and micro, and hyper-individualised and collective levels are in the end all entangled, then a path towards critical theoretical, pedagogical, and activist resistance becomes clear. Education has a duty to make the nature of the multitiered crisis we are living through more visible, as is also underlined in educational thinker Sandra Abegglen and colleagues' (2021) piece on eco-pedagogies. And as ecofeminist new materialist Stacy Alaimo also puts it in *Exposed* (2016, p. 188), the 'incommensurable grids' of more-than-human 'vulnerability, culpability, responsibility and concern' that attend to late capitalism's vast economic maldistributions, displacements and disturbances must be revealed before putting those eco-pedagogies into practice. For critical theorists and pedagogues, this means making the connections between the micro and macro more visible and mapping out links between the three ecological registers – the individual, social, and environmental. We must moreover grapple with and teach about the ethico-political problematic of the unhinged world that the COVID-19 pandemic made partially visible, and that ongoing climate change and socio-economic and geopolitical disturbances have borne out. We need new methodologies that complicate, deepen, and enrich our learning and teaching in the light of these ongoing disruptions, incorporating insights from a diversity of fields and perspectives.

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In resisting the grey curtain of capitalist realism and following the more hope-filled lines of flights carved out in the air by some of the aforementioned irruptions, a pedagogy of refusal must be embraced; an endlessly irruptive methodology that refuses to subordinate itself 'to a predetermined and predefined goal or endpoint' (Snaza, 2013, p. 49).

In this process of refusal and the subsequent reclaiming of a better destiny, we need to be continually on the lookout for new weapons by which we might 'bore holes' in conceptual 'space instead of keeping it smooth' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 413). Resistance means always experimenting with new ways of becoming, but while doing so, keeping our attention on the entangled lines of relationality by which new subjectivities and new social collectives might grow and emerge. Irruptively working with critical posthumanist and new materialist philosophies might enable us 'to recognize and implement new narratives that were previously masked by anthropocentric conceits and haughty Enlightenment-based notions of supposedly all-encompassing progress and linear progression' (Geerts and Carstens, 2019, p. 924).

Figure 7.10 Irruption: Resistance and/or Refusal



Conclusion: Irruptive Pedagogies in-the-Making for More-Than-Human Crisis Times

Félix Guattari in *Chaosmosis* (1995) writes that education's primary function is to cultivate futurity – the jubilant purpose of which is to rethink, amongst other matters, subjectivity, agency, intentionality, and relationality. We are thereby prevailed on to heed Deleuze and

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Guattari's 'vitalist' call to construct a futurist pedagogy of 'mutual trans-species interdependence' around principles of 'ecosophy' – a pedagogical praxis seeking to make connections between 'the multiple layers of the subject, from interiority to exteriority and everything in between', as Braidotti notes it in *The Posthuman* (2013, p. 92). Simultaneously, there seems to be a need for education to move beyond 'anthropocentric' and humanistic 'modes of navigation' that never seem to leave the loop of the 'sexed, raced, sexualised, economic, labouring human' (MacCormack and Gardener, 2018, p. 1). In refusing the educational production of the predetermined human(ised) subject, we move toward a critical pedagogical and posthumanist educational praxis that is fully cognisant of 'how the very idea of "the human" has led us to misrecognize ourselves and our relations to the world' (Snaza, 2013, p. 50). Such a more-than-human education embraces irruptive bewilderment, refusal, and resistance; opening itself up to 'strangeness and learning out of bounds' as it works to realise 'our real relation to other beings in the world,' and embrace those 'relations that humanism has taught us to disavow' (p. 51).

Critical new materialist and posthumanist philosophical turns, together with affect theoretical and hauntological ones, have encouraged scholars and pedagogues to pay attention to how the human is intertwined with a more-than-human world of pre-individual affects and affordances, bacterial, viral, plant, and animal assemblages, meteorological cycles, and geological processes. We are urged toward critical pedagogical praxes that recognise how mental lifeworlds are enmeshed with sociological and environmental ones, and that take seriously the scale of environmental and other disasters engendered by neoliberal extractive late capitalism. Education, in short, needs to come to terms with what has turned out to be anything but a temporary disturbance.

In this text, we have suggested an array of conceptual-methodological irruptions and real life-based irruptive moments as thinking-aids for responding to the disruptions that plague the present and that block access, both conceptually and literally, to the future. While the general tone of this essay might appear bleak at first, our argument is in effect affirmative and charged with hope: Affirmation, after all, does not entail a passive acceptance of the existing state of affairs, but rather a negation of what is clearly not working, thereby initiating a movement toward what could instead be possible. By activating critical irruptive thinking, the first important steps toward necessary transformation are taken. Or, as Deleuze (1992, p. 4) also

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reminds us, 'there is no need to fear […], but only to reach for new [conceptual-methodological] weapons'.

More-than-human crisis times, together with neoliberal and (post-)pandemic irruptions, demand that we reject the toxic positivity of neoliberal extractive late capitalism, as well as the progressive manufactured nationalistic ideologies of modernist reason, and return to a more-than-human reality of embodied, embedded, situated, affective, and messily entangled existence – basically a grounded "staying with the trouble" (also see Haraway, 2016).

Affirming our role as active agents of change, resisting and refusing, requires us to make our critical teaching practices alive to the world's indeterminacy and interconnected natures. The machinic – the impersonal and intra-personal resonances or 'inter-connections' that make all living beings, not just humans 'tick' (Braidotti, 2006, n. p.) – is our final irruption; one that suggests that there are a multitude of tiny solutions inherent in everyday practices, pedagogical irruptions, and new forms of attentiveness. Thinking of the machinic (versus thinking in terms of the mechanical), is a wake-up call to take up the queer affirmative weapons of plasticity, uncertainty, and radically fluent identities that assure us that nothing – least of all social constructions – are fixed, stable, or cast in stone. This weapon could furthermore be mobilised as a continuously irruptive force, to be used against the deadening facticity of capitalist realism.

Instead of being brought low by capitalist realism – which is clearly here to stay until it has annihilated itself and everything and anyone involved – we must look to countercultural expressions that are freed from stereotypical humanist plots, the 'aberrations and discontinuities' of minoritarian artistic, intellectual, and literary expression that 'may be therapeutic to the extent that they can condition the body and mind to endure a more profound existence, one that is closer to the multiplicity of discontinuous durations of which life is composed' (Ramey, 2012, p. 150).

To circumvent the many paranoias, anxieties, and depressions of capitalist realism, we could pedagogically mobilise the therapeutic acts of imaginative action undertaken by radical artists and activist groups, engaging in 'a production *sui generis*' that irruptively hijacks and reappropriates the 'diverse possibilities' that the mental ailments of capitalism offer us 'for recomposing existential corporeality' (Guattari, 1995, pp. 6-7), all while cultivating dissident subjectivities of like-mindedness and moving toward experimental modes of being and becoming rather than fixed and stratified modes of humanistic thought.

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Whether we as critical thinkers and pedagogues let ourselves be reoriented through irruptions, diffractions, strong collaborations or a combination of all three, the goal remains the same: theorising and teaching within the ruins created by neoliberal extractive late capitalism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the myriad of permacrises erupting right now, while working toward a world whose more-than-humanness is respected and (at)tended to…

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