

Weaving Vocabularies and Counterpoint in Canadian Curriculum Studies

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Following Madeleine Grumet's (2014) curriculum scholarship themes of autobiography, phenomenon, and events, I consider the topographic tapestry that distinctly defines curriculum studies in Canada and note that the *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* (JCACS) has been the room of looms for Canadian curriculum scholars. In this first editorial as principal co-editor, I reach back and pull up the threads starting with the inaugural issue, entwining how they have shaped my lived curriculum within this room, weaving their threads in relation to special issues, while entangling them with the thought-provoking works put forth in this current JCACS issue. I imagine and weave these threads as a personal métissage through time that seeks to continue editing JCACS in the tradition of Canadian curriculum studies as a complex coherence of differing voices (Pinar, 2014), as events in time with specificity and noisy conversations (Grumet, 2014), as a comfortably "nebulous notion of a dispersed and undefined Canadianness" (Johnston, 2014, p. 70) vibrating among "verdant meadows of hope" (Hlebowitsh, 2014, p. 90), and mindful of the curriculum genealogies we each live as counterpointed compositions (Ng-A-Fook, 2014).

JCACS continues to catechize Canadian curriculum, to move forward through Cynthia Chamber's (1999) questionings:

1. How are we experimenting with tools from different Canadian intellectual traditions and incorporating them into our theorizing?
2. What kinds of languages and interpretive tools have we created to study what we know and where we want to go?
3. In what ways have, and are, curriculum theorists writing in a detailed way the topos—the particular places and regions where we live and work?
4. How are these places inscribed in our theorizing, as either presence or absence, whether we want them there or not? (Ng-A-Fook, 2014, p. 24)

JCACS celebrates Canadian curriculum studies. Dennis Sumara and Rebecca Luce-Kapler, the first co-editors, started JCACS in 2003 from an idea at the Annual Meeting

of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies in Edmonton in 2001. The first issue was based on papers presented at the Curriculum Studies President's Symposium, organized by Dennis Sumara and Rita Irwin, one of our previous CACS Presidents. At that time, the editorial focus was on "Inventing New Vocabularies for Curriculum Studies in Canada." The contributors responded to philosopher Richard Rorty's (1998) notion that:

One way to change instinctive emotional reactions is to provide new language that will facilitate new reactions. By 'new language' I mean not just new words but also creative misuses of language—familiar words used in ways that initially sound crazy. (p. 204)

The writers were prompted to "offer some 'crazy ideas' that might interrupt habits of mind that currently organize the 'commonsense' of curriculum studies" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2003, p. 3). Curriculum scholars were challenged to draw upon creative language to construct new conceptual lenses. Today, Canadian scholars continue to use diverse literacies and critical interpretive practices to reframe and challenge taken-for-granted scripts and texts. As the journal's genealogical imprints and tracings illustrate, we continue to collectively reconceptualize, invent, and rewrite the curricular vocabularies that inform our daily lives as curriculum scholars.

From the first JCACS issue, Kieran Egan's (2003/1978) reprinted essay asked, "What is curriculum?" His retrospective recommended that while the *how* and the *what* will continue to be questioned, we should be more interested in "What counts as knowing?" and "Who counts as knowing subjects" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, p. 4)? Deborah Britzman (2003) wrote about free association as a tool to rethink what is valued in education. Britzman's focus was on imagining the possible—those unplanned ideas that could lead to fortuitous insights. Brent Davis (2003) discussed learning as complex transformation and entanglement. He proposed that, "diversity among parts and the juxtaposition of that diversity . . . might trigger new individual and/or collective possibilities" (p. 44). Suzanne de Castell and Jennifer Jenson (2003) put forth the concept of serious play and its transformational implications for gaming practices. Rena Uptis (2003) promoted the integration and value of art within school contexts, asking us to reconsider what learning might look like when connected to the presence of beauty. Yatta Kanu (2003) invited us to ponder the concept of cultural hybridity. She forecast,

If indeed, we are serious about the construction of another narrative, then curriculum reform needs to be grounded in "imagined communities" where relations are no longer unidirectional or univocal, flowing from the colonialist to the colonized. . . . Addressing these challenges requires hybrid/multinational curriculum thinking and acting consisting of overlays of multiple discourse, and plural assumptions and strategies. (p. 13)

Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell wrote about collaborative curriculum work where the relation is key to the tangledness and interdependence of pleasure and production.

These interwoven focal threaded pathways have thrived. I remember the first issue of JCACS coming out. I was a graduate student at the time and I look back fondly at how profoundly the journal and the CACS community have shaped my learning and research. One of my first publications was in a 2006 JCACS issue where I wrote about the reader "becoming complicitly knitted into the unfolding segments [of text], assembling them from the particular and separate to the general and whole. The reader is invited to become the interlocutor" (p. 52). In a 2013 JCACS issue, I described

Duoethnography (Sawyer & Norris, 2013), a dialogic methodology, as I could now describe engagements between JCACS and readers—JCACS being a methodological site of embodied rendezvous, grounded in Ted Aoki's rumination where

voices do not blend in a closure; rather, they celebrate openness to openness—there is distinct resistance on their part to be brought to a closure. I liken these five voices not to a symphonic harmony of oneness, but, as in certain Bach fugues, to a polyphony of five lines in a tensionality of contrapuntal interplay, a tensionality of differences. (In Berman, Hultgren, Lee, Rivkin & Roderick, 1991, p. xiii)

The way interplay works in duoethnography has worked across JCACS because we have intentionally set out to take up Canadian curriculum scholarship in this counterpointed manner, as

independent melodies in a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character. . . . The words juxtaposition, polyphony, distinct, harmonious, art, composition, and handling are all part of the semantic field of counterpoint [The reader], by inviting in social context and relation, becomes a catalyst and inspirator of meaning making. (Sameshima, 2014, pp. 185-186)

In 2014, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook's foundational, benchmarking genealogical project, "Provoking the very 'Idea' of Canadian Curriculum Studies as a Counterpointed Composition" was used as an anchor to provoke responses from William Pinar, Madeleine Grumet, Ingrid Johnston, and Peter Hlebowitsh. Ng-A-Fook describes Canadian curriculum studies as "bound together by stories of counterpointed historical movements" (p. 13). To do so, he quoted Hans Smits (2011), who asked us to reconsider, such historical movements within our field as "the play of counterpoint" where scholars might interweave "diverse chords and voices but also discordance or dissidence," offering in turn, both "complexity and the invitation to hear" each other differently. (p. 48)

In this special issue, Ng-A-Fook (2014) invited curriculum scholars here in Canada to experiment with curriculum theorizing as a composition of narrative counterpoints, rapprochements, and juxtapositions that pay particular attention to Cynthia Chambers (2003) call for braiding the "languages and traditions, stories and fragments, desires and repulsions, arguments and conversations, tradition and change, hyphens and slashes, mind and body, earth and spirit, texts and images, local and global, pasts and posts, into a métissage" (p. 246). Paying homage to the groundbreaking contributions of Canadian curriculum scholars, he concludes:

Might we then continue to be open and pay attention, to live well together as a community without consensus, while discussing what "curriculum" is at this time and place. And yet, continue to reread and reinterpret the present absences within such historical and contemporary conversations reflectively, recursively, and in a respectful way of relating to one another, while provoking and contemplating the very "idea" of Canadian curriculum studies as an ever evolving alliterated, aesthetic, complicated, contested, counterpointed, composition. (pp. 43-44)

In looking back, I also eagerly look forward to sharing our 2016 fall special issue, entitled "Canadian Curriculum Studies: A Curricular Métissage of Polyphonic Textualities," guest-edited by wonderful Canadian theorists, Carl Leggo and Erika

Hasebe-Ludt. Their section headings are fittingly titled: Provoking Curriculum as Relational Ecologies, Provoking Curriculum as Pedagogical Imaginaries, and Provoking Curriculum as Inspired Topographies.

In this spirit of weaving vocabularies and counterpointed *métissage*, I offer the following poem from the articles in this current issue—found lines enmeshed in and across the mindscapes of landscapes. Poetic inquiry is a research methodology for collecting data, analyzing findings and representing understandings (Prendergast, Leggo & Sameshima, 2009). The poem is interwoven with a digital image presented at the start of the poem. I created the composite image from two photos: an x-ray stitched four times from Steven Khan's article overlaid on a pioneer cemetery photo from Naomi Norquay and Pariss Garramone's paper (Figures 1 & 2).



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

The integrated italicized texts within the poem are collated responses to the digital art from a few curriculum friends. Without context, I asked them what they saw and felt when looking at the artwork. As an arts integrated researcher, I use the arts as a means to offer "crazy ideas," defy what counts as learning, play, juxtapose, create interdependence and hybridity, and note the tangledness of knowing. These are the challenges and responses of the first JCACS issue, the world of Canadian curriculum theory I have been raised in. These are the ways of my knowing and theorizing of the world. I am indebted to the authors and editors of JCACS' first issue for beginning my personal trajectory into research and to Canadian curriculum scholars who continue to support and shape the tapestry we proudly call Canadian curriculum studies.

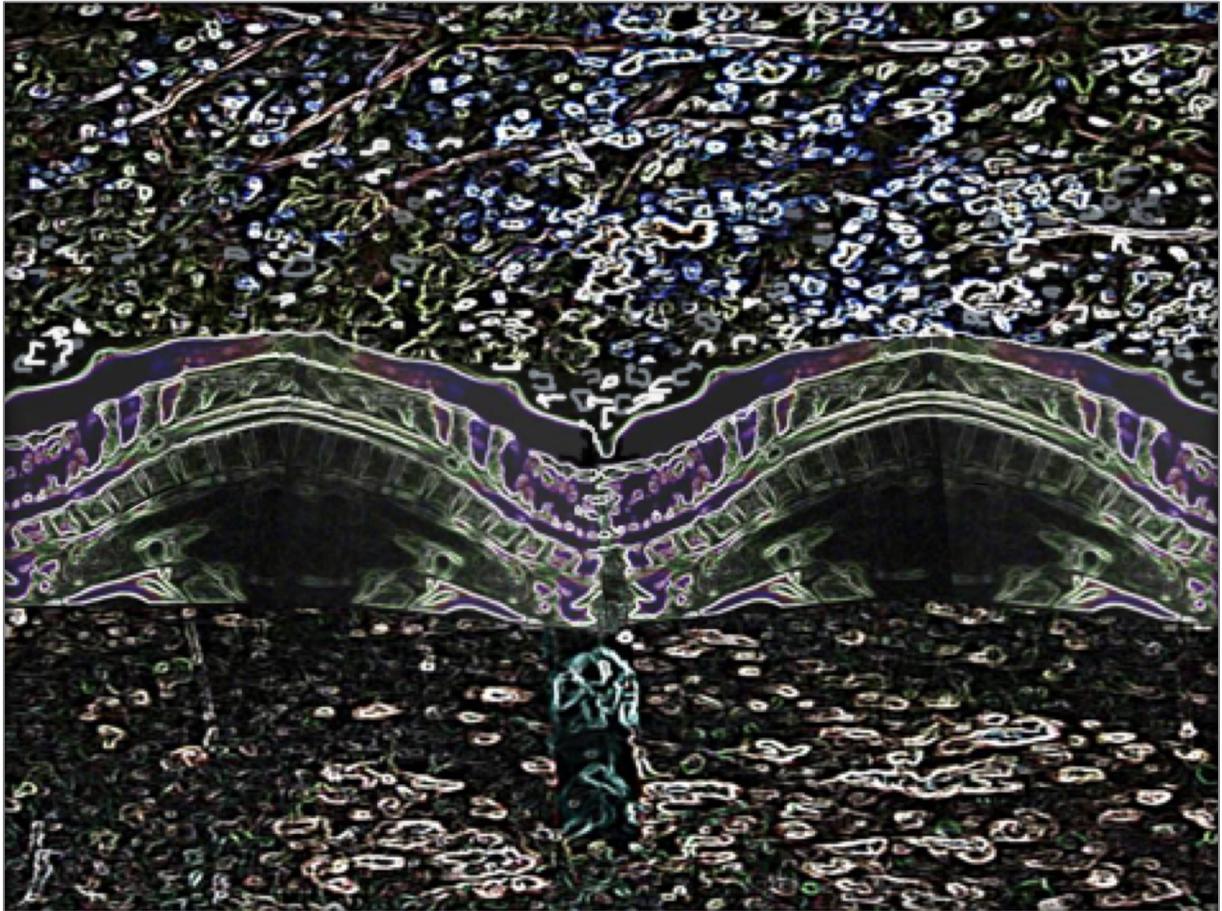


Figure 3. *Currere in Place* [digital image]. P. Sameshima, 2016

Constructing *Currere in Place*

this issue of place
theorized and inspired
by strange brewed fantasies
of Canadian ecological sensibilities
harshly pressed by northern and political landscapes¹

steps forward with Greenwood's keynote
fostering an ethic of place
as curriculum responsive to
place as lived
everyday
open in parallax
knowing
"the world is places"²

getting "faced"
in stories of rich relationship
where personal confessions are
political statements

*with decisions of how to traverse
snake barriers
under, over, around
the road untaken
still works
orienting
the smooth lens*

framing place
the physical, ideological, imaginary³
in Norquay
and Garraomone
restoring
new imaginings for
forgotten communities

Europeans
viewed the new world
as terra nullius
an empty space awaiting
*"a seductive embrace"⁴
lovers indeterminate
by the bridge
imagining*

creativity as
colonized, democratized,
innovative, destructive
fundamentalism
rebranded
Kalin asks what might risk resisting
in the democratization of creativity?
*I like purple
smiling the serenity
of vibrant earth
of shallow water
and a slow turtle walk
to the bridge*

*while for me
such sadness
surveying eyes
hooded
searching
arising*

neoliberalism "demands creativity
for the sake of creativity
mobility for the sake of mobility
fluidity for the sake of fluidity
change for the sake of change"⁵

*when the woman asks
the snake she took in
why did you bite me?
the snake answers
that's what I do*

the poison
Butler recounts
interrupts economy
as the contaminated
water waits for
currere to be captured as
specific experiential snapshots
opening into wider landscapes
of place-based local literacies
to understand
positionings of
teachers as amateur intellectuals
and researchers as amateur practitioners

*hiding in the familiar
behind the landscape
of fabric, of patterns
a mysterious woman's face
in pain and fear
alone*

marooned says Khan
complexly embodied

psychoanalytic hermeneutic aesthetic
productions with
poetry and photographs
sOMATICALLY sutured
stitched through
my body residue
being-not-at home-with
oneself

maroonage
a sacred comma
a pause

*a stop
a contemplation
appreciation and wonder
a meditation on love*

*identifying the structure
the hardest part of currere
simply stylized
masked
and all it takes
is moving forward
in any direction
thinking of the world
and the other
intentionally*

"There is still time—in the lee, in the quiet, in the extraordinary light"⁶

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¹ Sumara, Davis & Laidlaw, 2003.

² Snyder(1990) in Greenwood's keynote.

³ Lippard in Norquay and Garramone's article.

⁴ Lippard in Norquay and Garramone's article.

⁵ Gielen in Kalin's article.

⁶ Adams, R (1994). Foreword.