Provoking signs: Un/canny moments as curriculum theorizing

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Positioning

Six in a text /A text in six, we work at staging a mise-en-scène provoking signs, signals and signatures of curriculum discourse. Always already? toujours déjà? host and hostage to the word, we are worked by text, by that which recurs, even as we are working the text. Running with and against the material events of curriculum, our writings incite a text of six in performative conversations as improvisation around and about citational graftings from proper names and signatures. In the complicating folds of each one/not one, we work at keeping curricular discourses under erasure? For living on. Always already and not yet there…un/canny moments as curriculum theorizing…

A text’s attempt to frame itself produces warps and strains, dislocations.
—Jonathan Culler, 1982: 205

Gathering within the folds of this paper, we work the warps and strains of the textures of curriculum dislocating hegemonic frames in un/canny moments. We wish to stage a mise-en-scène…telling our stories….grafting theoretical traces…provoking signs, signals and signatures of discourse. We confess to having our signatories always already provoked by curriculum scholar Ted T. Aoki (2003) who would have curriculum under erasure to keep its space alive in living pedagogy. Reading Aoki reading Culler, our reading habits come under erasure. Re-readings refuse to be halted. Reading Culler reading Freud, we are drawn to the startling effects of the uncanny: “The uncanny,” writes Freud, “is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar”; “the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which
“recurs” (a grafting from Freud as cited in Culler, 1982:24). We are worked by text, by that which recurs, even as we are working the text. Labouring on the Aokian slope [/] of un/canny moments, we run with and against the material events of curriculum—making strange the familiar. Aoki (1996) invites us to linger in sites of possibility through attending carefully to what goes on with/in language as we write and are written through texts.

_Texts are therefore not structures of presence but traces and tracings of otherness. They are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures._

—John Frow, 1990:45

Inter/textual spaces

_Lingering in spaces between words_….Intertextuality, as a term, confounds the very theorists who play a part in shaping it, taking on an incredible breadth since coined by Julia Kristeva over thirty years ago. One might say its ambiguity suits the needs of too many, and yet, this draws us to the potential of a descriptor that goes beyond what simply connects texts. Educational researchers also assume basic tenets surrounding intertextuality as the subject evolves beyond clear grasp, slipping into the guise of another phase of literary criticism or other field. This ambiguous nature (not unlike the ‘postmodern condition’) attracts us to various intertexts, during a time when the reader-learner is bombarded with textual forms. The potential offered by re-cognizing notions of texts is one of allowing researchers and teachers the opportunity to step into a space of intertextuality that at once expands the notion of text—from book to school to community to spaces between words— and ultimately encourages the learner to engage in a ‘pleasure of the text’ eloquently described by Roland Barthes (1975).

_We pass texts between us. We touch the text instead of each other and make our marks on it rather than on each other. The text is material, it has texture, it is woven; we pull and tug at it, it winds around us, we are tangled up in it._

—Madeline Grumet, 1988:144

This text will take on the format of performative conversations—as stories’ startling theory. As each pronominal “I” is played out in conversation, we juxtapose a doubling play of a “not-I.” In the interval—on a “third ground—in a “third” discourse—in the spaces in-between—a hospes for a “third” person pronoun—a (s)he as reader—as a grafting—as a splicing—in the complicating folds of signatories. We linger in curricular text/ures, ghostly g(j)estures, sign/ificant interpretive gestures, and trans/lating lived curriculum as inky spillages from etymological traces. We are always and already host and hostage to the word. Our storied
fragments midst theoretical traces and proper names work at keeping curricular discourses alive as startling spaces—performative contradictions—un/canny spatialities. A conversation to be a conversation needs to be interrupted. In a moment of provocation …

**Provoking gaps...**

Several months ago, standing in front of a painting by Mary Pratt on exhibit, I was provoked by an uncanny experience. There was a fragmenting—a kind of ‘doubling’ of perception—an entering into a space of shifting and moving ground...

Pratt’s paintings are realistic depictions of everyday events rendered almost photographic through her use of exquisite detail. At first glance, the painting Red Current Jelly (1972) appeared self-evident with its jars of translucent red juice positioned on sheets of tinfoil in the mid-day sun. Like a photograph, the painting’s representation seemed clear and precise—without contradiction.

Then slowly with prolonged gazing, my perception shifted and what was first seen as shiny tinfoil reflecting light and shadows from jars of jelly, became thick blobs of red, grey, sky blue, and black. The depth and transparency of glass and foil became patches of oil paint on masonite. Almost simultaneously my gaze shifted again and the photographic representation of jars on foil reappeared. This flickering back and forth between images and paint on canvas continued unbidden. Things were not as they seemed, and yet,... they were not otherwise....

**Inter/play**

It seems that when awareness is focused on any of the senses, our experience opens up and shifts from a fixed position of knowing, to a flow of constantly changing perceptions within an open space of possibility. One begins to distinguish between thinking ‘about’ what is being experienced and what is often described as ‘bare attention’ without conceptual overlay. Instead of directly seeing, tasting, hearing, touching, thinking, we seem to dwell in thoughts, perceiving a world constituted by ideas and concepts. Fluid, ever changing experience becomes reified—open spaces freeze. Our life-world materializes..... rendering a landscape of solid appearances....

Constituted by concept, appearances of teacher, student, curriculum begin to take shape, informing, and formulating experience into what we expect to be real and true. Such appearances arising from persistent conceptualizing creates a sense of secure, seamless continuity that both protects and imprisons us from groundless, trans/forming, per/forming, and moment-to-moment experience (see Trungpa, 1975).
In gaps between thoughts, non-conceptual awareness shines continuously...

—Milarepa[1]

Each moment configures differently, while appearances of continuity convince otherwise. Sometimes, if paying attention, the process of conceptualizing into tightly woven cocoons becomes apparent, and then suddenly something happens, we stop or are stopped with a crack

gaps...opening into liminal spaces...

Liminal as playing to the edge of the possible at the edges of im/possibility where language leads language into direct, non-conceptual awareness....

Liminal spaces of appearance—or masks that simultaneously reveal while concealing. Masks can be held for years with telltale battle scars while others are torn away as loss and death arrive. Insubstantial and translucent, living masks constantly re-create in spaces of difference—narratives of knowing oneself as not other—“I am here and you are there” (as Ted Aoki says). Then, in momentary fragments before self/other has congealed, a glimpse of shared open space shines through...a space without concepts of self/other...an in-between doubling. In these gaps between concepts and non concept, in the spaces of self/other and living/dying where ‘doubling’ is unfettered by language, all im/possibility abides....Learning to rest in inevitable fractures that grow into fissures and traces of past/present as we learn that our child has cancer, or see bruises on a student’s neck, or are struck by the beauty of spring cherry blossoms.....How can we provoke these vital spaces in our curriculum, inviting in light, and endless possibility.....

Fifth-month rain—
poems posted to the wall, peeled off
leave traces.

—Matsuo Basho (1644-94)[2]

Ghostly Curriculum...

...understanding the isness of curriculum is fraught with ambiguity and contradiction, as it becomes clear that the range of positions to be occupied within a singlespace are many and varied and that the space is constantly contested.

—Usher and Edwards, 1994

The ghost of curriculum inhabits the space of the real/not yet real......
The word curriculum has common currency in the daily discourse of schools. While the word curriculum seems to well serve professional educators what it refers to remains transparent and variant. One can, for instance, hear curriculum referred to as a Ministry document, a teacher’s plan, children’s experience, something to do with a specific grade, what a child is behind in, and so on. So, what is curriculum? Perhaps it is time to revisit the question.

What ‘is’ curriculum? The question is inherently ambiguous. It at once signifies that curriculum is present by the sign *curriculum* but also asks what it is, what is the ‘isness’ of curriculum. Such ambiguity posits us in a tensioned space, in the difference of a sign(ificant) claim of the existence of curriculum and an acknowledgment that we do not ‘know’ of it. Are we not then in an abysmal space...curriculum as real and/or not real, elusively present, ghostly? The calling of our attention to the question of curriculum is evocative, disquieting, wonder-full.

For some curriculum is real enough. It is just a methodological and discursive challenge to illuminate ‘it.’ This is the case in much of curriculum theorizing that ‘commonly’ responds to the question by attempting to deductively reveal essential features or manifest the essence of curriculum. Curriculum is brought in from the dark, disclosed in the light of deductive clarification as an entity unto itself.

But for others the ambiguity of the question is not so easily resolved by the disclosure of curriculum through an act of clarification. Who or what clarifies? Discursive rendering of curriculum is as much an act of exclusion as of inclusion. And with that awareness comes a sensitivity to the indeterminables of discursive renderings. Wood (2002), for example, notes two linguistic indeterminables:

*incompleteness* (that which is not capturable in any words) and *excess* (the significances of the words can never be limited by the meaning one was trying to express).

Perhaps, rather than disclosing curriculum in ‘clarity of thought,’ we might dis-close curriculum in the between of real/not real space opened by the question. The midst of the between provokes, incites ‘thought’ (of curriculum) such that thought ‘loses control’ and ‘thinking’ happens ecstatically constituting and reconstituting ‘curriculum.’

Thinking as “ecstasy—a state of exalted delight in which ‘normal’
understanding is felt to be surpassed—so intense that rational thought and
self control are obliterated”(Morris, 1980: 413). In such a state, the
movement of thinking furtively eludes the gang of categories that seeks to
enact its hegemonic juristics to arrest curriculum ‘in’ thought. Thinking as
way-going invoked of indwelling real/not real, is already and always in
flux, on the move, ‘out of’ categoric control. Categorical renderings of
thing(s)-as-such, are dis-closed, delimited, re/newed. We are confronted
with the recurring inextricably interwined ontologic–epistemologic play.
The juristics of metaphysics remains unsettled…with/in gaps…. and
dis/ruptions……

Curricular G(j)estures

I want to suggest the happening of curriculum is of one’s interpretive
gesture, an existential gesture. Let’s begin by playing with the notion(s) of
(Medieval court) jester, gesture.

Jester, gesture—to act (L. gesta neut. pl.)

Both jester and gesture are etymological siblings educed from the Latin
gesta which means to act. Playing with these sibling notions, what is
understood as curriculum is invoked of one’s interpretive gesture in the
moment-at-hand. The lived experience of Medieval court jesters
interpretively indwelled the difference of the real/unreal. One of the ways
the Medieval court jester enlivened the moment-at-hand was by musing in
such a way that he was a-musing.

What made the jester so amusing was his ability to play with the
multiplicity of individual expectations of those present in the court in ways
that were peculiarly unexpected, often refreshingly insightful. The jester,
invoking his interpretive gesture, kept things on the move constituting and
reconstituting the moment(s)-at-hand as possibilities of unexpected
musings for the king and court. The jester was a ‘living’ g(j)esture.

In the spirit of the Medieval court jester consider the very possibility of
curriculum. While the court jester interpretively indwelled the moment-at-
hand, that is, indwelled the difference of the bare-situation (situation before
it is meaning-full) and the various expectations of those present in the
king’s court, the curriculum jester indwells the difference of the bare-
situation (situation before it is meaning-full as curriculum) and what others
consider curriculum-as-such to ‘be.’ In-situated, one playfully delimits
notions of curriculum given in this or that articulation as they show
themselves in conversation by constituting amusing dis-closures. The
isness of curriculum, in this sense, is necessarily on the move, never
arrested nor rests for long at least in concept, in definition, as the subject of
a particular discourse, and so on. Curriculum is ghostly, moving in and
through the dark and the light of what is ‘thought’/not yet thought to be
curriculum.

The ‘isness’ of curriculum is dis-located by the force of ones interpretive gesture (Worthing, 2002) in the moment-at-hand, in the space of ‘difference,’ in the real/not yet real curriculum. As a curriculum jester invoking one’s own interpretive gesture re/constitutes meaning (in this case of curriculum) moment to moment to moment.

So situated, one is held sway in the infinitely present ontic-ontological difference (Silverman, 1994), the moment of the being-of-things, such that the being-of-things is always and already on the move, never at rest in self identity. In this sense one’s ‘interpretive’ g(j)estures, with respect to our provoking curriculum, necessarily dis-closes curriculum re/constituting possibilities-yet-to-be.

Thus, one’s g(j)estural disposition necessarily constitutes curriculum as an existential phenomenon in a Sartrean sense. Curriculum is in constant movement beyond where it is at any one point in time. We are close to the notion in Zen Buddhism that “we must acquiesce to a suspension that yields to what Trinh calls a non-knowledge” of curriculum (Rapaport, 2003: 18). The movement of ‘thinking’ does not seek curriculum as transcendence, curriculum is adrift amid a plethora of interpretive gestures.…

Textures of Sign(ificant) interpretive gestures...

The question of curriculum floats in the midst of interpretive gestures. It has no home to go to, forever. Indwelling the moment-at-hand the hermeneutic sensitivities of interpretive gestures re/constitute curriculum.…

Curriculum as lived interpretation pushes the limits of conventional, planned curriculum. Beginning with fundamental questions embedded in a view of curriculum as lived interpretation, several questions are inscribed in the foundational relationship between: (i) how we understand our selves in relationship to other sentient beings and ontologically prior Earth, (ii) how and who we are as existential beings, and (iii) how we act praxiologically towards self, Other, and World, when curriculum emerges as the more fundamental question: what does it mean to be human, in the more-than-human world?

For within the intimate connections between education, praxis, critique, and transformation, await the curricular imperative to be re-imagined, and
to be enriched, in terms of embeddeness within this experiential context vis-à-vis the critical connection between knowing/being/acting. Here, given the role of interpretation in lived experience within the experiential flux of caring about the world, after the examples of prominent educators like Aoki (1996), Jardine (1998), Smith (1999), we concur that traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology hold promise for reconceptualizing curriculum attentive of this vital nexus.

For if we are to believe education is emancipatory, about transformation and ethical imperatives, if emancipatory education is about knowing that will free selves, then there exists an imperative for curriculum as embedded within narrative, within a liminal in-between and g(j)estures, that renews and provokes lived curriculum. That is, in contrast to curriculum as reification, in the planned curriculum with notions of possessive noun-based objectified discourse, to instead, re-imagine curriculum, in all its immediacy, as living, experiential, continuous verb, as gerund, in enacting spaces of living possibility within narrated-poetic inquiry (Leggo, 1997a, 1997b).

In particular, two authors are drawn heavily upon here, the potential of David Abram (1996) for pedagogy, in his poetic contributions to phenomenological immediacy and Taylor’s (1991) hermeneutic reading of the loss of meaning. With these two bodies of work in mind, two “object-subject study” vignettes are selected with openings for provoking curriculum, in our continuing interpretations of the Aokian turn that imparted the originary utterance to the framework for our research (Aoki, 1996).

**Hermeneutic phenomenology, narrative and ethical imperatives...**

To begin, an illustration of how hermeneutic phenomenology might open the possibility of curricular spaces, in sharing a favourite passage from David Abram’s writing. Here we find Abram penning his poetic critique of empiricist scientific framing, grounded within the separation of the subject—the perceiver, from the object—the perceived, in his expansion of Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal phenomenology, derived in turn, from Husserl’s ontologically prior notion of the lifeworld.
The clay bowl resting on the table in front of me meets my eyes with its curved and grainy surface. Yet I can only see one side of that surface—the side of the bowl is invisible, hidden by the side that faces me. In order to view that other side, I must pick up the bowl and turn it around in my hands, or else walk around the wooden table. Yet, having done so, I can no longer see the first side of the bowl.

Surely I know that it still exists; I can even feel the presence of that aspect which the bowl now presents to the lamp on the table. Yet I myself am simply unable to see the whole all at once. Moreover, while examining its outer surface, I have caught only a glimpse of the smooth and finely glazed inside of the bowl. When I stand up and look down into that interior, which gleams with curved reflections from the skylight overhead, I can no longer see the unglazed outer surface. This earthen vessel thus reveals aspects of its presence to me only by withholding other aspects of itself for further exploration. There can be no question of ever totally exhausting the presence of the bowl with my perception; its very existence as a bowl ensures that there are dimensions wholly inaccessible to me, most obviously the patterns hidden between its glazed and unglazed surfaces, the interior density of its clay body. If I break it, hopes of discovering these interior patterns or the delicate structure of its molecular dimensions, I will have destroyed the bowl; far from coming to know it completely, I will have wreck ed any possibility of coming to know it further, having traded the relation between myself and the bowl for a relation to a collection of fragments.

—Abram, 1996: 51

Of significance, here Abram reminds us of our limitations as existential beings, subverting beautifully, anthropocentric hubris of certainty and finality, and in that process, reminding us that before our eyes stand presences that subtly slip from view into concealment, when framed within dominant frames to appear as absence… yet through attentiveness, Abram also shows that there nevertheless remains possibility of openness of being, to that which still stands there, not immediately accessible, but still immediate…Abram’s critique also reminds us of the futility of fragmenting the world in aspiring to know the world, caught within throwness (Heidegger, 1962) of immediacy, within a hermeneutic
circle (Bontekoe, 1996) where separation of subject and object is as untenable as it is unattainable, since we can only exist as beings-in-the-world.

Yet, at the same time, Abram’s warning notwithstanding, we might also be reminded breaking is also breakdown (Heidegger, 1962), where it is through breaking that disclosure opens to us, if we are attentive in our hearts. What do we see in the image below? If in answering, we see a piece of art, a picture, a cultural artifact, or art contemplating the meeting of the animate and the inanimate, the whole and the broken, useful and useless, we might be thinking to ourselves we cannot possibly be mistaken with any of these answers. For after all, is that not how we have been taught in schools to categorize nature? Or if I were to say the spoon represents a piece of culture, or art that captures cultural artifact juxtaposed next to living nature, we might also think we cannot be mistaken, for after all, have we not also been taught in our schools to spilt culture from nature?

Yet, what if I were to suggest, even as the spoon is culture, it doubles as tool, technique, technology, that insofar as culture hides the earth, cultural artifact also hides its presence as a mode of technique. And pushing further, what if I say to you, these artifacts imply what is unseen, but deeply felt, presence of narrated beings for whom nature, artifact and tool hold meaning, yet who are not in the picture, for whom in order for nature, artifact and tool to have meaning, it must also derive from lived experience, even as it imparts within that doubling, meaning to the lived? And what is more, this particular representation, representing dialectical flux between immediate and reified, derives from a singular particular act, and a profound one at that, of sharing sustenance between mother and child?

Or more personally, disclosure emerges when the spoon broke, revealing its concealed nature, as my mother and I were about to share from a single bowl, our supper. What is more, within the breaking, what if I were to tell you it was at the instance I could not bring myself to discard the broken spoon that I realized it is truly extraordinary in these days of late modernity and fracturing, to partake of and from a single bowl, as I recalled the tenuous fragility of our relationship with people and things, when I found rationale for green critique, within narratives as lived, wherein education
can without fear, aspire towards ethical imperatives?

Lived Interpretations…Translating Curriculum

Once there were three girls…

...whose lives were originally separated

Melanie’s parents came to Canada from China; Janet’s parents came from England. But Melanie and Janet were born and raised in Vancouver. Sumiko was born and raised in Japan. Each went to school with friends who were just like them. They look content within their frames; their spaces are familiar, secure, solid.

Framing/Framed

What do these frames do? Do these solid lines belong to the inside or the outside or neither? The frame prevents the outside from coming in and the inside from going out. When these girls met later in their lives, they liked each other but sometimes thought the other was different. For example, the expectations of friendship were different. The concept of private was different. Language differences made things more difficult. They confronted things considered not common or usual within their framed space, because they had already learned what was common and usual. They had learned to see the world within their frame. Within the frame, they had learned about people who lived outside, but it was just knowledge constructed within their frames, a curriculum taught them, so to speak. John Willinsky (1998) writes that we learn to divide the world: we “are schooled in differences great and small, in borderlines and boundaries, in historical struggles and exotic practices, all of which extend the meaning of difference. We are taught to discriminate in both the most innocent and fateful ways so that we can appreciate the differences between civilized
The concept of translation is a useful tool to provoke curriculum, the curriculum of the classroom and the curriculum of our lives.

“Trans” suggests a journey, a searching of new space. “Transing,” however, can be futile and dangerous.

Walter Benjamin (1968), in his “The Task of the Translator” says that “[a]ny translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information—hence, something inessential. This is the hallmark of bad translation” (69).

Is that what we have learned? Has the classroom curriculum we teach been a bad translation?

**Fragmented**

In today’s classrooms, there are many Janets, Melanies, Sumikos, and more, sharing the same space and time. And yet, they might not be sharing, as much as we hope, because of the solid frame within which they have learned to live. In the same classroom, sitting next to each other, they might continue to be just learning the distance between countries, cultures, and people. Or, they might feel left alone outside of the frame, and thus be struggling to enter into somebody else’s frame in vain. The frame continues to exclude, even though it seems there is a lot of space available between frames. Why can’t they meet there? Can’t they create a different frame—a fragmented frame—so that they can go beyond divisions?

Translation might help them embark upon such a journey. George Steiner (1998) suggests “the original text gains from the orders of diverse relationship and distance established between itself and the translations. The reciprocity is dialectic: new ‘formats’ of significance are initiated by distance and by contiguity” (317). Distance yet contiguity is what a fragmented frame offers. Is this possible?

**Equivalence/Equilibrium**

Students are constantly translating others and being translated by others. They do so through language, spoken or thought. Even when they speak the same language, English or english, they might not speak the same language, because, as Foucault argues, a discourse is a socially constructed system of statements within which the world is understood, and it determines the relationship among people. The “meaning of a word is its use in the language” (20e), Wittgenstein (1958) suggests. Language does not have immediate access to reality, but it dictates our relationships with the world. No wonder a word like “learning” evokes different images and different spaces to different people. Where is the original, then? Without an original, everything becomes an original; translation emerges from
translating, newness emerges. Walter Benjamin (1968) writes “all suprahistorical kinship of language rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole—an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other: pure language. While all individual elements of foreign languages—words, sentences, structure—are mutually exclusive, these languages supplement one another in their intentions” (74). Can we seek to communicate through pure language? Can we derive a curriculum of pure language?

Unequivalent/Unequilibrium

As mentioned earlier, translation can be futile and dangerous if it is done within a frame. Niranjana (1992) in her Siting Translation argues instead that translation should be a significant site for challenging representation, power, and historicity, rather than “a practice [that] shapes, and takes shapes within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism” (2). What kind of information has this kind of translation provided?

I consider examples about Japan. In North American universities where students study Japanese literature, most read only a few writers’ works, namely Junichiro Tanizaki, Yasunari Kawabata, and Yukio Mishima, because, as Lawrence Venuti suggests, these writers “established a canon of Japanese fiction in English that was…based on a well-defined stereotype that has determined reader expectations for roughly forty years.” These writers unfold a Japan with tatami mats, cherry blossoms, silence, submissive women, hara-kiri, and so on. The recent bestseller Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden (1997) captured the attention of the media in exploring the “mysterious” Japanese woman’s occupation, geisha. This book sold four million copies in English and has been translated into thirty-two languages, primarily because it promotes an image of the Japanese women that suit the non-Japanese reader’s frame.

Translators, publishers, and scholars choose what they want to perceive of Japan, a stance that Kojin Karatani (1998) calls “the aesthetic stance.” He argues that Western academics do not want to consider Japan as a westernized country which can offer intellectual and ethical criticism; rather they want to think that Japan should only offer something aesthetic such as geisha, Ukiyo-e and Zen. Going back to our three girls, if this is how they learn the world, it is a challenge for them to share the same space in school, because they are translating and being translated for who they are not. Curriculum based on these old chestnuts of culture and literature misleads and misrepresents, enclosing solid boundaries where there should be fragmented lines, entrenching difference, even calling exotic, rather than exploring shared space.
Third Space...

But, because it evokes interaction, translation has the potential to crack solid lines and create new space, the space which Homi Bhabha (1990) calls Third Space, “though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity: that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (37). Ted Aoki (1996) writes about a bridge between spaces, such as East and West, saying that educators and business people tend to think about crossing a bridge between two places, but that “we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges urge us to linger,” because they “are dwelling places for people,” inviting them “to transcend instrumentalism to understand what it means to dwell together humanly” (6).

Can classroom curriculum offer dwelling spaces for students where they can linger and ponder?

The most uncanny thing...

... that action becomes exquisite when it is borne out of "inaction"
—out of waiting, listening, attending ...
—David Jardine, 2000: 171

Ex-quisite? from the Latin quaerere? to seek. Learning to listen exquisitely? learning with Jardine. I listen to Sumiko speaking of friendships and I am reminded of my own young students coming to Canada from Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Israel, England and Australia, struggling to make friends—marking and re-marking the fragility of frames at the boundaries of friendships. Englishes as intertext(ualities). My testimonies always already partial…incomplete …always already and not yet there …

I am often asked how my writing life relates to my teaching life and perhaps it is the hauntings that work their way into the writings? sometimes I feel it is only with these young students that I can have conversations always already interrupted? they trip me up in my signs and signals always already exposing an instability in my teacher babble...'but you said'...the repetitious droning of a whine...iterability...while we as teachers so intent on decision...halt the conversations...

I don't know how to be in school…I don't know to be there. And I don't know how not to be there. I can't seem to get out. Jacques Derrida designates: "The Self: a cemetery guard" (1986: xxxv).

Haunting belongs to the family of Heim; it in fact has never been evicted from the home…the Unheimlichkeit that
haunts our thinking, because in its remoteness there is something very close, and it is disquieting only to the extent that it is close: "They're back!"

—Avital Ronell, 1986: xviii

What is this something that comes very close? That is disquieting only to the extent that it is close? As we struggle to break away from hegemonic discourses, the traces of signs, signals and signatures appear in uncanny ways to haunt the work. The ghosts at work in the curriculum.

In everyday praxis when all seems to be going well…to have settled in the present tense…with generative possibilities…a disquieting moment arrives…brushes past…leaving traces of a murmur…displacing me again on a groundless path…erasure through the laws of physics…the physics of a doubling moment…an Aokian moment...

The most uncanny thing, according to Freud (1997), is the fear of being buried alive. And I find myself drawn to the strangeness of cryptophilia in Abraham and Torok's (1986) The Wolf man's magic word: A cryptonomy. The crypt marking the spot of jouissance as, and I draw from Derrida in his Foreword "Fors" to the text, "buried alive in its own prohibition" (p. xxxiv). Are we not buried alive in the language of curriculum…in the sign(al)…buried alive in its own prohibition. And so, entangled in the warps and strains of our text, we ride the doubling movement of an un/canny moment…working the slippery spaces of an Aokian slope […] as we work at cracking the sign…and in the tremors of a faultline…begin to tremble…

In a moment of provocation, each one/not one…

"a subject-writer-in-a-language, at work …"

… a grafting from the reads of Jacques Derrida in Signéponge/Signsponge

References


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Franc Feng's interests are motivated in a teacher's concerns with issues of
responsibility and complicity facing teachers in an experimental age. His eco-cultural critique of technology positing the ascendancy of technology as Third Nature is grounded within poetic lived experience, where narrative plays a central role in my ethical work. His research spanning ecophilosophy, cultural studies, and science technology studies (STS) merges: hermeneutic phenomenology, critical theory, and autopoietic theory: in the exegesis of texts, with the unfolding of focal practices of disclosure through/around cultural artefacts. His Ph.D. is a contribution towards opening a small conversation in languaging the dialectical flux between the immediate and the reified.

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D. Craig Worthing obtained his Ph.D. in Educational Administration at Simon Fraser University working with Dr. E. Samier, Dr. T. Aoki, and Dr. S. Smith. Educational administration, he suggests, is a re/constituting phenomenon rather than that which can be disclosed in the traditional structuralist articulations of theory. At present, his interest is in questioning the ethical implications of educational administration as a re/constituting phenomenon.

Currently, Craig is an administrator in the Richmond School District near Vancouver, British Columbia. He has recently written an article in the
British Columbia Principals and Vice Principals Association Journal entitled, *Outside In: Contextualizing a Particular Response to the Question of Public Confidence in Education*.

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**EndNotes**
