

CURRICULUM FRAGMENTS: THEORIZING WHILE PRACTICING AN EDUCATIONAL LIFE AND BUILDING A *CURRERE* ORIENTED REPRESENTATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL "I"

By Thomas S. Poetter

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

At last spring's 2nd Annual *Currere* Exchange Retreat and Conference held at Miami University, I presented an idea to my assigned discussion group about doing a book length treatment of all that I have learned about curriculum studies over my life and career by writing a series of "fragments," or story-bits of learning, as a child, son, student, citizen, sibling, adult, teacher, coach, pastor, husband, activist, father, scholar, and politician, with the intent of tying the bits to deeper discussions of curriculum theory, pedagogy, and policy from my own experiential and scholarly points of view. I explained that I intended the work to make a contribution to curriculum studies, while also framing my life and its contributions through commentary about our humanity, our society, our institutions, our work—and our lives.

I explained to the group—each group was constructed of 6-8 participants for the retreat to hear each other's initial, fledgling ideas about ongoing *currere* projects—that I wanted to advance the *currere* work I was doing and that others might learn to do by actually doing it and creating new samples of it for consumption, and not just by writing about it. Of course, I knew that I would be doing both at the same time, as I do here, and that the stories I told would involve emergent ideas and frameworks about theory, practice, and identity as a result of and through the *currere* approach. I asked them, "Would you be interested in discussing my concept of curriculum fragments with me by hearing one bit and judging if I'm on the right track?"

"Yes!" They encouraged.

So, here goes. What follows consist of a *currere* fragment describing the curriculum event, a reflective interlude about the event, and, finally, a curriculum analysis of the fragment. I end with a discussion of my intended next steps.

CURRERE FRAGMENT: JASON SAMUELS—ONE LAST, BIG SPLASH

This fragment is about Jason Samuels, our basketball playing day(s) together, and what I learned from him, especially the hard, deep lesson that stuck with me but never really phased me academically and intellectually until now. This event and our subsequent lives together haunted me for years, but I never interrogated the encounter beyond the deep hurt that sometimes lingers through significant, though seemingly fleeting, life events.

Early on, I committed myself to the sport of basketball and to being really good at it, intending to make the high school team, to star on it even, and to continue playing in college. Even if that were a long shot, I didn't care; I wanted to play no matter, because I loved basketball, and because playing basketball saved my life. This all started when I was around 11 years old, in 1973, spurred on by my brother's and my father's love of the game and a trip to see a high school game with my Dad on my 10th birthday in 1972.

When my father died suddenly after his second massive heart attack in November of 1976, I sought further solitude, emotional release, and salvation on the asphalt and

concrete courts of my hometown. At every single turn, I felt the melancholy of connection to my father, who nurtured me up to love the game. He had played in high school and college (he was known in college for his quick feet and long set shots and earned the nickname “The Dalton Flash” in honor of his hometown in Northeast Ohio and of his speed), he took me to games, he refereed church league games (as a pastor that supported my older brother’s own love of the game and that I attended religiously with them, and shot baskets with me on his way home for dinner after long days in the church office and before evening committee meetings, night after night after night, year in and year out.

Over the years, I came to realize that the people I met, the focus I garnered, and the successes I had with basketball contributed to my sense of purpose and well-being and helped me deal constructively with loss in ways that my family and society, at that point in time, could never have provided. There was no family therapy, no psychologist in 1976. If there were, we wouldn’t have gone to see him or her. That’s just the way it was for middle class families in the Midwest in the 1970s. Families never admitted weakness or sought help, even in traumatic situations. At least, we didn’t. Falling to pieces was the norm; dealing with it, and maybe even healing, not so much.

I was just 13 and in 8th grade when Dad died. I played basketball alone and a lot and even more following his death. I played all manner of hoops games with kids my age, and I played with older boys and young men, all over town, as far as my bike could carry me, or in solitude, which was most of the time. I welcomed all comers, just shooting around, one-one-one, two-on-two (my favorite), 21, full court, half court, whatever we wanted to do whenever the opportunity and the person, power, and willingness presented themselves. I’m not describing a boy who just played basketball and liked it. I played all the time, as many hours a day as I could. All weekend, all summer (when not playing baseball!), after school, at school, always.

I had met Jason through Little League and youth basketball events, though we went to different elementary schools during the year. But, once we were all in middle school together, we hit it off to some degree, and we both played on the 8th grade basketball team. The fact is, I mostly shot, and the others watched. Sometimes this went well, sometimes not so much. But, Jason and I had started to become friends. I invited him over to play basketball in my driveway after school, before the actual season’s games started and after dad had passed.

I don’t remember how this “play date” came about at this point, but I’m sure that it happened in that typical sort of “in-passing, no big deal” way that young boys, even back then, planned things. No phone calls, just a passing word in the cafeteria, probably, about playing and where to be at what time. We played on the parsonage driveway on “my” dear, beloved driveway court, which we had to abandon by June to make way for a remodeling project before a new pastor would be hired and moved in by fall. Dad died in late November, 1976; we were removed from the parsonage by June, 1977. Cold, hard endings all around. I found out quickly; that court was never really mine.

Things started out fine that day after school, marked by cool air and a hovering, ominous mist of precipitation. We played some h-o-r-s-e and shot around and talked and laughed, but then we began a game of one-on-one, as it started to sprinkle on the court and then rain lightly. Back then, I wasn’t short for my age. Most boys hadn’t experienced their growth spurt yet, so at 5’7” (I never grew another millimeter after reaching that apex!), I was very average in height and, as a result, never at much of a

disadvantage up until then in my hoops world.

But, Jason was already about 6' tall, so I had some trouble making and completing some of my moves and getting shots off, because he was also very agile and athletic. And, he thwarted me at most of my turns, even my quick, tricky ones. As our contest wound down and I was backing in for the winning score, the ball bounced in a puddle that had accumulated volume as the rain picked up during the game. It started as a shallow, leftover puddle from a previous shower, growing, unbeknownst to us, as we toiled.

When the ball hit the asphalt lake, it died, and it stunned us both. Then, simultaneously un-paralyzed, we scrambled to the ground for it and tussled over the ball, both with our hands on it, ripping at it and each other. As we struggled, the alternate forces of our hands and arms made the ball come loose, and it flew, almost of its own accord, over the fence that separated our home's driveway from the neighbor's hard (about a 3' metal vine fence, loose and springy, common in those days but now hardly ever seen).

Un-phased, I scrambled to my feet and hopped the fence to retrieve the ball so we could finish the game, but as I returned with it in mere seconds, invigorated and drenched, Jason was already on his bike, making his way down the slanted end of the driveway toward the street. I called after him, "Jason?" and he yelled back, "Sorry, Putt. Gotta go."

That was the last time that Jason and I really ever played together in any significant way, although we practiced with the teams we played on all the way through our junior year in high school. But, we never had a significant conversation or dove headlong into a pile for the same loose ball, or anything, really, ever again. I can remember feeling numb for a few minutes, then brushing it off, figuring that he had to get home for dinner or that he had forgotten something pressing he had to do after school or that perhaps our scramble for the ball dislodged a memory that he set off quickly to make right. But, these were all machinations I employed to distance myself from the hurt of being abandoned at such a crucial moment, and it stayed there for a long, long time. Obviously, it's still there.

This whole scene no doubt had a lot to do with how little I fought for him when Jason decided to quit the high school team after junior year to get a job during the winter of senior year. I desperately wanted to win a league championship, and he knew it, but I never begged Jason to stay like I did Jack Sparks, who I thought could really help us win games and who I had a relationship with and who had the same plan as Jason to skip our senior basketball season to work. Jack never drove his bike away from a tie game, so we were friends. But, neither played.

One way to recover meaning, and work on it, is through memory. I am convinced that direct intervention, such as asking Jason to read my story and comment, would not be fruitful, maybe horrible, too difficult to risk trying to do. Jason is still alive, but I just don't think I can take a 40-year memory (or re-memory) and expect him to provide some type of clear, honest explanation. Why would he remember? Why would he even care? Maybe he would; maybe he wouldn't. The key here is that this story, this fragment, among the others to come, is about my own educational development and journey and the pursuit of the primary question, as suggested by Pinar (1975/1994): "What has been and what is now the nature of my educational journey?" (p. 20).

So, at root, what is going on here? This is my *currere* journey, in fragments.

REFLECTIVE INTERLUDE: WHAT I THINK HAPPENED...WITH JASON SAMUELS

When I presented the curriculum fragment about Jason to the group at the conference, I spoke briefly about what I thought happened between Jason and me. Remember, I'm still struggling with the memory, wandering what it means and if I can even pinpoint anything after all this time and all of the possible interpretations and complicated circumstances. It reminds me of the conundrum that Toni Morrison (1983) presents, purposefully, in her short story, "Recitatif." This short story, one of the few she has published in her award winning career as a writer, advances questions about race and memory in the story of two young girls who had been sent to an orphanage after being abandoned by their still-living mothers and then terrorized by the people and their surroundings over a four-month stay together there as roommates. The terror remained with them forever, taking multiple forms, and pitting them and their memories against each other, over and over again, at different temporal points in their future lives.

One of the many twists in Morrison's story is a structural one: Morrison imbues each character with racially coded descriptions but never actually names the race of either girl over the course of the entire story, which traces the chance, important, and explosive interactions between them over a 20 year period after those fateful four months they spent together in the orphanage as 8 year olds. The reader can never tell which girl is Black or White, but ambiguity, not confusion, abounds. Nor does Morrison identify the race of a critical third character, Maggie, a disabled kitchen worker in the orphanage who is chased and beaten by the older, meaner girls in the unit, the culminating and critical event of the story, clouded as it is in each of their 8 year old memories and then, later, their 20-something year old memories.

The characters struggle with their memories of the place, the shock, the learning, the relationships, the terror, especially as it centers around their interaction with Maggie, and the realization "that their own ambivalent memories of her have been repressed and muted" (Stanley, 2011, p. 71). Morrison leaves the reader wondering, what actually happened to Maggie? How were the girls complicit or not in her suffering? What role does memory play in the equation, both in terms of what actually happened and what happened to them psychically? Meaning, the story ultimately turns around the words of Roberta, who says at the very end with regard to the flawed memory, clearer now in her own mind that they didn't actually beat Maggie themselves:

...And you were right. We didn't kick her. It was the gar girls. Only them. But, well, I wanted to. I really wanted them to hurt her. I said we did it, too. You and me, but that's not true. And I don't want you to carry that around. It was just that I wanted to do it so bad that day—wanting to is doing it" (Morrison, 1983, n.p., emphasis mine).

Morrison's insight is that young characters carry memory and, especially when in trauma, sink themselves into a conflated existence among the actual and the dreamed of and the subsequent impact those potential feelings of guilt incur; these feelings can be damaging, life changing, altering, and can feel as real as an actual kick.

So, I ask, what violence did I do to Jason, or he to me, that made us long-distance acquaintances in such close proximity after the tussle over a ball splashing in the rain? How could things have been different? Was there anything that could have been done

to change the trajectory of our relationship, or even of that day, as a result of the tie game inflamed by sweat and will? Why did Jason run off? Why didn't I chase him? How come I never asked why over 40 years, instead harboring my suspicions and living on benignly as though nothing had been lost? Have I even remembered this all correctly, or am I scraping around in re-memory, remaking the story and its meaning and my life through the telling and the critique? Is that so bad? Is it right? What does it tell you about me? What have I learned? Whom have I become?

I told the conference discussion group that later—maybe weeks or months or years or as life unfolded right in front of us in our small town—I realized that we could never be a match, real friends, buddies, Jason and me. We came from such different backgrounds, even in our small town. Both of my parents went to college and had professional jobs—his parents were working class. I ran with a mostly goody two-shoes crowd; we mostly didn't drink or smoke or carouse. Jason did drink and smoke and carouse, though our friends overlapped some, and we both had plenty of them. I didn't get into fights on weekends—he did. I played basketball hard, all the time. Jason just liked to play, here and there, and not really practice. And, he had no aspirations to convert his physical gifts into excellence through hard work on the court, in the rain (and snow!).

At school we didn't have the same classes or schedules or cross over much at all at school except at basketball practice, what with the band-cohort (I was in band—he wasn't) getting special scheduling treatment and advanced course placements. And, it was obvious at some point that my classes were tracked to college prep with college bound students in them (the rest of the band members), for the most part. We just weren't on the same track, and I have realized that the smashing of the ball into the puddle, kerplunk, deadened any hopes of our lives breaking this stalemate of distance, of priorities, of interest. Jason and I were no match. But, I still miss him, then and today.

And, I'm certain that, if he knew that he was an accomplice in this story, he would deny it, laugh it off, or be really pissed. For sure, we couldn't face the truth together, either, whatever that is.

CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

One of the key points that surfaces for me about this story, in general, is that, although I may be a rare bird who remembers things with some vividness, I think we all do to some extent, and most assuredly, we all repress things that are uncomfortable, bury them, keep them hidden, just to be well and sane and to survive. Certainly, we can't figure out every complex thing in life, especially the hurtful ones. Maybe some things are just meant to be. Maybe there is no rhyme or reason for any one event or string of happenings whose ends lie mostly out of our direct control. Maybe we are just too embarrassed to admit our failures, shortcomings, mistakes. Maybe, I am realizing now, keeping things hidden gets us nowhere, and the pain, internally, grows and takes life away from us.

I also feel as though the struggle with memory, especially a memory of significance that sticks with you, is that the world and the person and the context all have an impact on the story, that is re-told and is, as such, ultimately, a fiction. Now, this isn't all bad, that life is—ultimately, and perhaps at every turn after experience—a fiction. After all, Morrison writes fiction and teaches us something profound, as a result, about human nature, about ourselves.

I want to be clear here: this is how it happened with Jason, but not really. Really?

I ask, how could it be 100% “accurate”? There was no tape recorder or video recorder there, and my recording machine, my brain, works much differently than a recording device. Yes, I’m “recording” everything all the time, but my life experiences, the things I learn, my beliefs and values and hopes and dreams and many other things, impact each thing that happens, how it’s filed away, and how it is remembered. It can’t be any other way, unless you are the fictive Carrie Wells in Ed Redlich’s TV show *Unforgettable* or the real life Mary Lou Henner of *Taxi* TV sitcom fame, who is one of only 12 people in the world diagnosed with hyperthymesia—highly superior, autobiographical memory (Wright & Baur, 2012).

And, to boot, even if there were an actual, physical recording of our game, how could it be any better or more useful than the record that typical eyewitnesses have of events, who, in the end, in many cases, don’t really know what they saw even though they were standing only feet away when the car changed lanes and crashed into the other car, recording it, if you will, and missing the whole thing completely because of circumstances, biases, darkness, poor eyesight, fatigue, whatever. What if almost all of us are basically that unlucky sap who stumbles onto an old show on a movie channel, first viewed 40 years ago, which at the time seemed raucously funny but, now, can’t even manage to arouse an amused smirk (See *Animal House* or *Caddyshack*, for instance)? We can’t re-capture, ever, the actual thing. It doesn’t exist. And, all things change all the time.

Existence is what memory is for.

Look, after all, this event happened more than 40 years ago, though in ways it feels like it happened yesterday, especially while I was giving shape to the narrative when writing it down for the first time in 40 plus years. How could I be “accurate”? What, then, is the basis for what’s real? If we are doing scholarship here and using *currere* as a form or an avenue or a framework or a theory or a method for doing curriculum studies, then what is going on? And, what can we agree to be the rules for moving forward with this complex dance among experience, memory, and their representations in non-fiction, fiction, and scholarship?

Well, I would argue the way that O’Brien (1990) does in *The Things They Carried* that fiction is real, maybe “realer” than experience, and that the line between non-fiction and fiction is blurry, and that all of our writing is fiction in one way or the other. And, the truth is that we can’t escape it and that telling the truth, getting it right, communicating, depends on a certain amount of license that memory, and even miss-memory, allows. That is, there are certain things that can’t be described accurately, since words are too distant from action, from actual happenings, and sometimes, it just continues to be true that actual experiences may be too horrible or wonderful or utterly ineffable to codify and comprehend through words. Words must be employed to recreate scenes, memories, happenings, and so it could be argued that the symbol systems we employ to relate what we think we know can’t ever be 100% “accurate” in the sense of communicating what actually happened. This doesn’t mean that it didn’t happen; it just means that memory mediates, and the moment creates meaning, and so do subsequent moments and mediating experiences. The best we can do is tell the story as honestly as we can, or as effectively as we can in a fictive way, and for purposes that are defensible, and with the knowledge that the reader is going to judge, criticize, interpret, adapt, and reject what he or she wills to as a consumer of the story, who reflects on it, and ultimately critiques it, maybe internalizes it, maybe resonates with it, and, in our wildest dreams, perhaps, connects with it, and then, perhaps, maybe even learns from it (O’Brien, 1990).

Of course, I can't actually pin point for the reader where the lines become clear and dissect for you the points in the story at which the details blur into fiction, parts that are made up, maybe re-remembered by me to tell the story right. You'll have to trust me, which is the essence of all good teaching and learning, anyway, that unique connection of trust and belief and value that mediates the learning event on a human level in terms of relationality. The truth, probably, is that it's all "made up" in the end.

Ultimately, one has to trust and move and question and discern. In this trusting, there is a certain skepticism that is necessary to balance the power differential between writer and reader and, ultimately, teacher and student. Perhaps, making sense of the story and bringing meaning to it and deriving understanding is the entire curriculum project in and of itself. That is, taking that outside thing, like an experience, and internalizing it and adapting to it and using it as human fuel for next steps, perhaps intellectually, but maybe even in terms of actual step taking with our bodies. So, maybe it doesn't matter what's made up or embellished or extended or fudged or fictionalized. Maybe what matters is if the writer helps the reader make sense of things, or opens up new ways to think about the world, or extends that which had been the internalized, uncontested ways of thinking about the world that are embedded in our own life worlds. The curriculum field's turn happened in the 1970s, as the shift from curriculum development as a focus turned to curriculum understanding (Pinar, Slattery, Reynolds, & Taubman, 2006). How can our experiences lead to understanding, take us beyond the procedural, even the rational? How can we make sense of the world around us? And, can research/scholarship of this sort help us to do so?

Perhaps, the key to all of this is the timeless dance of curriculum and teaching, which lies mainly in the continuous questions, the kind that I am surfacing here. To what degree does the reader trust the writer, and to what ends does the writer wish to lead the reader? What is the project? Is the project, the point, defensible morally, educationally? Are the ends noble, tenable? Does the argument or story preserve and enhance our personhood, our humanity, our care and love for others and ourselves or at least illuminate how error can be situated, be overcome, be understood? And, how do we deal with the complicity of feelings, of prejudice, of bigotry, of immorality, of racism, of classism, of ableism, and of sexism that get embodied in our present talk, so flippant in many ways, as embodied in the phrasing, "Trust me. Believe me."

In my case, trust me, I want to come full circle to face my rejection by/of Jason. Meaning, once he walked away, I never pursued him. Believe me, I never chased him. Why? What did I know then that I am perhaps unwilling up until now to recognize, admit? What separated us, beyond the tension over that loose ball?

I think that after all these years I can admit that Jason rejected me, made a quick decision not to go any further with our friendship. We were classmates and teammates, but not friends, and never would be, beyond the niceties that proximity demanded. But, our proximity, including the five blocks we lived away from each other, couldn't trump, literally, the different lives we had and the end goals that seemed nearly scripted even in the 8th grade. This complex relationship, the calculus among competing factors such as social class, goals, outlook, interests—including our personal characteristics and behaviors—made us a non-match. All things being equal, I've always wondered if we would still be distanced if we met each other now on the street, had no history, but just met. I don't know, maybe, maybe not.

So my question is, what could school or the world have done to draw us together more closely? Anything? Is it possible that Jason just felt sorry for me after my dad's passing and was spending time with me as a sign of solidarity? Is it possible that I said

or did something in those moments over the splashing puddle to push him away, to seal for him a feeling that we wouldn't be friends beyond that day in any meaningful way? Could I have just been too intense, like the "try hards," contemporaries of my sons whom they say annoy and repulse them in their own young lives? What is it that causes people to connect, or not? Did my wanting to win, to compensate in some weird way for the immediate loss of my father so fresh at hand—the competitive spirit that lived in him and now in me—somehow make me less of a person, captive to a blind desire to come out on top at all costs? Whatever the reason or the cause, how do children, let alone adults, come to terms, personally and psychically, with the constant circle of acceptance and rejection that marks the human condition, especially among the young striving for acceptance and connection and, of course, love?

In Morrison's short story, Roberta admits that the pain of wanting to hurt Maggie haunts her. Though she didn't act on this image, it's the psychic cost of the internal violence of wanting to do it, the mental strain of hating others and the self, that take a tremendous toll, sometimes even beyond the physical and beyond the event. Deep down, I think that this is a sign that a person isn't a psychopath, that is, being able to see the merging of reality with the metacognitive skills of putting yourself in someone else's shoes or viewing yourself through an other's perspective, perhaps even roughly judging your actions, taking nothing for granted, looking for answers (Ronson, 2012). But, the pain is no less real; knowing that this is "normal" doesn't make it hurt less. And, the journey can be absolutely harrowing. Like Roberta, I wonder at all times about the lost potential, the distance, the pain associated with being estranged, confused, lost, hurt, frozen in the rain. How was I complicit in the damage done, by doing nothing, by not acting, by being hurt, by not racing after him when he could have helped us win a league championship years later? Beyond that, Jason, Jason himself, who could have been my friend, and wasn't. Who cares? What does it matter? What does this say about me, if I wanted him gone just as much as he wanted to flee?

There is much more to say here about the curriculum implications of this bit, the learning, the confusion, the layering of thinking and experience and possibility, that all accompany this story, the experience of it, and the telling.

But, the deepest truth here, beyond any meaning that can be ascribed to the situation as it played out and as it has been thought about all these years, is this remaining, sobering, educative fact: There hasn't been a single day since that day in the rain that I haven't thought about the ball splashing in the puddle and Jason rushing off on his bike, literally, never to be seen or known again.

Not one single day of relief, or clarity, after more than 40 years.

WHAT I PLAN TO DO WITH JASON AND FUTURE CURRICULUM FRAGMENTS

I plan to explore a series of experiences and their connections to curriculum, teaching, learning, schooling, democracy, life, purpose, and meaning, for me. I'm not extrapolating from my experience to others', but instead connecting directly my experiences and my thinking about them to phenomena and possibilities in the "real" world, perhaps through image, perhaps through story, perhaps through verse (Pinar, 2012). As I wind my *currere* journey around myself and the participants (Pinar, 1975/1994), I intend to play with Kierkegaard's (1985) discussion in *Philosophical Fragments*, and the challenge of despair, overall, and the illumination of faith, and his concept of indirect communication. I also plan to use Twain's (2010) tome of autobiographical "ephemera" and the challenge of making "coherence" out of life's chaos to fashion at least 7 stories/movements in the work and to move toward a

dialectic of understanding (Buber, 1923/1971; Huebner, 1967). Those 7 stories/movements are:

Loved (Loving)
 Known (Knowing)
 Bullied (Bullying)
 Lost (Losing)
 Ignorant/Ignored (Ignoring)
 Removed (Removing)
 Hopeful (Hoping)

Notice that love and hope frame the conversation. I consider this curriculum fragment about Jason and me a story of “Lost/Losing.” My intention all along has been to start in the middle.

Along the way, I intend to connect with and weave significant autobiographical curriculum works that I have always wanted to and haven’t been able to read completely (not merely as fragments as we often do as scholars) with the intention of treating them all as fragmented contributions to the whole range of approaches to *currere* including Grumet (1988), He (2003), Miller (2005), and Baszile (2015). Of course, I will return periodically to Pinar (2012).

Of particular note, in terms of my overall plan for this project, inspired by the conference and the support of peers on this journey with me, is the direction set for me by Twain’s autobiography, just published in the past seven years in three large volumes. Now, I’m no Mark Twain. I haven’t really done *anything* in comparison. So, I’m not going to try to write like him or attempt to create some sort of literary legacy out of practically nothing. But, I am interested in his approach to the work of writing his autobiography, which proved to be a struggle for him over many decades. Ultimately, Twain found that he couldn’t write a line-by-line account of his life, in chronological order. Instead, it occurred to Twain (2010) that he would write much differently:

Finally, in Florence in 1904, I hit upon the right way to do an Autobiography: start it at no particular time in your life; wander at your free will all over your life; talk only about the thing which interests you for the moment; drop it at the moment its interest threatens to pale, and turn your talk upon the new and more interesting thing that has intruded itself into your mind meantime. (p. 220)

One of the most inspiring things about Twain’s prose is how this approach plays out, especially in terms of the sheer brilliance of it. How much can we tell from a life by these bits pieced together, and what can we learn about ourselves? One thing we can tell is that life is beautiful and funny and horrible and unpredictable. Take for example Twain’s (2010) description of the antics of Dr. McDowell, who raised a woman from “the dead” (p. 214), and of the breathtakingly beautiful Missouri landscape that nurtured his love of nature (p. 215), including his life on the Mississippi and the lamentable plight experienced at school with not being able to learn to chew tobacco as a 7-year old (p. 216). Many of us have read at least a little bit of Twain’s work and know his life story somewhat, but we don’t have any proximity to the complicatedness of his life or his true greatness. What these pages—and many others in the tome—offer

is a glimpse of him up close, in a different light, piece by piece, through “supposedly” unrelated bit by bit. When I read these passages in Twain for the first time, I felt like I might be one of the few people in the world who had read them. After all, really, who is actually reading them beyond a few scholars and English majors? I felt closer to Twain than I ever have, after more than 100 years since the words were literally penned. As though he were speaking to me.

I’m no Mark Twain, but this is the way that I want to write. Will anyone care after 100 years? Will any of the ideas resonate? Is it a project worth doing? Will it advance the curriculum field? Will it make me more whole? We will see...

Very recently, astronomers discovered the rippling waves of a kilonova, the result of two neutron stars colliding 130 million light years away, creating new heavy matter such as gold and silver (Overbye, 2017) and giving us, as human beings, even deeper insight into the origins of the universe. Wave measuring devices and telescopes detected the clash in August of 2017 and, after months of scientific study, scientists from all over the world celebrated the event as further confirmation of Einstein’s theories of how the universe “works.” So, we have often posited, and now know, that creation starts with collisions. Now, as an educational journey, I want to know more about how our lives play out the mysteries of the universe, as we collide and create our own educational heavy matter. My thinking is that the alchemy, upon interpretation, portends to be ominous and beautiful and tell us a great deal about how things “work” and what’s to come.

This is my educational journey, my *currere*, in fragments.

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