

Making curriculum strange

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This issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* presents very differently-similar approaches to deconstructing curriculum – different contexts and contents that are strangers to each other, yet similar theory and philosophy that are always-already familiar. Each article affirms the journal's generative desires for revealing diverse ways of 'making the strange familiar' (see Molly Quinn's article, p. 80). Charles Rosen (1995) quotes the German poet Novalis (1772-1801, aka Friedrich von Hardenberg) as defining Romantic art with the more complete phrase, 'making the familiar strange, and the strange familiar' (p. 174). The concept is found among other Romantic theorists such as Wordsworth and Coleridge and is also closely associated with Surrealism. Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky (1917/1965) introduced the concept of defamiliarization (or in Russian, *ostraneniye*, literally 'making strange') to literary theory. According to Shklovsky, over time our perceptions of familiar, everyday situations become stale, blunted, and 'automatized'. Shklovsky explains: 'After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it – hence we cannot say anything significant about it' (p. 13). In these times of serious challenges to private and public perceptions of cosmopolitan citizenship – highlighted by events such as WikiLeaks' 'Cablegate' – strangeness and familiarity are helpful notions to work with. The articles in this issue upset routinised perceptions of the ordinary by bringing complementary theoretical and philosophical perspectives to their personal discourse, which resonate with those that might loosely be called 'post-critical' (see, e.g., Michael Polanyi, 1958).

François Tochon and Celile Okten make a multilingual rhizome that traces beginning teachers enacting their knowing about curriculum. From Celile's observations in Istanbul, Turkey, a shoot sprouts to François in Wisconsin USA where Peircean semiotics turn and return analyses of concept maps to afford insights into the possibility of another 'ontological design'. Using a simple assemblage to organise their complex data, Tochon and Okten review three students' curriculum conceptualizing under rubrics such as: hunch, symptom, metaphor, clue, diagnosis, explanation, deductive reasoning, identification, prediction and model building. Without wishing to spoil the article for the reader we can say here that, in making the rhizome, generative interactional processes are uncovered. Furthermore these processes demonstrate the recursive, fractal-like patterns inhering in learning and teaching and learning and... and... and...

Molly Quinn's poetically inspired journey springs playfully from a punny title [s]*Ex and the City*, towards an assemblage of discourses on *inhospit-abilities*, cosmopolitanism and a *curriculum of refuge*. Beginning her rhizome, underground, with a 'medley of "Subway Soliloquies"' she introduces a reading of cosmopolitanism, drawing on Jacques Derrida, to challenge the concept of concepts about questions of understanding ourselves in regard to other. Quinn's title is a hat tip towards the popular TV and film series, not so much for its New York connection but more for its themes of 'community and connection amid a world of strangers... politics of identity...making...breaking...re-imagining relationships...the perpetual need for personal asylum and amnesty – in pursuit of ... (the American Dream)'. The rhizome surfaces onto the first of three plateaus – *City Sidewalks* to give us a sense of the



TO CITE THIS ARTICLE PLEASE INCLUDE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

Sellers, Warren and Gough, Noel, (2010). Making curriculum strange. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* 7 (1) <http://nitinat.library.ubc.ca/ojs/index.php/tci> <access date>

lay of cosmopolitanism's land and the unfulfilled prospects that *side-walks* might suggest for education. *City of Lights* illuminates the darkness that blinds us to the rhetoric obscuring the hidden curriculum's purposive agenda and proposing a *refuge*. *Hot Child in the City?* exposes the enormity of suffering being propagated by those in pursuit of global prosperity on all and everything that stands in their way. Inviting us to heed Ghandi's words: '*be the change we wish to see in the world* – i.e., world citi-zenship...responsiveness concerning the ex-iled' (original italics), Quinn resists concluding her journey. Instead, she calls for always re-commencing our stories for, in and from the streets and other spaces and paces of our experiences.

Responding to Quinn, Yusef Waghid both agrees with and challenges the premise of 'forgiveness as a corollary of a curriculum of refuge'. Bringing a 'post-apartheid' South African voice to the conversation, Waghid queries the plausibility of Quinn's notion of forgiveness as pardoning what is forgivable in light of 'unforgiveable' acts of torture, rape and genocide by Hutus against Tutsis. Turning the argument about, he asks us to consider whether non-violent speech acts are sufficient to offset the silence of violence or if another iterative counter-activity is a necessary refuge for opening curriculum and encountering otherness.

Writing these introductory comments in the midst of WikiLeaks' release of secret diplomatic communiqués, we found the contents of this issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* resonating with 'Cablegate' and the subsequent political and economic actions being pursued by politicians, bureaucrats and the interests they serve, not excluding WikiLeaks' own agenda (see, for example, Tochon and Okten's rubrics of conceptualizing and Quinn's ex-iled citi-zenship). However, it is revealing to observe the complexity of all these powerful interests, their interactions in the wake of 'private' communications becoming 'public', and the overall effects on global cosmopolitanism. At first glance, WikiLeaks just seems to expand and further muddy an already dense and opaque conglomeration of affairs, but on reflection it could well be an example of another iterative counter-activity that Waghid invites us to think about.

References

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