

## 8 Love and Bewilderment

### On Education as Affective Encounter

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#### Two Classes

A few years ago, I taught a course on education of “minority groups” in America (a phrase that wasn’t of my choosing). My sense was that students would expect a course about the present moment and what is often called “achievement gaps.” By this time, I’d already been writing about what I call “bewildering education”: educational situations that can unstick us from our present ways of thinking and being, leading us to become lost (Snaza, 2013). My hope—which was, and continues to be, animated by feminist, queer, antiracist, and decolonial struggle—is that such bewilderment may create conditions for the emergence of unanticipated confluences of thoughts, affects, and collectivities. As I planned the class, I wanted to immediately swerve away from asking about differences in educational outcomes as captured by standardized metrics and instead look at the forces—colonialism, slavery, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy—that structured the emergence and maintenance of schools in the United States. I decided to begin the class with *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, followed by Brenda Child’s *Boarding School Seasons*. I wanted students to consider how settler colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade were inseparable from the “whitenizing” projects of US public schools and to think about how the humanization of some US residents was structurally conjoined with dehumanization.

The students in the class, who were fairly “diverse” compared to others on campus, responded to these readings with silence. Given that many courses on campus have substantial requirements for “class participation,” this was surprising. During my office hours, students came individually to express frustration. For many of them, the existence of boarding schools for Indigenous students was previously unknown to them, and they had never been asked to think about how policies stretching from the antebellum moment through *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which in effect made schooling illegal for enslaved people and their descendants, were continuing to shape schools in the United States. Many of these students openly expressed fear that their grades were going to suffer in

the class as a result of their unwillingness or inability to speak in class. They were overwhelmed and certainly bewildered, but instead of allowing them to unlearn whitewashed history and think through the ongoing violence of settler coloniality and forms of racialized state violence, the class just shut them down. They didn’t feel safe enough to get lost. We never recovered, and even as some of the later readings—such as Elizabeth Meyer’s book on bullying—enabled some interesting discussions, the class felt unengaged until the end. I’m not sure I ever taught a more disappointing class.

The following semester, I taught a philosophy of education course. Again, the reading list was primarily feminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial scholarship, although we also read hypercanonical texts by Plato, Rousseau, and Dewey. This time, I asked students to read bell hooks’ “Engaged Pedagogy” (1994) for the first class. Many of the students from the previous class were again enrolled, and I entered the first day with trepidation. But somehow everything was different. Zeroing in on what hooks calls “a holistic model of learning” (p. 21), which “emphasized well being” (p. 15), we discussed how class might be felt as ritual, one with spiritual and embodied dimensions that stretch far beyond narrowly rational goals about content and concepts. We read difficult texts that semester—by hooks, Sandy Grande, Paulo Freire, Deborah Britzman, and Donna Haraway—but the students always came engaged, even passionate about discussing them. This time the classroom was a space where everyone felt like they could be vulnerable, ask questions, and offer uncertain formulations. While some of this was undoubtedly about curriculum (what is read and in what order), my sense was that the difference had to do with something else, maybe something like *mood*, and I didn’t feel like I had the vocabulary to frame the problem.

Trying to make sense of the differences between these two classes and how the bad feelings of the first might have set up the generativity of the second sent me back to affect theory. Up until that moment, when I’d engaged affect theory in my scholarship, it was mostly in the impersonal, post-Spinozist mode (Massumi, 2002; Protevi, 2009), and I wrote about it as a subset of a wider scholarly current that was seeking to challenge and move beyond humanist thought and even beyond the human. At that moment, I started turning more toward the work in affect studies that focuses on emotion, or “feelings” (Ahmed, 2015; Boler, 1999; Brennan, 2004), and for the rest of this chapter, I’m going to dwell on a few of the lessons I’ve learned from this study, especially as bringing these two senses of affect together capaciously has helped me to clarify and shift my commitment to bewildering education. Because this study has taken place at a moment when questions about how and if classrooms can be “safe spaces” have polarized public discourse in the United States, I’m going to begin with a brief excursus on those debates, which have the important virtue of conceptualizing education as inescapably affective. Thinking through what



often gets forgotten in these debates allows me to come back to bewildering education, clarifying this concept in two important ways. First, we have to attune to all the ways that impersonal affects circulate in situations that extend far beyond the human, but we need to attend to affects in the sense of emotions to understand classroom encounters. And second, pedagogies oriented toward bewilderment have to simultaneously critique the (de)humanizing violence of Man and lovingly affirm non-Man ways of performing the human (Wynter, 2003).

## Feeling the Classroom: Safety and Bewilderment

In the last few years, at least in the United States, there has been a great deal of discussion, some of it happening far beyond the university, of the relation between classroom practices and safety. Tracing these debates from 1960s radical student activism through the University of Chicago's recent policy banning "safe spaces" on its campus, Zöe Brigley Thompson (2018) writes,

The tension in Western free speech debates lies between two schools of thought; the first suggests that any political idea, however extreme, should be expressed without fear of reprisal, while the second warns of the possible detrimental consequences of speech that targets minority groups, or even hate speech. Mainstream conservatism tends to pursue unfettered free speech, while the view from the left sometimes, but not always, demands limits. (p. 3)

The position that opposes safe spaces and "trigger warnings" has won a great deal of support among contemporary conservative and "alt-right" commentators in the United States (including Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, authors of *The Coddling of the American Mind*), and it often presents itself as a position that seeks to ensure the vivacity of First Amendment protections on "free speech." It can only do this, however, by splitting out affect from rational discourse and assailing affect as a detriment to rigorous, intellectual, rational debate of ideas. That is, as with the alt-right epithet "snowflake" thrown at people who raise questions about the violence of certain kinds of literacy events, such commentators see affect as getting in the way of thinking. They therefore champion "exposure" to difficult and violent ideas as a means of strengthening resiliency, grit, and askesis propelled by a narrow sense of rationality.

Tracing the history of content and trigger warnings (they are different things!), Jack Halberstam underscores how the critique of safe spaces espoused by Haidt and Lukianoff et al. has a kernel of truth but also displays an almost-studied avoidance to the material, historical, and affective conditions of contemporary education. He writes, "Lukianoff and Haidt hit some of the important markers of this new terrain of student

vulnerability, but they also fail to see the complexity of contemporary student bodies, never mind their diversity" (2017, n.p.). Noting that differences—especially race and gender—don't figure into their account, Halberstam also worries that "trigger refuseniks" risk homogenizing or universalizing accounts of harm. Halberstam (2017) goes on to note that "Both sides ignore the differences between and among students, and all fail to account for the differences that race and class make to experiences with trauma, expectations around protection, and exposure to troubling materials" (n.p.). Halberstam rightly worries about the ways that "the new sensitivity" props up a model of the student as a "defenseless, passive, and inert spectator who has no barriers between herself and the flow of images that populate her world" (n.p.). Beyond the ways that this demand on educational practice risks articulating such a passive self, Halberstam's analysis foregrounds without making it quite explicit how safety is an entirely *relational* affective situation. Put plainly, the safety of some students is almost always articulated in direct and antagonistic relation to other students. The conservative student who wants to jettison "safe spaces" to be able to say racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, etc. things seems to forget that his safety to say these things comes at the expense of other students feeling assaulted by such speech. And conversely, disenabling such speech through policies designed to create "safe spaces" actually *do* make those conservative students feel "unsafe" to articulate their (sometimes assaulting) ideas, which may need to happen before they can learn to think otherwise. In other words, safety is a relational affective milieu that is structurally uneven.

The students who demand trigger warnings and safe spaces are rightly calling attention to how certain modes of negative affect—fear and intimidation—can appear in and around pedagogical encounters in ways that *do* make intellectual and political engagement difficult or impossible for *some* students. But blanket calls for trigger warnings disavow precisely this specificity, positing predictable relations between content and affects that are almost never really predictable, and that may end up being used to limit engagement with texts that play important roles in feminist, queer, and anti-racist pedagogies. As Alyssa Niccolini (2016) aptly puts it, "Trigger warnings ultimately reveal anxieties over the animating capacities of pedagogies: what they might trigger, or using another lexicon, enliven, make alive, energise, set off, or animate" (p. 15). This anxiety about the unpredictable ways that affects animate us and our relations can lead *some* students, faculty, and administrators to demand a kind of safety that, in the end, can translate into a kind of buffer zone against politically radical engagement.

One of the most interesting things about the contemporary public disputes about safe spaces is how they reprise debates around pedagogy in Women's Studies classes in the 1980s. As student protests of the 1960s and 70s led to shifts in university demographics and curriculum,

safe  
space &  
affect



including the formation of Women's Studies and ethnic studies programs (see Ferguson, 2012), feminist pedagogy often turned on creating spaces where women could feel safe to come to "voice" concerns that many spaces in the university (and in the world more broadly) made difficult to enunciate. In this sense, they sought pedagogies that resonated with the axiom that "the personal is the political" and that had ties to the extra-institutional procedures of consciousness-raising groups. The difficulty here is that the abstract goal of creating safe classroom spaces for women to voice concerns as women amongst women turned on an essentialist conception of "woman" that synecdochally defined woman as White, able-bodied, educated, Western, and middle class (Boler, 1999, pp. 120–122; Fuss, 1989).

It is on these grounds that queer folks and feminists of color challenged pedagogies of abstract safety. bell hooks (1989), for example, wrote, "Unlike the stereotypical feminist model that suggests women best come to voice in an atmosphere of safety (one in which we are all going to be kind and nurturing), I encourage students to work at coming to voice in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk" (p. 53). hooks is underscoring how feminist and liberatory education cannot just take place in Women's Studies classrooms, and students who desire "education as the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994) will need to "come to voice" in spaces that lack even such abstract commitments to the safety of women raising their consciousness. But also hooks is attentive—like many other feminists of color—to how that abstract notion of woman is structured by racialized, sexualized, and ableist violence. Put differently, the safety secured in these classrooms was not the safety of the Black feminist, the queer feminist, the Third World feminist. And for these feminists to *transform* those classrooms into places of possible safety, they had to call into question the abstract universality of "woman" and the kinds of disavowal it requires.

I think it's productive to hold this earlier debate in tension with our current one because despite the apparent redistribution of roles (queer folks and feminists of color went from critiquing safe spaces to demanding them), the general structure of the dispute hasn't shifted much. Acknowledging this continuity requires of us something quite different than simply an affirmation of safe spaces or a denunciation of them. In fact, both of those positions have to ignore precisely the architectural and affective situations that subtend pedagogical encounters, including the ways that the spaces of classrooms, campuses, and cities participate in affective circulation. The point is not to take sides then, but to see how the endurance of this set of concerns must move us toward a different understanding of education itself.

Instead of a model of education that sees it as primarily a matter of rational cognition and intellectual agonism (whether that be of the sort imagined by contemporary conservatives and their "marketplace of ideas"

or the kind espoused by critical pedagogues [see Ellsworth, 1989]), thinking through the problem of safety requires that we understand that affect and thought are inextricable, that learning is always already as much about feelings as it is about thinking. Classrooms are not just spaces where ideas are aired, shared, critiqued, and debated; they are sites where affects emerge, circulate, and enter into conflict. (And this circulation far exceeds the human.) Pedagogy is therefore at least as much a matter of affect modulation as it is a question of theories, evidence, argument, and genealogies.

This means, in the first instance, that we have to give up on the idea that feeling safe in the classroom is something that can be produced by policy or fiat (Ellsworth, 1989). But it also means that championing a pedagogy of discomfort as an abstract goal is similarly impossible. What a conception of education as primarily affective—and a matter of an affective situation—allows is a way of thinking about affects that unevenly circulate among differently positioned bodies with different kinds of force or intensity. As Boler (1999) insists, "feminist politics of emotions recognize emotions not only as sites of social control, but of political resistance" (p. 113). This circulation cannot be understood only within the space of the classroom because, as Ahmed (2015) reminds us, everyone enters that space from elsewhere and carries with them histories of affective accumulation. These accumulations are records of the ways that race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and other vectors of social stratification shape the bodyminds of students and teachers, but that doesn't mean students or teachers can know or predict how those accumulations have taken place or what kinds of effects they will have in the classroom.

The pedagogical encounter is, at the affective level of the situation, unknowable and unpredictable. As a way of affirming this unpredictability, I try to practice what I call "bewildering education." In an essay by that name, I write, "I propose that education be reconceived as a process that leads us ... away from the stable, predictable, and cultured world of civilization, of cities, of routine, of politics as we have known it. Whither it should lead us is—and must be—unknown" (Snaza 2013, p. 49). One of the difficulties of enacting pedagogies that open onto the affective intensities of bewilderment is that it requires a sensitivity to relationality and the unevenness of our encounters. In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011) asks, "why do some people have the chops for improvising the state of being unknowing while others run out of breath...?" (p. 37), which gets directly at how uneven and unpredictable pedagogies of discomfort, unsettling, and bewilderment are. And indeed this was precisely the question I had been trying to ask after teaching the two courses I described at the beginning of this chapter. Not everyone is in the same place even when they're in the same space, and so what bewilders some may not bewilder others, what makes one feel safe may generate feelings of fear or anxiety in another. Bewildering education is, perhaps more



than anything else, about the cultivation of attunement to how affects circulate, how they are distributed, and how they both open up and shut down possibilities in highly unstable ways. It is an educational practice that takes shape only on the condition that education is reconceived less as a matter of abstract rationality and more as a matrix of affective circulation.

### From Event to Situation

I skipped this at the beginning, but I teach at an extremely wealthy private liberal arts college in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy. We occupy Powhatan land. Our buildings are constructed in a studiously homogenous style to evoke the money and privileges of the nineteenth century, calling to mind the founding of the institution in 1832. Of course, at that time, the settler colonial project was still aspirational. Virginia was a slave state, and Richmond had a thriving slave market. At its moment of institutionalization and for a long time afterwards, the college was restricted to male students.

I evoke this history, however briefly, to underscore how the physicality of the campus and its classrooms are structured by this history: racial and gendered forms of segregation and violence are literally, materially built into the rooms. While the university has become, especially in the last ten years, a much more “diverse” place (and I pause here to say that one could and should consider how “diversity” is here a logic of marketing more than of social justice, even if it can also be that), I am always interested in what this means for what happens when we “walk into the room.” I myself come from a working-class family and was the first of them to go to college. I attended a large state institution for my degrees, and to this day I find the highly classed atmosphere of my classrooms off-putting. I never enter the room as a professor without an awareness, however minor, that I would not have come here as an undergraduate, would never have felt comfortable in this space. And I think about my students. For some, this space is roughly contiguous with their private high schools. The wealth and architectural decisions that evoke that wealth (and its ties to whiteness) are, for some of them, familiar and comfortable. For other students, the space is far more likely to *feel* disorienting, unfamiliar, and even, in some cases, unwelcoming.

The first and, at least for me, most crucial axiom of affect studies is that affects cannot be understood as merely individual. Megan Boler (1999) puts this best, “I understand emotions as neither entirely ‘public’ nor entirely ‘private,’ but rather representative of a social and collaboratively constructed psychic terrain” (p. xxi). I would like to add to this Sara Ahmed’s (2015) insistence that emotions “accumulate over time” (p. 11) in ways that shape bodies and selves and—perhaps even more importantly—the ways that those bodies are oriented in physical and psychic space. She

writes, “Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations toward and away from others” (p. 4). This means, and this is my second claim, that every encounter among bodies produces affects and is shaped by the affects that circulate. Sometimes this happens at the level of the event, and we are, or can become, consciously aware of what’s happening. But not always. Maybe not even most of the time.

I have recently begun to use the idea of the educational situation to signal this.<sup>1</sup> In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant (2011) writes, “A situation is a state of things in which *something* that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life. It is a state of animated and animating suspension that forces itself on consciousness, that produces a sense of the emergence of something in the present that may become an event” (p. 5). Educational events—scenes of conscious learning—only come into existence then because of their emergence from educational situations, or what Erin Manning (2013) calls “associated milieux of relation” (p. 77). These situations, which are very seldom part of our conscious attention even as they are in intimate, nonstop contact with our *perception*, form the conditions—political, social, affective, and always more-than-human—within which events take place. To use Brian Massumi’s (2015) apt term, educational situations *prime* actants for events. They make some events more or less likely; they inform tendencies for movement and action.

I think moving from educational events to educational situations gives us a more interesting, if messy, picture of learning and bewilderment. I’d like to start by recalling Teresa Brennan’s (2004) opening move in *The Transmission of Affect*. “Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and ‘felt the atmosphere’” (p. 1)? Atmosphere, here, names precisely the affective situation of a particular space. Each room has a particular architecture, smell, and lighting, a kind of tonal mood. This affective tonality (to use a phrase of Erin Manning’s) may make some students more comfortable than others in a classroom. Part of this has to do with movement and accumulation, or as Ahmed says, with orientation. One *walks into* a room. Rooms are porous: bounded but open. To walk into a room, one must come from elsewhere. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed (2006) focuses on “conditions of arrival” as part of the affective accumulation of orientation. How do people and things arrive? Whence do they come? These conditions of arrival shape the class, gender, sexuality, ability, and racial politics of classroom encounters and the literacies that take shape there.

These feelings—which may or not become conscious to the students or to me, which may not take on the form of an event—constitute part of the situation of the classroom. It is about affects circulating among bodies as students see, smell, hear, and feel each other. (And by feeling each other feel all those social hierarchies, we have developed literacies

gevoel &  
architectuur

gevoel &  
atmosfeer

aanvallen circuleren  
tussen mensen en  
niet-mensen



gevoel &  
verschillen  
tussen  
studenten

to understand, often purely as means to survive.) It is also about how the nonhuman participants—lights, desks, windows, chairs, wooden paneling, particular carpets, air-conditioning systems, chalk or marker boards, etc.—affect the humans and other nonhuman actants. (The AC system, for example, sometimes malfunctions, causing moisture to accumulate in the carpet, which then becomes hospitable to mold cultures.)

While many of us teachers come into class having asked our students to “read” the assigned text and then we discuss it in formal, aesthetic, conceptual, and rational language, I think the concept of the educational situation gives us a way of thinking about how these encounters are affective to a much greater degree than they are conceptual or narrowly “intellectual.” Students can and do express their feelings about what we read. Some have a more developed vocabulary for this because of uneven access to what Boler (1999) calls “emotional literacies” (p. 139).

But even before this, students’ affective attunement to the space, to the other human bodies, and to the histories that materialize in the classroom shapes what they *feel* in ways that determine how they can listen, how they can respond, and how they can engage. Not everyone’s conditions of arrival prime them for collective reading as the rearrangement of desire. Not everyone feels safe enough to be open to the generation of collectivities. Bodies in the room vibrate differently, feel differently, and attune differently. And these differences have everything to do with the ways those bodies moved through other spaces (institutional, intellectual, geographic, and psychic) before they walked in or were brought in.

In 1989, Elizabeth Ellsworth noted that “acting as if our classroom were a safe space in which democratic dialogue was possible and happening did not make it so” (p. 315). This is so because, as Jen Gilbert (2014) argues, “safety is not something one does or achieves, nor is it an a priori state of being; rather it is something one feels” (p. 38). In other words, what Gilbert calls “the emotional structure of pedagogy” (p. 49) signals the appearance, at the level of event, of what I might recast as the politics of affect that structure the situation. Before anyone speaks, before texts are interpreted, or before ideas take shape, we are—and “we” here is never simply a human collective—suspended in the situation where affects swirl, collide, coalesce, and diverge. If we shift away from the event toward the situation, a much more complex and messy sense of learning and literacies can be felt, and I think it gives us a very different field from which to imagine the politics of education, including today, the question of how education relates to the politics of safety, safe spaces, and pedagogies of disorientation and bewilderment that might, to paraphrase Spivak (2003), rearrange our desires and our experiences of collectivity. The situation is never simply human; it happens largely outside of any human’s conscious attention, and it is precisely where each participant is “primed” by historical forces that stick to and shape bodyminds.

## Feeling (Beyond) the Human

In the classroom then, we are suspended in the flux of (more-than-human) affect. This suspension means that whatever else learning is, it is irreducibly affective. I have been arguing that connecting contemporary disputes about safe spaces with debates about feminist pedagogy from the 1980s can convey us toward this affective understanding of education. I’d like to end now by insisting that the affective milieu of the classroom is also directly political because what is at stake is precisely the articulation of the human in relation to its constitutive outsides: the inhuman, nonhuman, and less-than-human (Butler, 1993; Weheliye, 2014). Education has, since Plato, been understood as an assemblage that humanizes (some) students. Feminist, queer, decolonial, and anti-racist critics have long argued that this humanizing mission is structurally coupled with dehumanization (Snaza, 2013, 2019). That is, the particular conception of the human that has been articulated in such humanizing assemblages *requires* dehumanization to simultaneously produce the constitutive outsides it needs to be recognized as “human.”

Sylvia Wynter (2003) calls this particular conception of the human “Man,” and her work offers an extended genealogy of the emergence of Man as the “overrepresentation of the human” in the crucible of Western coloniality, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, heteropatriarchal relations, and the development of secular or modern science. In Wynter’s account, assemblages of humanization are connected via a diagram that orients social and psychic space around Man and works to discipline or eradicate non-Man ways of performing the human. Against Man, Wynter “advocates the radical reconstruction and decolonization of what it means to be human” (Weheliye 2014, p. 4). Since the educational institutions we move in and through have been shaped by the overrepresentation of Man as the human, Wynter’s formulation allows me to say underlying the problem of safe spaces is a larger, more diffuse, and potentially more explosive struggle over the meaning of the human.

The advocates of banning safe spaces and critical pedagogues that want to work through feelings to get to rational political agonism ultimately both share a conception of the human as Man, and both similarly see student demands to take affect seriously as getting in the way of a pedagogical project of inclusion where students shed their non-Man habits as part of their in-duction into Man. In this way, seeing education as rational as opposed to affective is a way of keeping education geared toward humanization and its inescapable dehumanizing effects. Wynter draws on Frantz Fanon’s (1967) idea of “sociogeny” to argue that this overrepresentation of Man as the human works only because at any given historical moment, the human *becomes* human in relation to scripts or narratives of what it means to be human, scripts that become part of



the “hybrid nature/culture” of a human being (Wynter, 2001, p. 32). She notes that this sociogenesis shapes our sense of what it is to be and to *feel like* a human (2001, p. 31). Put differently, processes of humanization and dehumanization are *affective*, operating to condition our senses of ourselves and our relations with others. In our present conditions, the ability for some to *feel human* is possible only on the condition that others have to feel their inhumanity.

The affective politics of the classroom are thus always already about a struggle over what the human is and how it is affectively policed. In a social formation like the United States—a profoundly racist and heterosexist settler colony—this struggle is directly related to racialized and gendered state violence. Rebeca Wanzo (2015) has recently called this “the deadly fight over feelings” in her analysis of how affect structure debates in the United States surrounding the state murder of Black and Brown people as well as the Black Lives Matter movement that challenges such violence. This violence operates in part because of the ways that dehumanization authorizes such violence as necessary, inevitable, or simply unremarkable. What I learned in the wake of my two classes is that this project necessarily has two sides: a critical project of calling Man into question and an affirmative and experimental project of generating loving modalities of collectivity that flee Man. When education foregrounds the former and focuses on events, students might come to feel unloved, and their discomfort becomes what Sara Ahmed (2016) might call a wall. But when the situation is saturated with love, bewilderment enables an attentive and affective shift from analyzing Man’s horrors to affirming ways of becoming otherwise together.

Bewildering education reorients us away from pedagogies that prop up Man via demands for inclusion, instead taking up what Weheliye (2014) calls the project of the “the abolition of Man” (p. 4). It requires a sensitivity to the inescapably affective relations that take place in the classroom, one which affirms the necessity of disorientation *away from Man*, but it does so precisely out of a love for what escapes and exceeds Man. This is love as abolitionist, decolonizing force. Let me return to Gayatri Spivak. She writes that “this is the effortful task: to displace the fear of our faceless students” (2003, p. 23). The double genitive here signals how this “fear of our students” is theirs and ours, or as I would prefer to put it, it circulates in the situation. Displacing this affective milieu towards an abolitionist, decolonial one requires love, but not a simple love for what is, for what we are. Instead it is a love of what exceeds us, a love for the potential that informs our selves and relations, but which is often violently shut down by assemblages of humanization. As hooks (2000) insists in *All About Love*, love is “the will to nurture our own and another’s spiritual growth” (p. 6). Simply put, it is *feeling loved* that generates the conditions for bewilderment, discomfort, and unsettling as a generative, queer, decolonial, and feminist possibility. Chela Sandoval (2000), at exactly the same moment, wove together Third-World feminist thought

and postmodern theory in order to argue that “these writers who theorize social change understand ‘love’ as a hermeneutic, as a set of practices and procedures that can transit all citizen-subjects, regardless of social class, toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement” (p. 140). More pointedly, she calls this “de-colonial love” (p. 144).

In “Bewildering Education,” I said that the task was to “open up love beyond the limits of the human” (2013, p. 51). I want to underscore that this moves in two distinct but entwined directions. First, Wynter’s work allows me to recast my earlier use of “human” as “Man”: We have to love non-Man ways of performing the human. And second, this love also returns us to the ways that affect always exceeds the merely human toward non-human animals, objects, things, ecologies, and a whole host of participants in the situation that aren’t human.

Taking into account only the humans in the room—even if we understand them to be complex subjects shaped by accumulation of affects preceding their entrance—doesn’t go far enough to dislodge Man as the telos of education. We have to let our love extend through each other and toward the space itself as well as the spaces connected to the space and all those entities (human and not) whose being is tied to those spaces. We might then pick up hooks’ (1995) call for us to practice “beloved community”—“where loving ties of care and knowing bind us together in our differences” (pp. 263–64)—and extend that community beyond the human.

In other words, the necessity of focusing on affect in the educational encounter is not an end in itself, but a means toward a larger project of abolishing Man, which is impossible without a dismantling of the structures—architectural, social, economic, political, legal, agricultural, and residential—that prop up Man. Love in this sense is nothing but a collective affective commitment to decolonization, to a world where a multiplicity of ways of performing the human can flourish in relation to more-than-human socialities. This is a world only legible outside of humanist, Man-centered literacies, but its taking-place always shapes the situations in which we find ourselves. Bewildering education turns toward this situation, finding there all kinds of possibilities for reorienting ourselves and our relations.

## Note

1. See my (2019) book, *Animate Literacies: Literature, Affect, and the Politics of Humanism*.

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