

# *Visceral Beginnings*

KAREN A. KRASNY & CHLOË BRUSHWOOD ROSE

*York University*

We readily noted a discernible visceral thread weaving its way through the ideas and concepts presented in the articles in this issue of JCACS. The theme couldn't have reverberated any louder for your editors. Where one of us (Chloë) continues to examine questions of subjectivity and representation through psychoanalytic theories of learning, and the other (Karen) investigates the relationship between the aesthetic and moral value of literature through theories of embodied consciousness, both of us seek to capture from our respective theoretical positions, how intellectual and cultural acquisitions are grounded in a pre-reflective and pre-linguistic bodily existence. Similarly, the authors in this issue of the journal emphasize the visceral nature of the human subject and a growing recognition of the role of affect in curriculum and pedagogy.

Lisa Taylor's work came to our attention at the 2010 Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies (CACS) Pre-conference held during the first year of Karen's tenure as the association's President. Organized by Past-President Hans Smits and colleague Rahat Naqvi, the pre-conference focused on critical questions raised by Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, including the inevitable epistemological problems associated with "framing" our ethical relation to the Other through patterns of social affect. In "Feeling in crisis: Vicissitudes of response in experiments with Global Justice Education," Taylor applies

Sharon Todd's articulation of Levinasian ethics to examine the psychical complications associated with social justice education. Drawing on Deborah Britzman, Roger Simon and others, she details the qualities of activist global justice education "that render teaching/learning both paradoxical and difficult" in a field that is "affectively and ethically fraught." Taylor's constructive critique of social justice curriculum and its attending critical pedagogy are informed by the specific example of a preservice teacher education course in Global Justice Education.

Stephanie Springgay reminds us that to think "affectively about politics" offers us alternatives to "approaches that are a direct analysis of signs and discourses, morals and rationales." In her article, "The Ethicoaesthetics of Affect and a Sensational Pedagogy," Springgay examines the ethical dimension of the affective-turn in pedagogy through the lens of Guattari's "ethico-aesthetic paradigm." To illustrate, Springgay opens by evoking for the reader how artistic modalities like the public, participatory, community and interventionist art embodied by Jess Dobkin's "The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar" fits within this Guattari's paradigmatic shift. Prompted by her inability to breastfeed her own daughter, "The Lactation Station" allows Dobkins and audience/participants to wrestle with the social and political pressures of conforming to what it means to be a good mother in the West. Springgay analyzes Dobkin's performance in which audience members were invited to taste samples of pasteurized human breast milk produced by six new mothers through the affective and visceral responses of participants. The event brings together "bodies that generate the affect disgust which is then registered, perceived, and qualified as a series of emotions and feelings" where the visceral moves us to act and reorganize sensations and instincts. Springgay aims to draw our attention to the social and political ideologies behind the disgust associated with the public tasting of breast milk. She makes clear how the breast milk tasting event disturbs the modernist paradigm of

“visualist taste” that relates exclusively to our scopic consumption, to create that sensate moment in which the boundaries between subjects are dismantled. In Deleuzian terms, such moments of transversality achieved through the sensational pedagogy of “The Lactation Station” serve to dislodge the human subject from its normal habitat and identity to becoming-other and allow for a degree of spontaneous generation. JCACS readers may recall the recent article by Xiao-Jiu Ling’s (2009) in 7.2 titled “Thinking like a Grass, with Deleuze in Education?” that, too, sheds light on Deleuzian thought, in particular, the concept of deterritorialization in which Deleuze uses geographic metaphors to place the subject at the nexus of intersecting lines. Accordingly, “[o]ne only discovers worlds through a long, broken flight” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 27). The sensate moment is that point of departure—a visceral beginning—in Springgay’s sensational pedagogy.

In “Living as Textual Animals: Curriculum, Sustainability and the Inherency of Language,” Patrick Howard calls for a curricular acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of the human cultural world and the biotic realm. Finding inspiration in the words of Gertrude Stein: “...anybody is as their land and air is.... It is that which makes them and the arts they make and the work they do...”, the author extends this interconnectedness to characterize the relationship between language and the environment. Howard cites David Abram’s recognition that language arises from “the perpetual interplay between the body and the world.” The article and most assuredly, the idea of humans as textual animals puts us in mind of Suzanne Langer’s (1957) evolutionary account of human language in *Philosophy in a New Key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite and art*, which honours the expressive and embodied voice-play associated with ritual gestures and dances in response to natural lived events. The phenomenological return to the embodied roots of language led Howard to a language arts project with grade nine students in Newfoundland and Labrador in which the

students used writer's notebooks as a site for exploring their ecological selves.

A regular contributor to JCACS, Carl Leggo offers readers "Living Love: Confessions of a Fearful Teacher" which manifests what Leggo calls, in the words of Richard E. Miller, a passionate pursuit to "produce writing that generates a greater sense of connection to the world and its inhabitants." Leggo has been much seduced by the "possibilities" of writing but the author who has written so much about love and hope in education is also aware that the written word can be unruly. Perhaps it is this wild and dangerous quality that portends such possibility and promise for refusing a life lived in fear. Looking back on a seemingly expansive past and facing what appears a brief and uncertain future, Leggo does what so few academics dare to do—bare his soul in the light of growing older. And he does so eloquently through a lyrical weave of poetry and prose—some of his best. Leggo never fails to evoke and it seems fitting that in an issue grappling with the visceral, Leggo's words should leave us with the kind of transversal space to examine our feelings of love and fear in the midst of our own vulnerability.

In closing, we are pleased to announce that Sara Matthews at Wilfred Laurier will be joining the editorial team as editor of our new Book Reviews section debuting in Volume 9, Number 2 in late Fall 2011. We are soliciting books for review, as well as book reviewers interested in writing reviews for the journal. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to contribute to the book review section.

On a final note, with my Co-Editor's permission, I (Karen) would like to end this editorial by expressing my sincere gratitude to the CACS membership for their support throughout my two-year tenure as President of the association. I am extremely grateful for the dedicated contribution of the CACS Executive members. Whether it be coordinating the CACS Program at CSSE, the Celebration of Creative Scholarly Works, the CACS pre-conference/Provoking Curriculum, the

CACS awards, or administering the business of the association, their remarkable capacity to collaborate in advancing the work of the association should continue to instill confidence in the membership and an excitement about the future of Canadian curriculum studies. I am especially indebted to Past President Ingrid Johnston for her friendship and counsel and cannot imagine how I would have got through these past two years without her. I am thankful to the many SIG Chairs and Presidents whose efforts help maintain CACS as the largest association within the Canadian Society for the Study of Education and who work to bring to the fore the Canadian curriculum scholarship emerging from their respective disciplines. Needless to say, assuming the position of CACS President and JCACS Co-Editor has made particular demands on my time and I am most thankful to my Co-Editor Chloë Brushwood Rose for the many collegial conversations and her efforts directed at achieving our vision for the journal. Finally, I am delighted that the vitality of the association and its longevity is reflected in the growing number of new curriculum scholars who are taking an active role in the association and wish newly elected Co-Presidents Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Rochelle Skogen every success.

## References

- Deleuze, Gilles & Parnet, Claire. (2007). *Dialogues II* (Revised Edition). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Langer, Suzanne. (1957). *Philosophy in a New Key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite and art*. Oxford: Harvard University Press.
- Ling, Xiao-Jiu. (2009). Thinking like Grass, with Deleuze in Education? *Journal of the Association for Curriculum Studies*, 7 (2).