

An/other Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky: Greenwashing, Curriculum, and Ecojustice

NICHOLAS NG-A-FOOK

University of Ottawa

The global environmental crisis is in large part a direct consequence of the cultivation in Western industrialized societies of stories in which the earth (or 'nature') is conceived, and thus exploited, as an object of instrumental value. (Gough, 1991, p. 33)

Seeing oneself in all things is not a matter of the violent colonization of all things, as if to see oneself "in" all things is to have impregnated them, to have pissed on every tree, surveyed every acre. It is not a matter of enslaving all things and making them indebted to me. It is, rather, a matter of recognizing my indebtedness to *them*. (Jardine, 1992, p. 273)

This narrative moment begins at edges of a logging road just outside the township of Kapuskasing in northern Ontario. Here at this curricular place of narration, I am watching him dancing, wings expanded, pointing down, performing his ruffled aesthetics of ecstasy, totally interconnected with the watching others, flirtatiously taunting them, attuning them to the sensuous earthy drumbeats,

moving his feet soundlessly, rhythmically, to a bell ringing in the empty sky.

On the ground, already covered with a light snowfall from the night before, within the ditches of this dusty gravel road, at the liminal limits of its manufactured arteries, the smell of death, of its rotting leaves, its clear-cut trees, pesticides perfuming young spruce saplings, foreshadow a different narrative dance still yet to come. I watch this soundless curricular movement too, as a hunter of memories, with a narrative shotgun ready-at-hand. And yet he dances to the ecological drumbeat, in the silent presence of this shotgun, and the "soundlessness begets a sense of deadness" (Tuan, 1993, p. 70). At the empty centre of these manufactured arteries, is where Spruce Falls Incorporated, a pulp and paper mill, continues to piss the profitable effluents of its multinational colonial home on every tree and every acre. And this same mill, like many other mills, announces itself through this very paper not only for what it "is," but rather, as Jardine (1992) calls forth, it announces itself for what it is not.

...It announces sun and sky and earth and water and trees and loggers and the meals they eat and chainsaws and gasoline and pulp and the dioxin produced by the bleaching of this paper and the effluent and the poisoned fish near pulp mills, and the cancer and the pain and the death and the sorrow and the tears and the Earth and the trees growing up out of it. It announces all things without exception, just as a bell echoes everywhere, even where it is unheard. (p. 265)

This piece of paper then, on which you read from today, with all its uniqueness and irreplaceability, requires as Jardine (1992) reminds us, everything else in order to echo its existence. The most remarkable part of his poetic passage is not that this piece of paper announces all the things that it is not, but rather that this paper just *is*

(Evernden, 1999). As a curriculum theorist and a parent, I find that this specific narrative moment in Jardine's writing continues to resonate a deep affective chord within my sense of being for what it does and does not reveal about the earthliness of our ecological presence.

On those cold autumn mornings, often in late October, before the glaring sun announces its presence from the leafless shadows of the boreal forests, in the midst of the ongoing pain and death, my father healed and continues to heal the mill workers who visit his rural medical practice for their cancers. And it was within the unheard silence of these dark mornings, after a long night of my father being on call, that I would often whisper at the side of his bed "Dad, will we leave to go hunting soon?" "Just now," was often his prescribed cultural reply. "Just now," is a prevalent Guyanese expression in our family which means anywhere from five minutes from now, to an hour, to four, or in some cases three days, maybe more. Yet implicated in this temporal cultural reference to time, is that there is always just enough time available, for justice to come, just now.

Today though, how might we provoke an asking of narrative moments, of thinking, of doing, that takes time now to think about the things we do, could do just now, and/or put off doing just now? And in these reflexive moments of just now, which often for me echo in an empty curricular sky, how might we attune ourselves away from what Jardine (1992) evocatively calls the urban cluttered noise, in which many of us now live? It is out of this abundance of technical clangour, of enlightened civilized progress, below the ecological resonance of a bell ringing in an empty sky, where he suggests much of "our curriculum theorizing often arises as a hurried response to our shortened breath" (pp. 262-263). I do fear making time to sit down, to question my sense of breathlessness, to communicate my autobiographical narrative struggles with greenwashing, the commons of my daily curriculum lived away from the writing within this digital screen. But more than anything else, I fear what I may or

may not find within the potential emptiness of this kind of asking. Such awakened asking, of attuning oneself to this present consumptive exhaustion of our children's Earth, its breathlessness "veers," as Jardine (1992) suggests, "too close to home" (p. 263). Yet such asking, as Casemore (2008) makes clear, is the autobiographical demand of place to which we must account and to which we must become accountable. Such a demand calls forth, of being on call, and asking about the things to which we can do justice now.

To the north of the capital institution from where I now teach and write as a curriculum theorist, as a global citizen, and as a parent, flows the Kichi Sibi, where its tributaries bleed life into this earthy place, calling us forth and asking us to do ecological justice, right now. And here each week students and I gather within the concrete inter/disciplinary conglomerate we call the University of Ottawa, as curriculum workers teaching and learning on/within/through the colonizing abundance and emptiness of an industrious urbanized territory that has been inhabited by the Anishinabeg since time immemorial (McGregor, 2004). "Place holds the past," Casemore (2008) whispers on migratory wings from the South, "when we lose our sense of connection to what has gone before" (p. 23). As transnational nomadic curriculum textworkers then, how might we provoke such a calling forth on this traditional indigenous territory in relation to the narrative enclosures of its ecological presence? In turn, how might we open our provocations of alter/native narrative accounts in relation to concepts like greenwashing, curriculum, and ecojustice as a praxis of living earth democracy within the institutional and inter/disciplinary places we curriculum theorists call teacher education?

Greenwashing the Ontario Curriculum as a Narrative of Colonial Enclosures

The colonialist opposition between a self who is governed by an unruly nomadic impulse, and one who has domesticated this impulse by becoming an agriculturalist (settler), is a structural imperative of Western teleological narratives of identity formation: the movement of nomadic desire must come under control through the commodification of that desire in a colonialist apparatus. (Marzec, 2007, p. 4)

Education is suffering from narration sickness. (Freire, 1970/1990, p. 71)

In March of 2007, away from the earthy drumbeats of a rough grouse dancing, the Ontario Ministry of Education responded to a calling forth of our environmental responsibilities to the places we now inhabit through its establishment of the Curriculum Council and its first report. This committed collective of community members and educational experts were asked to report on the various ways environmental sustainability could be narrated across the school curriculum. The report provides important and relevant strategies for administrators, teachers, students and community-based environmental partners to teach the next generation of Canadian citizens how we might continue to recapitulate our industrialized educational system (its manufactured curricular arteries) toward creating a more sustainable environmental future (Dewey, 1977; Kleibard, 1977). However, the current reconceptualization of the Ontario curriculum as becoming more inclusively green - a greener way of shaping our schools, shaping our futures - also fails in many ways to address such intergenerational calling forth across the territories we now inhabit.

Instead, *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping our Future* pays homage to our future actions by evoking the thrilling names and concepts scattered over the history of educational scientism and technology

while forgetting the very experiences that take place beneath our feet (Jardine, 1992; Gough, 2006). This is what Young (2009) calls, the historical and present mechanist and commodified approaches that colonize our daily curricular actions. Although somewhat greener (or is it?), the document in many ways continues to narrate the classical narratives of technological progress with which we “enlighten” ourselves today. This current narrative em-plot-ment of technological progress fails in many ways to offer solutions to the ongoing consumptive problem of many Canadians, a problem that is ever more present due to our expanding global population and its respective stockpiling of economic enclosures.

In 1968, Hardin defined a technological solution as an educational narrative that advocates for change “only in the techniques of the natural sciences, demanding little or nothing in the way of change in human values or ideas of morality” (p. 101). Furthermore, as Young (2009) warns us, the *Curriculum Council Report* also fails to provide narrative accounts that question how our curriculum policy documents remain steeped in the technical root metaphors of overall and specific expectations, which reinscribe anthropocentric and individualistic pedagogical approaches for environmental education within our future curricular designs. Therefore for her, this document continues to create many curricular and pedagogical enclosures as it calls forth communities of administrators, educators, teachers, and students to take up its environmental discontents within the multiple literacies of our daily classroom practices. At the same time, this report pushes teachers, communities, and students to take action, just now, so that we may sustain our narrative and material existence as a species within the near future. Yet standing here within the stillness of such manufactured political arteries, as a public educator watching this ecological dance, I still hear an/other bell ringing in the empty sky.

At the precipice of these manufactured edges, we can hear Gough (1999) reminding us, that this narrative construction often “privileges

scientific analyses [narrative inquiries] and explanations of natural phenomena and environmental ‘problems’ with little or no acknowledgment of debates about the limits to scientific methods of conceptualizing and/or resolving environmental issues” (p. 37). Here “environmental education rests,” the report narrates, “on a foundation of knowledge from both science and social studies/geography” (p. 5). Furthermore it advocates for the integration of such inter/disciplinary knowledge across the school curriculum. Such integration is an important beginning toward greening the curriculum within our schools. However, we need to continue to critically question the epistemological, political, and material “enclosures” that each of these disciplinary foundations put forth in relation to how we might imagine curricular narrations of environmental sustainability within our narrative manufacturing of a futuristic “green” economy and its respective ecocritical literacies. Gough (2008) tells us that most references to environmental literacy within the existing literature of environmental education offer a “weak” conceptualization of “literacy” itself. Such references, like those put forth in the *Curriculum Council Report* for example, “ignore many contemporary debates about language and literature, such as the limits of representation, referentiality, and textuality” (Gough, 2008, p. 75). Instead, Gough asks us to consider a conception of literacy that takes into account a more nuanced understanding of environmental education as a intertextual practice situated within the inter/disciplinary terrains of the arts and humanities which in turn move beyond the current conceptual narrative enclosures of the places we now inhabit.

In *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature*, Marzec maintains, “two historical developments parallel the coming to presence of the English novel: the rise of the British Empire, and the land-reformation phenomenon known as the Enclosure Movement” (p. 1). Marzec (2007) draws our attention to *Robinson Crusoe* as an exemplary example of this colonial narrative em-plot-ment. When

Robinson Crusoe first sees the island he codes the land, Marzec tells us, as more frightful than the sea. Consequently, Crusoe spends his first night not inhabiting the land but instead metaphysically above it in a tree. Marzec suggests that the uncultivated land provides “an example of the Lacanian Real,” where the land itself remains “a non-symbolizable, meaningless presence that bewilders Crusoe’s sensibility, and by extension the socio-symbolic order of the British Empire that he carries on his back” (p. 2). Crusoe gradually eases his fears, Marzec then explains, by spending the following decades setting up a series of enclosures that slowly cover the landscape.

Crusoe introduces an ideological apparatus, Marzec maintains, to overcode the earth. In this fashion, Marzec concludes,

...he can “quiet” his mind, relieve his anxiety, and resist the nightmare of actually “being there” on the island: the terror of inhabiting an other space *as* other. This “being in the tree,” a resistance to “being there” until the land is enclosed and transformed is the structure of what I call the “Crusoe syndrome.” (p. 3)

How does transplanting and cultivating certain disciplinary knowledges across other curricular territories, their uncommon countenances, also work to create a form of Crusoe Syndrome? Might the Ontario educational apparatus suffer from a certain amount of socio-symbolic narration sickness? We can read the *Curriculum Council Report* in relation to the Ontario public schooling system as both the tree and the land. On the one hand the report provides a symbolic place for the government to defer its civic responsibilities of “being here,” on the land where the current corporate and individual consumptive nightmares are taking place. On the other, the report provides the government an ideological apparatus to “be there,” in our schools, cultivating, transforming, and enclosing our future cultural inhabitations of the land.

The next generation, our provincial government reassures the public,

...will receive the best possible education in the world, measured by high levels of achievement and engagement for all students. Successful learning outcomes will give all students the skills, knowledge and opportunities to attain their potential, to pursue lifelong learning, and to contribute to a prosperous, cohesive society. (p. 1)

This governmental 'regime of truth,' its ideological reproduction, is applied toward disciplining environmental education within our schools, under the standardized political and multinational guise of assessment and accountability (Foucault, 1980, 1994/1997). Here politicians continue to put forth a politics of truth advocating for educational narratives that concentrate on observing 'objective' behavioural change to measure high levels of achievement (Foucault, 1997/2007; Gough 1999). Meanwhile, a student's "subjective" presence within their daily earthy activities (within their narrative accounts) is deliberately ignored. Is this, another promise to take the narrative lead out of our curricular gas? In an Orwellian sense, we continue to re/count how well the cows and pigs are growing within our educational enclosures in order to generate future bio-power for the corporate industrial machine. Perhaps, here is where the way in which we call forth environmental education, within this report, is yet again an/other Pavlovian bell ringing in the empty sky.

Such narratives of "successful" learning outcomes and economic prosperity continue to advocate for, what Gough (1999) calls, unsustainable narratives of consumer fiction. Instrumental rationality and its respective narrative em-plot-ments are once again at play on Ontario's educational centre stage (Giroux, 1982, 1990). Nonetheless, Gough (1999) also reminds us that many scientists have since abandoned such consumptive narrative accounts of predetermined socially efficient profit-based economic outcomes. Instead, he asks us to question the historical sources of the political and cultural ideologies, which inform narrative productions of consumptive

complacency. Meanwhile our Canadian resource-based economies continue to rely on each global citizen's cohesive ability to prosperously produce, export and consume more trees and fisheries. In turn, our subjective narrations, as Greene (1999) stresses, are then recounted, accountable, through a single observable meta/narrative strand.

Our current storied vision of Ontario education sees schooling through the lenses of a governmental system taking on primarily, what Greene (1999) calls, a technical point of view; what the Ministry of Education research branch calls evidence-based learning. In turn, this narrative em-plot-ment advocates for political reform as "benevolent policy making, with the underlying conviction that changes in school can bring about progressive social change" (p. 11). However we stand she continues, "at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and in any case," the narratives we tell ourselves about our relationships with the environment are forever on the way (p. 1). Therefore, whose and what successful learning outcomes are we teaching (narrating to and with) in order to both reconstruct and contribute to the educational spaces of a prosperous and cohesive society forever on the way? And as teachers and students, what can we do in response to such questioning as a form of daily praxis within our classrooms? Like many others, our family often tries to devise technical ways, a daily environmental education curriculum if you will, and responsible local and global citizenship practices, in which we might decrease the evils of contributing to overpopulation, overhunting and harvesting of living things, both taking and giving to the commons without relinquishing any prosperous privileges we now enjoy from our stockpiling of economic enclosures. In turn, we struggle with taking an ecological account of our daily household economy.

Here in lies the paradox with an ecojustice curriculum advocating for, and lived as, a greener narrative of consumptive economic prosperity. As the faceless multinational corporate Once-ler in *The*

Lorax might say, it is about living the way we *thneed*. When we have the earth in mind, what we *thneed* are not necessarily more prosperous people, who consume more truffula trees, who work in bigger factories, which in turn help us to colonize and come closer to greener, and bigger, and bigger, and bigger settlers' dreams. But rather, as Orr (1994/2004) makes clear, we desperately need more narratives of "peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind" (p. 12). And yes, this alter/native narrative character is perhaps somewhat idealistic and even a little romantic. But what would romancing our relationships with the earth as a greener narrative em-plot-ment look like on our curricular centre stage? As teacher educators how might we then provoke environmentally responsible citizens of every kind, that in turn understand how shaping the stories taken up in our schools is interrelated with how we conceptualize the future shaping of the ecological territories that many of us now call home? Such a homecoming, Evernden (1999) reminds us, is obviously incompatible with the current attitudes of dominance and exploitation that are entailed within the prosperous consumer discourse of technology. For now, the *Curriculum Council Report* continues to attune our earthy mindfulness toward narrative accounts of environmental sustainability as a form of greenwashing, of a justice to come, just now.

We can trace the term greenwashing back to 1986 where Westerveld critiqued the "hotel industry's practice of placing green cards in each room, promoting reuse of guest-towels," in order to save the environment (see [Wikipedia](#), 2009). However, Westerveld (1986) observed "that in most cases, little or no effect toward waste recycling was being implemented by these institutions due in part to the lack of cost-cutting by such practices" ([Wikipedia](#), 2009). For example, now with the *Curriculum Council Report* in circulation, how much are schools doing in terms of waste reduction? The report acknowledges that due to "the absence of specialized teacher training and expertise, there is likely a gap between the environmental

education “intended” in Ontario’s curriculum and that which is taught and received in the classroom” (p. 2). Therefore, how does placing a green card within each of our curriculum designs work to reduce industrial consumer consumption taking place both inside and outside of schools? And should such civic responsibilities be placed squarely on the shoulders of teachers and students within the schools? These questions aside, Westerveld suggests that the objective of this type of corporate “green campaign” is about increasing profits and not necessarily diminishing our ecological impact. Consequently, he labelled such green campaigns and other outwardly corporate environmentally conscious acts with an underlying purpose of profit increases as greenwashing.

In a sense, we can reread the *Curriculum Council Report*, and its respective resource documents, as a yet another technocratic and corporate narrative of greenwashing, which seeks to place overall and specific green expectations in every classroom. Perhaps another narrative em-plot-ment of the *Crusoe Syndrome* is at play here. And being here in the classroom does not necessarily mean being there for our local inhabitations of the land. Do these green expectations help us profit toward shaping “successful” environmentally responsible citizens within a cohesive Ontario society? Is there such a cohesive thing? And, what might the inter/disciplinary narrative visions of such “successful” expectations look like? As teacher educators, how might we then shape the narrative expectations we tell ourselves here within the university, in order to afford future teacher candidates, students, and the public writ large, strategic pedagogical opportunities to challenge our complacency with being one of the largest provincial sources of pollution release in North America (Krajnc, 2000)? Moreover, how might we respond to both the possibilities and limitation-situations of this report? Is there a way in which we can pay such green expectations forward to a justice yet to come, just now, that remains unfaithfully faithful to the concept of environmentally responsible citizenship outlined in this report? In

response to such asking, let us turn our narrative accounts toward a concept of living an ecojustice curriculum on which we might act now, within the context of teacher education.

Living an Ecojustice Curriculum as Earth Democracy

Armchair activists might talk a good game when it comes to critiquing unjust government policies but shy away from community action that might actually effect change. (Westheimer, 2005, p. 31)

We share this planet, our home, with millions of species. Justice and sustainability both demand that we do not use more resources than we need. Restraint in resource use and living within nature's limits are preconditions for social justice. (Shiva, 2005, p. 50)

Today within the context of public education how might we provoke an asking of narrative moments, of thinking, of doing, that takes time now to act in response to the ecological things we do, could do just now, and/or put off doing just now? How might we reconceptualize teacher education toward becoming a pedagogical place where we can shake the rhizomatic curricular trees of the legislated discursive regime? Rhizomatic shaking, Gough (2006) explains, works toward destabilizing our current pedagogical articulations of Western science. In turn, he pushes us to question how such articulations work to shape our future narrative em-plot-ments of living an ecojustice curriculum as earth democracy. Such living involves dancing pedagogically to the earthy drumbeats of environmental education that travel beyond hierarchical and centralized epistemic enclosures; where we can in turn shake up the evidence-based discursive minis/tree regime. Here Gough (2006) suggests we can begin this inter/disciplinary curricular dance, by drawing upon the

arts, artefacts, disciplines, technologies, community-based projects, practices, theories, and alter/native social strategies that challenge monocultural understandings for teaching our current narrative assemblages of environmental education. This ecological dance entails moving beyond representations of environmental education rooted both epistemologically and culturally within the disciplinary regimes of science and social science. As educators, curriculum theorists, and students we might then attune ourselves to a bell ringing in the empty sky, as travelling textworkers, shaking the curricular discursive minis/trees as a strategic form of rhizosemiotic play (see Gough, 2007a, 2007b, 2008). Here curricular attuning in terms of environmental education entails, as Gough (p. 626) makes clear, not only playing within the academic landscapes of feminist, queer, multicultural, sociological, antiracist, post-colonialist cultural studies and/or science studies, but also psychoanalysis, indigenous studies, popular arts, and arts criticism. During our nomadic travels as textworkers, we can then begin to reread the Ontario curriculum as a form of ecocriticism that works in turn toward fostering environmentally responsible citizens of every kind.

In 2009, responding to a call to do justice now, the Ontario Ministry of Education published *Action Today, Shaping Tomorrow*. “As countries around the world face complex environmental and social issues,” authors of the document narrate, “there is a growing recognition that education has a key role to play” (p. 3). In turn, our government “has made a commitment that environmental education, as defined in *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*, will be part of every child’s learning and that responsible environmental practices will be fostered across the education system” (p. 3). Although our provincial and national governments pay lip service through such proposed educational policy frameworks, they seem reluctant to take the necessary actions today outside of schools in terms of shaping a more sustainable future for our children tomorrow.

Westheimer (2005) stresses, “Canadians’ knowledge about public issues, and perhaps more importantly, their ability to connect particular perspectives on these issues to political parties and candidates, is disturbingly low” (p. 26). In December 2009 for example, Canada won the colossal *Fossil of the Day* award during the United Nation climate change conference in Copenhagen. Meanwhile, United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon scrambled to the drumbeats of an ecological bell ringing in an empty sky, trying to defend this world body’s central role of taking action today and shaping tomorrow.

The political delegates attending the conference, made rhetorical commitments toward agreeing to agree to future actions that could potentially reduce our existing carbon footprints within our current multinational colonial enclosures of the commons. Instead of accounting to produce a “binding agreement,” politicians like Stephen Harper agreed to “take note” of the things they could do justice to, just now (Edwards, 2009). That same day, our provincial government also consulted with CIBC World Markets and Goldman Sachs about selling off our public commons—Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario—to reduce the stockpiling of our provincial debt (Benzie, 2009). These narrative enclosures, and the privatization of the stocks they produce, represent a hurried response to a sense of psychic loss of our provincial self-reliance during these times of manufactured recessions exploiting the commons. In response to our collective anxieties with this psychic loss, the Ministry of Education has since commissioned the Curriculum Council to draft another report focusing this time on the integration of financial literacy across the Ontario curriculum. Meanwhile on April 1 2010 the federal government quietly announced the cancellation of its ecorebate program for retrofitting our residential enclosures of the land—a mediated Fool’s Day indeed! So how might teachers and students negotiate their narrations of this sense of loss

as an ecojustice curriculum, lived in turn, as earth democracy? How might we integrate our consumptive accounting of the commons across the inter/ disciplinary territories of the provincial curriculum?

Here at our Faculty of Education, prospective teacher candidates are invited to enrol into our unique [*Developing A Global Perspective for Educators*](#) program of study. The primary/junior teacher-candidates who are accepted into this global cohort seek to understand, among other things, how they can imagine international development, social justice, peace, environmental sustainability, and various forms of responsible citizenship in relation to their rhizosemiotic rereadings of the existing Ontario curricula (Mclean, & Cook, & Crowe, 2006). These students are invited to participate in various community service learning projects that move beyond the “prorogation” of armchair activism espoused through the discourse of both federal and provincial politicians. Instead we engage an ecojustice curriculum that delves into the clangour of our urban abode. And together we discuss and develop curricular and pedagogical strategies for living an ecojustice curriculum as earth democracy. Earth Democracy, Shiva (2005) whispers, within the urban cluttered noise of a bell ringing in an empty sky, is our awareness that we are connected to all earthy things, much like the lifeblood of Kichi Sibi River that bleeds and unites us here in Ottawa unconditionally.

Paying it Forward: Teacher Education, Curriculum and Ecocritical Literacy

I use the term ‘ecocritical literacy’ hesitantly and cautiously. Education is now so awash with ‘literacies’ – ‘environmental literacy’, ‘scientific literacy’, ‘technological literacy’, ‘computer literacy’ and so on – that the term is in danger of becoming an empty signifier. (Gough, 2008, p. 74)

And I am frightened that I won't know what to say when he asks what I have actually *done* to live in the spirit of a loving and compassionate indebtedness to all things; what he will say if he discovers that it is some of *my* ignored debts that he must repay, perhaps with his life... (Jardine, 1998, p. 275)

In a course I teach called [*Schooling and Society*](#), our course of study and respective weekly complicated conversations focus on the ways in which the institution of public schooling and its explicit, hidden, and null curricula, work to politically and psychically affect teachers and our children's reconstructive and reproductive connections with *Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future* (Giroux, 1982; Pinar, 2004). We engage ecocriticism as a form rhizosemiotic play for rereading the provincial curriculum (Gough, 2006, 2008). Through our ecocritical rereadings of the curricular expectations, we ask ourselves how the corporate media machine and/or our government minis/trees work to "greenwash" and/or "whitewash" the various "standardized" balanced literacies we are asked to teach in schools. Consequently, as public intellectuals we study various curriculum theories that might in turn help us to deconstruct the various narrative em-plot-ments and respective cultural representations of our earthy environment mediated through the corporate neo-colonial media machine (see Giroux 1990, 1997, 2004; Hall, 1997; Haig-Brown, 2008). In turn, we ask ourselves how we might work toward becoming actively engaged ecocitizens through our curriculum theorizing and teaching.

For example we discuss both curricular and pedagogical strategies for taking up documentary films like *Refugees of the Blue Planet*, where teachers and students can deconstruct our current global and local consumptive relationships with the earth and its respective natural resources. The film examines the ecological impacts of rising sea levels on the Maldives, planting green deserts in Brazil, and drilling sour gas wells in Alberta. We attempt to

understand these texts' curricular complexities and how our pedagogical consumptions of toilet paper, oil, and natural gas work to displace indigenous communities both here and abroad. We challenge ourselves to act against our current consumptive practices, which in turn help to facilitate multinational corporations and their respective colonial curriculum to enclose and expropriate the biodiversity of traditional indigenous territories. We study, debate and experiment with rhizosemiotic curricular and pedagogical strategies for teaching future students how to empathize with the life narratives of 25 million environmental refugees. Now outnumbering political refugees, these fellow human beings camp outside, enduring the stormy nightmares caused by climate change and/or the continued corporate privatization and enclosures of the commons.

In the documentary, we witness how the multinational corporation Aracruz negotiates the political capital support from the Brazilian government to displace thousands of once self-sufficient farmers in the areas surrounding the town of Vitória. Here Francisco, a local indigenous farmer, shares narratives of how fertile farmlands have become sprawling colonial enclosures called "green deserts." A bell ringing in the empty sky now silences the voices of the animals, birds, and insects within the greenery of these monoculture forests. Furthermore the Eucalyptus trees consume thousands of liters of water each day, sucking up the earthiness that once sustained both the lives and livelihood of local indigenous farmers farming the land. Francisco and his family are faced with the uncertainty of when they, like the others before them, will be expropriated from their traditional land to join the growing numbers of environmental refugees across what is remaining of our blue planet. These deserted green enclosures, Shiva (2005) echoes, like a bell ringing in an empty sky, enclose "knowledge, culture, water, biodiversity, and public services such as health and education" (p. 3). Meanwhile, 95% of the cellulose produced from these Eucalyptus plantations is exported as toilet paper to Europe and North America. Here within this narrative

em-plot-ment we are Seuss' (1971) faceless Once-ler consuming truffula trees. We are the prescribed cultural reply displacing the hum of the Humming-Fish, the frisking of Brown Bar-ba-loots, and the songs of Swomee-Swans ringing out in space for the things we *thneed*.

When schools are incorporated as green deserts, which distribute educational narratives as economic stockpiles balancing and testing the minis/trees' disciplinary monocultures, teachers are then asked to "recapitulate" unjust ecological policies under the guise of greenwashing our civic responsibilities. In turn, the planet itself then becomes both a displaced political and environmental refugee within the curricular contexts of public schooling. Therefore teachers share enormous political and social responsibilities when it comes to both challenging and teaching the various ecological narrative enclosures and un/enclosures we choose to teach in schools. Consequently, as a curriculum theorist, a global citizen, and a concerned parent, I encourage teacher candidates to discuss the ecological complexities—social, cultural, psychic, environmental, etc.—during their nomadic travels toward becoming self-reliant curricular textworkers within the public schooling system. In turn, I ask students to design community-service-learning social action projects that challenge our ecocivic responsibilities in terms of selling off the commons of our classrooms to the offshore profitability of multinational corporations like British Petroleum. I call on students to "take note" of the things we could do justice to now.

Together we discuss the possibilities and limitations of the following three types of citizenship programs in relation to our curricular understandings of the current *Character Development Initiatives* taking place within Ontario schools:

1. Personally responsible citizens act responsibly within their community (contribute to food or clothing drives, recycle, pay taxes, obey laws, etc.). Programs that pursue a vision of the personally responsible citizen by encouraging students to

volunteer or give to charity do not necessarily advance students' abilities to critically analyze the root causes of social problems and suggest possible solutions.

2. Participatory citizens are active members of community organizations. They might organize a food drive, community garden, and/or a recycling program at a local school. These citizens know how government agencies work. Programs that seek to teach students how to participate in the community do not always delve deeply into root causes of problems.
3. Social justice-oriented citizens ask why people are hungry and act on what they discover. They seek to critically assess social, political, economic, and environmental structures to see beyond the surface causes. This type of citizen understands social movements and how to effect systemic change. (Westheimer, 2005, pp. 30-31)

There are no magical connections, Westheimer (2005) cautions us, between the "pedagogical connections and the underlying values or ideology taught in lessons" that seek to take up one and/or all of these citizenship programs (p. 32). Consequently, there are no guarantees that our curriculum-as-planned will necessarily translate pedagogically as an ecojustice curriculum lived as earth democracy. "Regardless of what kinds of programs colleagues and I study," Westheimer continues, "we consistently find that reach exceeds grasp: that claims about teaching towards multiple visions of citizenship often are mismatched to the content and pedagogical approaches employed" (p. 32). Therefore school programs often claim, Westheimer (2005) stresses, that they are addressing all three, when in reality their broader citizenship curriculum only addresses one.

To understand these three forms of citizenship in relation to their final social actions projects, I invite students to reread them against

the film *Pay it Forward*. At the start of this film a primary Social Studies teacher named Mr. Simonet (played by Kevin Spacey) communicates in his opening soliloquy to students that the deep structure of schooling life is always negotiated, internalized, and ultimately gives meaning to our lived experiences inside and outside of the daily clangour of educational and corporate institutions. In a sense, at least for me, Trevor, the main protagonist of this narrative em-plot-ment, tries to disrupt the institution of schooling, the clutter of daily life, of engaging an assignment, and its respective system of accountability “just” to get an A. Instead, he wants justice, to see just how the possibilities of his social action curriculum might work. Yet, what he soon realizes is that he does not have control over the final outcome of this social action plan’s lived curriculum, nor its intended audiences’ curricular expectations. And nor do we, in terms of what the narratives of living an ecojustice curriculum as earth democracy will call forth, or how it will pay forward economically and environmentally for our children of tomorrow.

Many of the students enrolled within our global cohort take up the pedagogical call for action today in order to shape responsible ecocitizens of tomorrow. In 2009, these students designed various community service learning social action projects, which in turn addressed local, national, and international concerns. For example, committed groups of students raised funds for the “[Guatemalan Stove Project](#)”, “[Pennies for Pencils](#)”, and clothing and food for homeless people in Ottawa. Other students developed educational resources that provided curricular opportunities for teachers and students to question how we are implicated in the root causes of local and global social and economic inequities due to multinational corporations’ continued enclosure of the commons.

One group of primary/junior teacher-candidates created [Where do you get your coltan?](#) In this curricular resource document, the students tell us that the existence and ecological impact of coltan, a black metallic ore used to manufacture consumer electronics, is relatively

unknown to the average person living outside of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Nonetheless, the choices we make here in Canada, these socially concerned students remind us, have global impacts. In turn, as active engaged eco-citizens, these students call us to make informed decisions about the narrative enclosures we choose to teach. Yet they warn us that we cannot do this without access to information.

As teachers, we may wish to encourage our students to think critically about global issues, but we cannot do this without information. As students we may wish to be agents of positive change; but we cannot do this without information. ([Where do you get our coltan?](#), p. 2)

In response to a bell ringing in an empty sky, to make present such absence of information within the elementary public schooling system, these students designed curricular articulations that took an ecojustice curriculum lived as earth democracy across the inter/disciplinary terrains of our provincial curricula. Responding to Gough's call for rhizosemiotic play, these students reread the science, drama, social studies, and language arts curricular expectations to create lessons that politically labored to deconstruct the complexities of mining for coltan (colombo-tantalite) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). When refined, this mineral is then referred to by many NGOs as blood tantalum; utilized in the production of capacitors for computers, cell phones, and various other electronics. The students' lessons examine, among other curricular things, the violent impacts of exploiting and consuming this resource in relation to the displacement and systematic genocide of human lives, the impact of deforestation on eastern lowland gorilla habitats, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Although an ecojustice curriculum lived as earth democracy might not be a good fit for all, I am hoping that educators, teacher-candidates, and the public writ large, might begin to provoke an asking of our institutions of schooling. "Living democracy," as Shiva

makes clear, “is the space for reclaiming our fundamental freedoms, defending our basic rights, and exercising our common responsibilities and duties to protect life on earth, defend peace, and promote justice” (p. 6). It is within this space where we might begin to ask ourselves how the curricular and pedagogical approaches we employ both within and against the generative reproductive and reconstructive spaces of our classrooms works in turn to colonize and enclose the unenclosed commons of our daily lives. In turn, living democracy provides a curricular space to remind us of our symbiotic interconnections with the ecological ecstasy of soundlessness, of a rough grouse dancing at the edges of a logging road, in the presence of a memory’s narrative moment. And still, it allows us to remain unfaithfully faithful to concepts, like ecocritical literacy, eco-citizenship and an ecojustice curriculum lived as earth democracy, if there is such a thing. Again, here is where, as educators, we all have enormous responsibilities—indeed, teachers and students have the power to be agents of, and for, shaping future ecological and relational cultural replies taking place just now.

In *Pay it Forward*, Mr. Simonet offers students an opportunity to engage an asking that provokes a thinking and a doing, a praxis that takes time now in class to think about the things we do, could do just now, and/or put off to doing just now. But is provoking a curricular and pedagogical space for such institutional asking in the classroom enough? “What have you ever done,” Trevor asks Mr. Simonet, “to change the world?” Here he demands his teacher among other things to model the same social action he requires students to engage for a grade. Mr. Simonet responds, “Well Trevor I get a good night sleep, a hearty breakfast, I show up on time, and then I pass the buck on to you.” I wonder how the *Curriculum Council Report* to which I am making reference here today within this paper, in some way, passes the ecological crisis caused by the overconsumption of corporate bucks onto us, those who teach and learn in schools tomorrow? When schools are reduced to greenwashing machines, corporate

enclosures which distribute educational buckshot as goods and services, teachers are in turn reduced to complacent politicians, proroguing acts of justice, taking note of the things that could take place just now within their classrooms, holding a narrative shotgun, standing within a space of soundlessness, and listening for an/other bell ringing in the empty sky. But what now, will be your curricular and pedagogical cultural reply?

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