

*Liminal, permeable regions and  
metaphoric scale:  
Strategies for avoiding orientalism and reification in  
trans-national curriculum studies*

AAACS 2013 Presidential Address

PETER APPELBAUM  
*Arcadia University*

This year's theme, "Counter-western curriculum theory: Displacement, Transference, or Action?" challenges us to explore the perseveration rampant in curriculum scholarship, the constant critique – whether sociological, epistemological, aesthetic, or environmental – that has defined our field, never fully realized yet always promising ... what, exactly? In my remarks here, I address the challenges that we impose upon ourselves in taking on a project of internationalizing curriculum studies, and raise some potential concerns about the kinds of efforts we might undertake. I note that our genealogy as a field sets up much curriculum studies scholarship as resistance, critique, and imaginative resistance through alternatives; this work could be interpreted as perpetuating a static set of unsatisfied hopes, desires, and goals. The work of most members of AAACS is also epistemologically restricted to a Western canon. Our efforts to morph such limited approaches into something more international, trans-national, global, post-colonial, or otherwise counter-Western may contain within themselves their own tragic flaws; in particular, international and transnational scholarship constructs its own epistemological geography that includes its own boundaries, liminal terrains, boundary-crossings, and exploitations. A geography, whether physical and tied to nation states and cultural maps, or ideological and epistemological, brings with it concepts of scale and dimension that affect the ways in which we might employ or work within and around the geography itself. I will tie up my comments with this latter concern, that scales establish reified giants and monuments, micro-environments, and assorted quagmires within which we might get trapped if we are not careful.

## Psychosis

We have the explanation that a perseveration defines our field and makes our work possible, from the early origins in ameliorative approaches, through fantasies of scientific progress, eugenics and visions of a citadel-on-the-hill, circumnavigating Taylorism and goal-based operations research design, and profiting highly from the ruins and compost of post-theories and outsider status within the broader world of education. By continuing to complain about contemporary practice and policy, and to always seek alternatives to dominant discourses, we create a profession, establish careers, engage in complicated conversations, and satisfy our desire for intellectual interaction in a world of educational policies and bureaucracies that dismiss or obliterate academic engagement, introspective reflection, and caring for human beings and the environment. In psychoanalysis, we use the term “secondary gain” to label those behaviors of resistance and transference associated with clinging to neurosis. I place most curriculum studies work in this category, as resistance to the dominant discourses of educational policy. The question becomes, “Why would we continue to critique and resist when we do not see our critique and resistance as building a movement, countering dominant ideology, or leading to systemic change?” We have a huge literature of cultural, political, philosophical, phenomenological, qualitative and quantitative critique of contemporary educational practice, and an increasingly broad literature that updates that critique with more recent replications and elaborations. A secondary question is, “Why do we limit ourselves to an Ameroeurocentric epistemology, ignoring traditions of curriculum scholarship from outside of our canon that might help us to achieve our fantasies and dreams?” On the one hand, AAACS is an affiliate of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, IAACS, and we actively work within the broader commitment to internationalization of our field as individuals and as a professional association. International scholars attend our conferences and publish in our journal; members attend meetings of the other international associations sprouting around the world, as well as the IAACS World Curriculum Conference, and we publish in the IAACS journal, *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*. Yet, the internationalization, as least on the part of the AAACS subgroup of the larger association of international scholars, typically remains limited to our own research traditions; we practice internationalization as social interaction, yet our individual research and scholarship rarely builds on these transnational interactions, either as collaborations and co-research projects or as inter-fertilized epistemologies and practices.

A simplistic attempt to interpret underlying motivations, causes, or implicit assumptions for either of these shortcomings on our part might start with the hypothesis that there is an unconscious need to be punished or ill. Is curriculum studies punished by limiting itself to dominant epistemologies that evolved in Western cultures? Is the “cure” of internationalization and transnational theorizing something we posit yet resist, in order to sustain this punishment? Perhaps. Might we consider the suffering of curriculum theory under the missing creolization that would strengthen its epistemological and cultural “health”? The blatantly weak logic behind such an application of pop evolutionary theory and epistemological eugenics hardly hides its crass imperialistic and colonial assumptions and impulses. Yet we should not ignore the potential interpretations that consistently critiquing educational theory and practice as mechanisms of social reproduction or of abuse wielded upon learners in service of corporate profits enables an external gain of claiming

entitlement to avoid direct involvement in social policy or educational innovation. Similarly, classic interpretations of internal secondary gain might posit a narcissistic investment. To paraphrase a typical example from the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* (van Egmond 2003), while we see our compulsive behavior as misplaced and crippling, it also provides us with the satisfaction of being superior, more intellectually engaged, more reflective, more aware of relevant insights, and so on; van Egmond said of a man with obsessive handwashing behavior: “He saw most of his fellow men not only making much more trash than he did but as being trash.”

### **Beyond *orientalism***

Our theme for this year raises further interpretations. The first, following Edward Said, suggests that a sustained gap between Western and “other” epistemologies and practices perpetuates an *orientalism* of the other that holds off the completion of a fantasy of merging with erotic, oriental, theories and practices. This interpretation emphasizes the ways in which the desire for the other, constructed as an erotic desire, is more powerful than any actual fulfillment of the fantasy would be; the secondary gain of sustaining the desire, and the pleasures of such desire, overcome the fantasy itself. It is only good to truly want to undermine the Western dominance of the field, and only feels good, ironically, when we desire it; to fulfill the desire would mean the end of the fantasy and thus the end of the dream. Ending the dream would lead to an end of searches for ways to learn about alternative, culture-shocking curriculum theorizing that we seem to need to know about. A doubled concern is that fulfilling the dream would in fact devalue the dream itself, if the fantasy is less satisfying than the desiring. Another interpretation for the perseveration on, and lack of, transnational work is that we do not value the work outside of our canon, or that we fear it for some reason. Here, too, we have resistance based on the primacy of desire: if we were to truly transform our work in interaction with alternative epistemologies, the fear or devaluing would no longer be in the realm of fantasy, and the closure would void the secondary gain of such resistance, whether this resistance comes from positive erotic attraction or negative erotic avoidance.

We ask in our theme for this year,

If to interpret society is to change it, how can we produce any change with blemished theoretical tools? Can we head on a global theory? What do we really want? Do we want to change the field? Do we want to change curriculum theory? Do we want to change society? Do we want to challenge the Western modern discrepancy between social experience and social expectations? What are we doing now? ... How can we engage in a theory that is aware of different historical patterns within the West and beyond the West and between West and non-West platforms? How can we produce a theory that doesn't seek a predominant pattern? In what ways does the lack of such a theory make the pleasure of wanting such a theory even more pleasurable than any seemingly perfect theory could be?

I have been thinking about these questions in the context of our recent task forces that have been so active in the past several years: our Task Force on Curriculum Work in Practice & Policy, and our Task Force on the Internationalization of Curriculum Studies. Each has set off on serious and

demanding actions that promise meaningful impact on our field and on each of our individual understandings of our field, including scholarly “products” such as articles in our journal within new sections devoted to engaging with international literature, edited by João Paraskeva, and to North American literature, edited by Patrick Roberts, and thoughtfully edited by our new managing editor, Susan Jean Mayer. As Jim Jupp (2012) articulates in his article in the Spring 2013 issue of our journal, these new efforts should not reflect some sort of new wave in curriculum studies, or additional fodder for the reconceptualization of curriculum, but instead the emerging, collective sense that curriculum reconceptualization has always been a practice of participation in, interrogation of, and promotion through, cosmopolitan sensibilities. Jupp concludes his essay by directing us to Maxine Greene’s (1988) notion of living in and with long-standing traditions that require constant remaking, historical and contemporary study, careful political tactics and strategies, and intellectual efforts to always treat traditions as incomplete. In particular, Jupp notes that Greene called for curriculum as engagement in multiple traditions. Thus we can see in our own self-interrogation the desire to find this interaction with multiple traditions never adequate; reflexive critique further questions our conscious and unconscious motives both for refusing to engage with curriculum scholarship of traditions beyond North America, and for pursuing these traditions as poachers or miners, taking these resources for our own colonialist projects – the latter most positively termed *transplantamiento* by Jupp, following the Mexican novelist and playwright Jorge Ibarguengoitia: international transplantation of established critical and postcolonial traditions interpreted and re-deployed in order to obtain different ends than intended in the original context. In less positive terms, such academic work, irresponsibly labeled “scholarship” has represented an attempt at career-building via retelling a lesser-known theorist for an audience in education – transplantation for the sake of transplantation, or more clearly, raping another context for its intellectual resources, and dropped as impure theoretical ore on new soil. This non-scholarly work sometimes leads to curiously meaningful creolization and self-critique in its new context, sometimes not; the key is how the audience for such work, *transplantamiento* with cosmopolitan sensibilities or plundering for raw intellectual ore, takes it up: in self-critical cosmopolitan ways, or as malingerers, never finding its way to interaction with the issues these theories explore, conceptions of culture, curriculum and scholarship these “other” theorists pursue, and so on. Robes of multiculturalism, social justice curriculum, critical pedagogy, and internationalization have spawned an extended period of masquerading malingerers, never taking action and transmuting theoretical practice in light of a multiplicity of perspectives and traditions yet to explore. How many more years before we truly immerse our work in a creolized, trans-national, inter-culture?

### **What are we waiting for, fellow malingerers?**

Yet, as a psychiatrist Colin Anglicker notes in a recent radio episode of *This American Life* (WBEZ 2013), whenever he hears somebody is very much of a “malingerer” he thinks, “Uh, uh. He ain’t malingering; there’s something else going on.” As I once wrote, our professional paralysis might be a representation of the inability to continue self-deception. No longer able to accept ourselves as hero or patriot, and no longer able to communicate our awareness that the world is an irrational place, no longer able to accept the authority of the State, indeed any authority, because such acceptance

is a form of self-deception, we share a lot with the “simulators” of World War I, who have over time become a model for paralysis as the “rational” response, as a plausible refusal to continue the process of self-deception (Appelbaum 2002; Rosenfield 2000: 100). If we believe our repetitive compulsion with our lack of integration with traditions and epistemologies “from elsewhere” is an “illness,” then we might call these repetitions, as Marla Morris (2008) writes, the over and over again episodes of lived experience, as the very stuff of the death drive; repetition compulsion, she notes, is both what makes us crazy and exactly that to which we must turn. She *intentionally* repeats, revisits, re-emphasizes, reconsiders, creating the heartbeat of life and curriculum (p.196). We are led to John Dewey’s time-worn admonition that beliefs are those things upon which we are prepared to act – not what we claim, and not those “slogans” Maxine Greene once dubbed systematic, popular ways of talking taken wistfully or desperately as generalizations or statements of fact, or those characterized by Israel Scheffler as “phrases repeated warmly or reassuringly rather than pondered gravely” (Greene 1973, p. 10; Scheffler 1960, p.41). Indeed, we might say our current discussion of internationalizing curriculum studies smacks of all the good intentions, internal conflicts, inconsistencies, and unintended consequences of that earlier feel-good movement, now branded misguided neo-liberalism, “multiculturalism.” Reification of “other” traditions in which people bask, slum, mine for gold, dabble for self-critique, and so on, comes dangerously close to intellectual tourism, with postcards from our travels posted in conference sessions and journal articles, and souvenirs displayed with bravado. And cosmopolitanism, in this sense, slides dangerously close to what Sharon Todd calls a “new-wave response to a humanity that it unsettlingly *imperfect* and which needs to be ‘rescued from the bed of destruction’ that constitutes what it means to be human, ‘all too human’ (Todd 2009, p.1)

### **Curriculum as cultural translation**

In such a context, we may seek alternatives to such postcards and souvenirs, employing parallel, nomadic discourses that co-exist with the conundrums and paradoxes of the neoliberal, yet offer simultaneous alternatives – existing both in and out of the traditions we have inherited, yet not born of or duplicitous in these traditions. For example, interweaving homi bhabha’s idea of the transnational as *translational* and Judith Butler’s concerns with *recognition*, Seungho Moon (2012) notes that cultural translation unfolds at the sociocultural limits of universal concepts, creating openness, fluidity, and inclusion that previously were excluded from the dominant discourses. Because translators accept the uncertainty and ambiguity of language, and the potential multiple meanings of specific language events in multiple spheres and contexts, cultural translation is an analogous process that radically rearticulates the meanings of universality itself. Curriculum as cultural translation, suggests Moon, becomes *political* engagement by creating new vocabulary, dismantling dominant discourses and their hegemonic exclusion of certain people from proper recognition.

Curriculum as cultural translation is one possible characterization of Alan Block’s (2004) work on “Joseph Schwab and the Rabbis,” incorporating Talmudic discourses as curriculum scholarship while also challenging Schwab’s own conscious or unconscious attempts at translation, corrupted

by Greco-Christian traditions. This work also had the powerfully playful effect of co-translating curriculum as “complicated conversation,” now reframed in the context of Talmudic and Schwabian deliberation, with their focus on conversation as a translation of theory into practice, and of polyfocal translation across and among perspectives and positionalities as the resolution of ethical dilemmas, the anticipation of alternatives, and, curiously, intentional “misreading” as an effort to become oneself. This Talmudic curriculum practice shares with Hannah Arendt (1977) and Sharon Todd (2009) what Hannah Spector has described as “thinking and judging the particular case” (Spector 2011, p. 6). That is, “[p]articular questions must receive particular answers...there are no general standards to determine our judgments unfailingly.” William Pinar similarly wrote, “the agony and ecstasy of the particular attunes us to the actuality of alterity” (Pinar 2009, p. 35). Susan Mayer (2012) writes of “collaborative knowledge construction processes.”

### **A geography of cosmopolitanism**

Gert Biesta (2006), too, intones the wisdom of Hannah Arendt, and her shift from a Kant-like notion of imagination as establishing a critical distance – making universal standpoints comprehensible as ‘reality’ – toward imagination embraced for bridging the abysses to others, and for putting things in their proper distance. Biesta writes of constructing stories of an event from each of the plurality of perspectives that might have an interest in telling it, and imagining how I would respond as a character in a story very different from my own. Visiting is *not parochialism* (staying at home and pretending to visit), *not tourism* (making sure you have all the comforts of home while you travel), and *not empathy* (forcibly making yourself at home in a place that is not your home by appropriating its customs). Those things erase pluralism, and we don’t want to do that. Visiting is therefore *not* to see through the eyes of someone else, but to see *with your own eyes* from a position that is *not* your own - or to be more precise, in a story very different from one’s own (ibid, p. 91).

I am curious about this geography of cosmopolitanism and translation that has crept into recent curriculum studies discourse. We have distances and abysses and standpoints that can be located on maps of traditions and topoi of hegemonic scholarly practices. This incipient Cartesian attempt to force a geometry onto our work might promise some reassurance, like other slogans warmly repeated; it might also carry with it any of the dangers of Cartesianism we have come to understand. Transnationalism, internationalization, and so on, evoke borders and boundaries to cross and blur and erase and re-impose, and so carry with them the double-binds of maps and cartography. In particular, I have been noticing the ways in which these discourses presume the concept of scale.

For example, Gaventa and Mayo (2009) write about citizenship being multidimensional because governance is multi-scaled. Citizenship identities of those involved in a global campaign were transformed by the additivity of global citizenship rather than replacing local and national affiliations and identities. The logical implication of their work, using this discourse, becomes a challenge to continue to build and sustain inclusive and democratic coalitions which *span multiple sites and spaces of citizenship*. The research program asks questions across local/national/regional scales related to the dynamics of mobilization; the politics of intermediation around representation,

legitimacy and accountability; the politics of knowledge around framing issues; and the dynamics and process of inclusion and exclusion to examine who gains and who loses. The claims that the emergence of transnational forms of action marks a scale shift in contentious politics, and that new political opportunities offered by the changing global landscape, imply the need for transnational activists to shift the scale of contention.

Robertson (2012) argues for the global as a meta-narrative that needs to be picked apart in various particular ways, including as a condition of the world, as a discourse invoked in a particular imaginary, as a project with purposes and set in motion by framing with the global or extending into the global, as scale that registers the ways in which platforms for action are constructed, as reach of actors to evoke the horizon of institutions and individuals and to bring notions of power into play, and as habitus of subjects who are “cosmopolitan” or “global citizens” or consumers, and so on. Robertson suggests that the global is often invoked as the reason for policy, but more importantly that policies have been advanced by actors at new scales, such as the global, the regional, or local, in order to develop very different education sectors, teachers, learners, and so on. She suggests viewing scale as mutable rather than fixed; specific scales are produced and reproduced by socio-economic processes and political struggle, with education policies selectively and strategically advanced to do precise things. At various scales, we also find, suggests Robertson, borderings and the diffusion of borders. For example, she cites a paper by Balibar (p.13), in which Europe as borderland describes Europe far from being at the outer limit of territories; instead, the borders are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movements of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled – for example, in cosmopolitan cities.

### **Scale: border pedagogies, metaphoric size, and location**

In writing about cosmopolitanism and global risk turned disaster, Hannah Spector writes, “While I have argued that cosmopolitanism ought to also be understood as globally significant phenomenon, a cosmopolitan education centralizes ethical responsibility to our close and not-so-distant world neighbors and to our home, planet Earth.” In my own work, I have tried two different approaches to scale. The first, inspired by those border pedagogies that characterize borders as liminal, permeable, and ambiguous autonomous regions, prompts perspectives based on gradients. Here the relative scale does not clarify a border as locatable and disruptive, but instead recreates at every level of magnification the same recursive creolization of culture. The second approach to a cartography of intercultural experience focuses more on relative and metaphoric size and location, concepts that bring me back to my recent work with puppets and statues. In the semiotic context of puppets and statues, scale is mutable and metaphoric, and strongly related to the ideas of exaggeration – whether big or small. We have the grandiose and the miniature, the imperceptibly moving slow puppet and the time-lapse speed up of the slow puppet actually going fast. Time and space are stretchable in the reality of the puppet show and statue, independent of their meaning. Those of you familiar with my interest in puppets know that they are intimately linked with the idea of *bildung* through the work most prominently of Goethe, whose Wilhelm Meister plays with puppets as a child, tours as a managing director of a theater group as a young adult, and finally comes to understand that he has

been a living character in a puppet show run by a secret society as he is about to enter adulthood. In Goethe's novel, we are introduced to the ways that the most radical forms of pedagogy, with individuals pursuing their own adventures, is paradoxically the most conservative, leading youth to accept their proper place in society. This is for me the fundamental summary of the Bildungsroman literary genre and the ur-text, so-to-speak, of Bildung and curriculum theorizing. Puppets serve as a metaphor in a variety of ways in this story. One key feature is the way they model knowledge: any artifact can serve to represent anything else, and the switch from one representation to another is what we might take as the demonstration of knowledge (Appelbaum 2008, 2012).

But that notion of the puppet show also speaks to the role of imagination in curriculum: it makes it clear how fantasy and imagination are at once critical to pedagogical practices that focus on epistemological concerns, and to the experiences of imagining new worlds in adolescence that are central to conservative, social reproduction. As we ponder the transcendental power of giant, larger-than-life puppets floating above crowds in a parade, or the nuanced aesthetic beauty of a miniature puppet dancer unequaled by any human, we are bumping up against the ways that scale and distance are linked to perception and the ideological. When a puppet show exaggeratedly slows down the intricate magic of a character's stupendous feats, and we understand this as "happening" ironically in faster-than-possible speed, scale is uncoupled from measurement and units. When an enormous triple extra-large pair of jeans is used to represent a microscopic hole in the floor of an ant's apartment, or a tiny train engine is suddenly understood as humungous when approached by an even tinier leopard made out of a potato, it is easy to grasp why humans have a conception of things existing and happening outside of time and space, and further possible to conceptualize the tensions between epistemology and Gnosticism, empiricism and the transcendental, that are at the heart of contemporary Western philosophical stagnation (c.f., Nelson, 2001). Yet, as Susan Stewart (1993) writes, miniaturization carries with it a semiotic power to signify attention to the whole, whereas the gigantic semiotically calls attention to parts. Consider the miniature book, whose size does not change the meaning of its contents, but whose tininess makes us think of the book as a whole, compared with a 75-foot parade dragon, whose wings, we can see, are made out of recycled coke bottles, and whose eyes are turned by long, thin sticks from underneath its tummy. That small book strangely pulls us away from the details of its story toward the exquisite crafting of its cover, while the giant dragon reminds us of clever materials rather than calling forth theories of dragon communities and dragon history. Stewart references an 18th Century carnival of "freaks" – the tragedy of the public miniature, a dwarf prince as a mirror of the princes of Christendom, yet made diminutive, and conquered, as the cultural other, side-by-side with his wife, monstrously "big with child", and his horse, miraculously diverting with tricks upon command, the latter two seemingly toys come-to-life, yet kept in a box, a coffin's promise of eternity (pp. 108-109); the giants, ironically, bafflingly playing the role of victims, terrorized by locals in tales and legends. Giants are also associated with landscape. Many natural formations are interpreted as the ossification of giants – the large boulders scattered around the countryside are the huge rocks hurled by giants at one another; the lakes, streams, mountains and islands made from the tears of giants, or the result of giants' bumbling escapades, leaving the lake as their footprint, roaring in the forest, shaking pebbles from their shoes. Just as the miniature presents us with an analogous mode of thought with worlds inside worlds inside worlds of ever-smaller miniaturizations, so the gigantic presents the



analogous worlds outside of worlds outside of worlds. Both involve the selection of elements that are transformable and displayable in an exaggerated relation to the social construction of reality. However, while the miniature represents a mental world of proportion, control, and balance, the gigantic presents a physical world of disorder and disproportion (Stewart, p. 74). Thus, so-called local theories of learning and teaching, or so-called culturally-specific epistemologies and social practices of education, by their very nature, carry with them the semiotic power of recursive complexity, and an associated opportunity for an “outsider” standpoint, viewing at a distance and enclosing the observable in a fantastic eruption of as-yet-unrealized surfaces. At the same time, this distance is potentially a tragic distance, as we come dangerously close to destroying the miniature -- giants ourselves -- and are condemned to experience simultaneous and unconnected dramas, like when we peer into a dollhouse and can only see one room at a time. The confrontation results likewise in forms of profound aloneness, as when Socrates is suspended in a basket above The Clouds, or like King Kong with his shadow falling over a sleeping New York City. We become Frankensteins, waiting outside the peasant hut. Those attempts to explore curriculum on a scale of nation, region, or ecological niche, on the other hand, semiotically flip the relationship: we are enveloped by the enormous landscape, enclosed in its shadows, moving through the gigantic as the miniature moves through us – we feel contained, constrained, limited in our ability to understand. The gigantic calls to mind Anish Kapoor’s sculpture, *Memory*, exhibited at the Guggenheim in 2009 (Guggenheim 2009). It could only be experienced in disconnected parts, working in tight restrictions of the space, and demanding of the visitor that he or she attempt to pull together dividable locations, each occupied in a different way. The sculpture also changes over time, so that compression in space is juxtaposed with compression and inaccessibility, fragmented, frustratingly preventing miniaturization in any form.

## **Scale of curriculum projects**

### **1. Avoiding the exaggeration of the miniature**

Individual autoethnographies and documentaries on specific innovations in education are like the rooms in a dollhouse, like teeny puppet wizards constructed of cork and knitting needles. The researchers are overwhelmed by the details, the complexity of it all. The thick descriptions use anecdotes synecdochly, as pieces, puppets themselves, that stand for the whole. When the audience for such work confronts interpretation and extensive details from “outside” – as giants looking in, they are forced to accept simplification and generalizations, under the presumption that a closer look would reveal more. Exaggeration in this way of thinking is not merely about changing scale: the changes in scale and quantity are significant only in relation to a corresponding change in quality and complexity. The effect is estrangement, as the details are turned into overarticulation. These experiences, Stewart explains, are connected as much to cultural tradition and metaphoric distance as they are to the complexity and details of the work.

The more complicated the object, the more intricate, and the more these complications and intricacies are attended to, the “larger” the object is in significance. ... Complexity is a matter of context and history as much as it is a matter of number of elements, for the assignation of

elements is a cultural process: the description determines the form of the object. The more synecdochic the description, the closer we are to a cultural hierarchy of description. When description moves away from synecdoche toward the “spelled out” and overarticulated, the effect is an exaggeration of the object through estrangement. (1993, p.89)

Meanwhile, large-scale studies, efforts to craft policy from products of accountability such as international tests and surveys, and well-meaning but misguided neo-liberal transnational curriculum as cultural translation, sever the synecdoche from its referent. That is, the obligatory limitations on any individual effort are, by the very circumstances of the effort itself, partial, pieces of the whole, a recycled bottle on a giant dragon’s wing, or only one of three rooms through which one can interact with Anish Kapoor’s sculpture, Memory. When we talk of internationalizing curriculum studies, or try to make that project more palatable by naming it *transplantamiento* or seriously pursuing cultural translation, we are, no matter how we look at it, placing ourselves in a gigantic landscape, miniaturizing our work as a small little part, and therefore pretty much disempowering ourselves, leaving few options for how to cope. Again, from Stewart:

What often happens in the depiction of the gigantic is a severing of the synecdoche from its referent, or whole. ... The partial vision of the observer prohibits closure of the object. Our impulse is to create an environment for the miniature, but such an environment is impossible for the gigantic: instead the gigantic becomes our environment, swallowing us as nature or history swallows us. In the representation of the gigantic within public space it is therefore important that the gigantic be situated above and over, that the transcendent position be denied the viewer.

I think this is where we are located at this moment in curriculum studies. We are in awe of the gigantic. Where, then, might we go?

## **2. Avoiding ossified, giant statues of curriculum**

Well, traditionally, according to cultural theorists, people have responded to the awe of the gigantic via Gnostic rather than epistemological practices. They construct commemorative public sculptures, which I analogously think of as articles summarizing and applying giants in our field: Paulo Freire, Dwayne Heubner, Maxine Greene, Lao Tsu, Herbert Kliebard, Lawrence Cremin, Jane Addams. Korean Tasan Chong Yag-yong (Moon 2013), Indonesian Ki Hajar Dewantara (Aletheiani 2012), Chinese Tao Xingzhi and Mexican Raul Ferrer (Price 2012), Jamaican Marcus Garvey (Baldwin 2012). However, the reduction of the individual in the face of the public monument is all the more evident in the function of the inscription: one is expected to read the instructions in order to perceive the work – to acknowledge the fallen, the victorious, the heroic, and to be taken up by the history of place. Stewart writes that all public monuments of this type are monuments to death and the individual’s prostrations before history and authority. We might be tempted, thanks to the 19th and 20th century obsession with science, technology, and the occupation of the sky, to metaphorically climb the top of the Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty, or one of Tokyo’s many skyscrapers (Wikipedia undated), or, like the statue of William Penn at the top of Philadelphia’s City Hall, take in an abstract transcendence above and beyond. In such a fantasy, the view is beyond

the viewer. There emerges the possibility of unveiling the giant, finding the machinery hidden in the god, and approaching a transcendent view of the city ourselves. We must watch out, once again: is our collection of souvenirs from around the world a miniaturization of these giants? Are we placing them on display in our corporate office, high up in the towering office building? Stewart notes that the president of the corporation typically has a suite on the top floor of the skyscraper, while the public viewing platform is one floor below.

### **How do we travel in the geography of curriculum?**

João Paraskeva (2011) writes of an itinerant posture of deterritorialized thinking. I propose that this posture can benefit from a consideration of scale and distance, of exaggeration, miniaturization and the gigantic. The gigantic art of a public space—my phrase for what Paraskeva might call a democratization of knowledges, bringing together and staging dialogues and alliances—is an art of culture, rather than an art of the natural landscape. We must not recreate an epistemological repetition of our addiction to scale and distance by collecting souvenirs from our travels around the world – i.e., monumental sculptures; but instead, we should seek to enact puppet shows that shift scale and exaggeration in multiple ways in multiple places and in multiple forms. That is, we should not create synoptic summaries of non-western scholarship, written for Angloamerican audiences in the context of Angloamerican scholarship; we should instead shift and slide and live within and without of multiple cultural perspectives, with multiple audiences, in multiple discourses, at the level of micro-studies of a non-Western tradition at once with the macro-deployment of non-Western traditions outside of Western epistemologies, yet also carrying out *tranplantamiento*. The puppet show of curriculum scholarship in this sense can be insightful: **The miniature is a metaphor for interiority; it promotes intimacy and domesticity. The gigantic is an exaggeration of the exterior, the imposing and intimidating.** In a puppet show, the gigantic might be tiny, and the small might be huge. The privatized and domesticated world of the small, local, and immediate fosters a subject whose transcendence over personal property substitutes for a strongly chronological, and in that sense radically piecemeal, experience of the everyday. Localized life history studies and autoethnography, interrogations of specific terms and concepts, and small-scale observational ethnographies of schools and communities are thus privatized and immediate, fostering transcendence over personal property, establishing experience of the everyday against chronological policy-grounded and intimidating declarations. Broad transnational and comparative work, transnational collaborations, and meta-analyses of curriculum scholarship would then be understood as exaggerating the exteriority of curriculum, of avoiding the intimate and domestic in favor of powerful arguments and patterns. This all becomes manifest in fantasies of animation, as in the creation of “real life” in schools when we “bring a curriculum to life,” the narcissism of domination, the uncanny mirroring of oneself, or in the terrors of the little doll, alive and monstrous, and no longer under one’s control. The giant, in opposition to the small, participates in fantasies of an authentic body rather than an authentic subject. Because the giant appears as a landscape against which life transpires, it seems superfluous, over-signified, simultaneously destructive and creative, and exaggeration that may mislead. It’s crass to juxtapose the miniature

as the personal and the giant as the collective. To avoid this, we turn to puppets as our model for curriculum work, collective in their personalization and personal in their collectivism. Science fiction and horror narratives have suggested this for some time: they often function as allegories by pushing human behavior to extremes. Puppets and statues, giants and miniatures, when taken as curriculum, should be celebrated in the same ways. Make your work puppet shows of curriculum, where any thing—concept, example, story, person, process, confusion, question, deception—might be a representation of any other thing, and where scale is a matter of imagination, interpretation, interaction and audience.

I mean this literally, with no exaggeration intended.

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