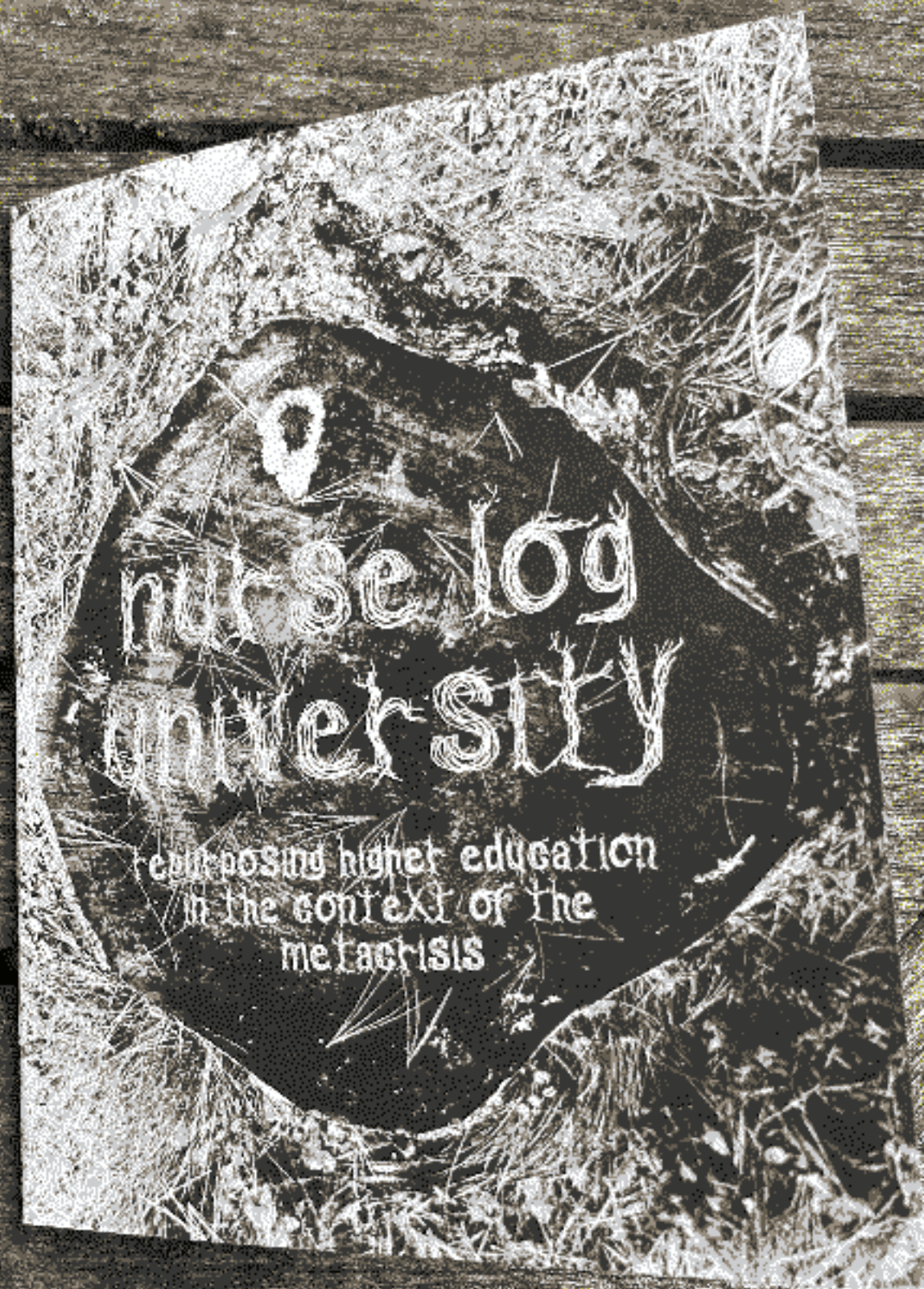




nurse log university

decomposing higher education
in the context of the
metacrisis

Charles Carpenter and Jordan Engel

Charles Carpenter and Jordan Engel



"We are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present."

nadiamariyan.ca

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made in the Nayanno-nibiimaang Gichigamiin region.

winter 2026



a mindful invitation to make good ruins

If it feels available to you in this moment
let your body settle in a way that is comfortable for you
soften your gaze, letting your mind know that you're tuning inward
holding that you are supported by the ground beneath you
and that you do not hold yourself up alone.

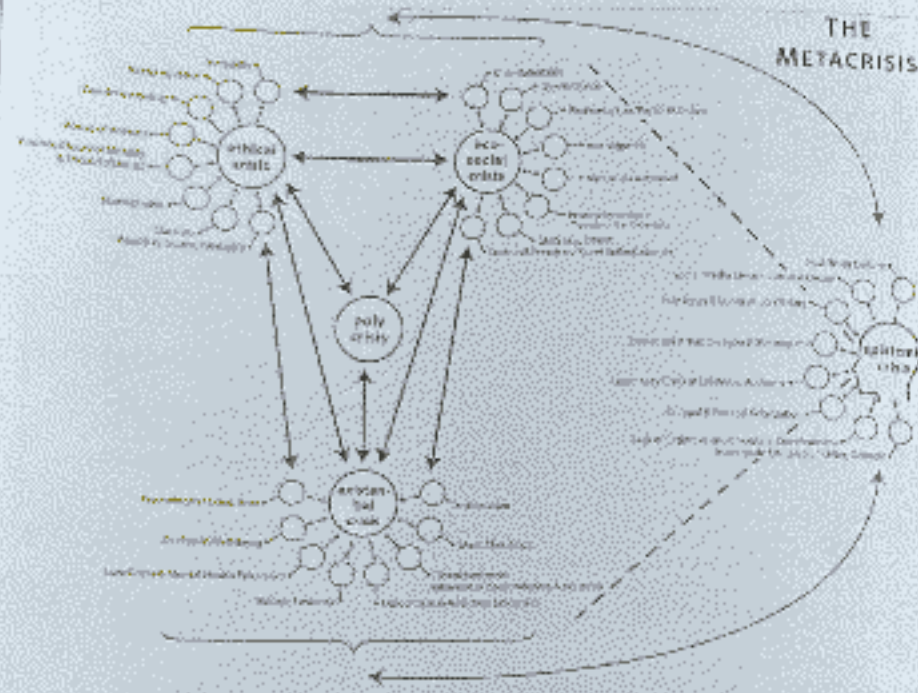
begin to bring your attention to your breath without needing to change it
simply noticing that the breath is already happening
indicating a vast network of cooperation within you and your body
take a few moments to focus on where the breath enters, and where it goes.

I now invite you to think about another living being: a tree
maybe a tree that's in your neighbourhood, in your favourite park, maybe it's an imagined tree
what type of tree is it? what size? where is the tree located?
can you see or hear the rustling of the leaves or branches in the tree on a windy day?
I invite you to imagine many years passing, perhaps centuries, and the tree grows old
eventually the tree falls over, and over many more years, the trunk slowly decomposes
the tree has become a nurse log
fungi thread through its interior
insects make homes in its hollows
moss gathers moisture along its surface
seeds take root in the richness of its decay
nothing here is wasted, nothing in control.

now gently notice your body again
inside you are tens of trillions of cells
different shapes, different functions, different lifespans
some cells build
some repair
some break things down so that others can grow
many of them will die today
so that life can continue
like the nurse log, your body is not a single thing
it is a site of ongoing cooperation and transformation.

imagine your body as part of a wider forest of relations
human and more-than-human, living and dying, visible and unseen
consider how your contribution can aid in the process of making good ruins
that is, identifying important learnings and starting points that can inform
what might come after.

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The artist is grateful to the many who have supported this work, and to the many who have shared it.



THE METACRISIS

the modern university has long positioned itself as an
ivory tower
elevated above the rest of

elevated above the rest of the world

tasked with observing, diagnosing, and intervening from a distance

this posture relies on separability

between knower
and known

learning
and consequence

theory
and land.

Stein and Andreotti invite a different metaphor

a nurse log is a fallen tree that becomes host rather than authority.

it does not stand
apart from
the forest

it shelters fungi,
insects, mosses, and
seedlings

it holds life
by decomposing

to imagine the
university as a horse
log is not to
romanticize collapse,
nor to propose a neat
alternative model.

it is to refuse the
fantasy that higher
education can remain
intact while the
worlds it depends on
unravel.

repurposing means
learning
how to say things
right

See also Hancock, Harford 2003, *Ministry, mission and the emergence of a modernity in early twentieth-century China*. DCL (University College London).

Shaw, Brian and Vanessa de Oliveira Andrade. 2025. Repurposing the University in Times of Social Ecology. *Interventions: Journal of the Modern Latin American Studies Association* 27 (2025): 23-44.

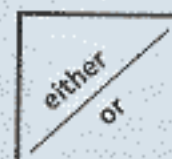
Wolke, D. & Bloom, A. (2002). 'Measuring the Unmeasurable in Times of Social and Political Breakdown', *UTS Occasional Paper*, No. 10, University of Technology, Sydney, 28 Nov. 2005. <http://www.uts.edu.au/ocp/papers/020102.htm>





from narrow to wide
boundary intelligence

wording the world
to control it



language as
heuristic



worlding the world
to move with it

emotional sobriety:
from defensive
behaviours to social
engagement in
facing difficulties

relational maturity;
first, respect
reciprocity, consent
accountability



intellectual
discernment, not
being overwhelmed
or immobilized by
volatility,
uncertainty,
complexity and
ambiguity

intergenerational
responsibility: "the
back stops here"

"if education was re-oriented towards ontogenesis [the clearing and opening of genuinely new ontogenetic possibilities], it could be opening up horizons of social-economic organization that go beyond what is imaginable within modernity/coloniality, beyond capitalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, green deals, doughnut economics, degrowth, or just transitions" (Andreotti, 2021).

Victor de Oliveira Andreotti, 2019, *Unpacking the University in Times of Field and Ontological Breakdown: From the Ivory Tower to the Street Edge*, *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 46, 1 (2019), 229-244.
Victor de Oliveira Andreotti, "Rethinking the University in Times of Social and Technological Breakdown (IT'S A BUST)," *You're in, Climate Intelligence Centre* | University of Technology, Sydney, 28 Nov. 2020, www.climateintelligencecentre.org/its-a-bust/.
Victor de Oliveira Andreotti, 2021, *The role of education in re-orienting the political, social and ecological relations, equity and*, *Advances*, 2021, 143-155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23445495.2021.1958672>

FRED: Yeah, well, the ones who happily claim and embrace their own sense of themselves as privileged ain't my primary concern. I don't worry about them first. But, I would love it if they got to the point where they had the capacity to worry about themselves. Because then maybe we could talk. That's like that Fred Hampton shit: he'd be like, "white power to white people. Black power to black people." What I think he meant is, "look: the problematic of coalition is that coalition isn't something that emerges so that you can come help me, a maneuver that always gets traced back to your own interests. The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?"

to refuse to call others to order, to refuse interpellation and the re-instantiation of the law. When we refuse, Moten and Harney suggest, we create dissonance and more importantly, we allow dissonance to continue — when we enter a classroom and we refuse to call it to order, we are allowing study to continue, dissonant study perhaps, disorganized study, but study that precedes our call and will continue after we have left the room. Or, when we listen to music, we must refuse the from within the general antagonism. My favorite movie is *The Shoes of the Fisherman* and I want to be like this character in it named Father Telemond. He believed in the world. Like Deleuze. I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in *that*. And I plan to stay a believer, like Curtis Mayfield. But that's beyond me, and even beyond me and Stefano, and out into the world, the other thing, the other world, the joyful noise of the scattered, scatted eschaton, the undercommon refusal of the academy of misery.

This morning, at the end of this world, I ask myself what I would give up to bring into being a different world, to change the air, to change everything.²² I theoretically sort through precious things to see which ideas are brick walls and which are doorways. I think of the snapping turtle's shell design, and I think about all the maps I'm missing, even though they are right in front of me. The maps all around us. The ones on the backs of turtles.

the rest is up to us.

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a note about zines as outlined by Anne Pasek:

1. MITIGATE CARBON+ IMPROVE EQUITY IN THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY
2. COMMUNICATE—AND PERFORM—IDEAS
3. INVITE MORE PEOPLE INTO THE RESEARCH PROCESS
4. REACH AUDIENCES YOU CAN'T PREDICT IN ADVANCE
5. INTERVENE IN SPACES IN WHICH YOU AREN'T WHOLLY INVITED OR WELCOME
6. HELP YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH AS A GIFT (ECONOMY)



"To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on your futures, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty is better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk."
—Rebecca Sinit

"Love is an action, never simply a feeling."
—bell hooks

