

THAT FIRST YEAR

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The Latin infinitive of curriculum—*currere*—I invoked in 1974 to emphasize the experience of curriculum, lived embodied experience that was structured by the past while focused on the future. To study such experience, I suggested a method in four steps or phases. In the regressive phase, one returns to (not simply recalls) the past, or to aspects of it: for instance, one's school experience, the experience of an influential teacher or text, one's ongoing relationship with an academic discipline. In the progressive phase, one imagines the future (personal, social, political); in the analytic one analyzes these texts and the experiences they register and provide to understand what, before, might have been obscured by being in the present. That expanded¹ subjectivity becomes, in the fourth moment or phase, synthesized, so one acts anew in the private and public worlds one inhabits.²

My currently unfinished³ book that examines the work of the Canadian philosopher George Grant (1918-1988) requires emphasizing two of these four moments of *currere*. In the first, I reactivate Grant's critique of time, technology, and teaching. In the second, I reconstruct what I learned from that experience of reactivation. In so doing, I revise Grant's critique while tempering my theory of curriculum as complicated conversation.⁴ In the first section of this ongoing study, through copious citations of Grant's collected works, and not hindered I hope by my commentaries on them, the reader too can return to Grant and the historical moment he personified, provoking Grant's critique to reverberate through us living now.⁵ By teaching the past, I attempt to provide passages to the future, one blocked by the present.

Reactivation is, then, a reformulation of the regressive phase of *currere*, encouraging not only remembrance of things past, but also a return to their presence there, a temporal regression in service of reconstructing one's subjective experience of the present. Reconstruction is a reformulation of the analytic phase of the method, wherein one attempts to learn from the experience of being in another time and somewhere else, incorporating that knowledge into what becomes a reconstructed understanding of who one is and what is at stake in the present moment, intertwined insights. Evident in the introduction as well as in section two of the Grant manuscript, such a subjective synthesis ensures what will seem like slippage⁶ between Grant's critique and my own.

In reactivating my experience of my first year as a professor, I aspire to remember⁷ the circumstances surrounding the start of the journey I am close to concluding now. While it has had its twists and turns,⁸ there has been, it is retrospectively clear, continuity. As Grant's analyses of time, technology, and teaching reduce to one albeit complex critique, my variations turn out to be on a single theme too: the lived experience of study, in time, in place, with others: *currere*. I share that study with you now, a "temporal simultaneity"⁹ the method demarcates sharply. No rigorous regression, this reactivation is punctuated, as you will see, by my associations with what has happened in the years that followed. My last years, it turns out, were foreshadowed in that first one.

THAT FIRST YEAR

After graduating in June 1972 with the PhD from Ohio State University, I began driving West. In Denver, I decided to go back.¹⁰ I telephoned the Head of the Search Committee who had hired me—William T. Lowe¹¹—who kindly offered me a summer course to teach. What struck me right off—as I entered that classroom on the River Campus of the University of Rochester—was the age difference between us. Working

the year before as a teaching assistant, my students had been undergraduates—student teachers of English—and, in general, slightly younger than I. That summer course at Rochester was filled with graduate students—practicing teachers—older than I, almost but not yet twenty-five. Sometimes, I have wondered if my respect for teachers—imprinted by my educational experience of the public schools¹² where I had studied and taught—was extended by this experience of age difference teaching that first summer at the University of Rochester. Not that I have always been deferential toward my elders. Only a few years earlier, being “young” had been an implicit moral advantage, as it was the aged “establishment” in the U.S. that we students had protested, who had been to blame for racism and militarism, abstractions made concrete by the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, the race riots, and the War in Vietnam. Four years later, hired as a faculty member, I had become a member of the “establishment” myself. That first year my youth seemed, suddenly, a disadvantage.

The undergraduates to whom I taught English teaching methods that first fall greeted me with skepticism. Intellectually aggressive, several challenged my critique of teaching methods, my insistence on “dialogical encounter”¹³ articulated in the first-person singular, emphasizing solitary and social engagements with literary texts. In contrast, my teaching assistants—doctoral students—were agreeable that first term. In time, I came to rely on my teaching assistants, especially Madeleine Grumet.¹⁴ While she too eschewed the standardization that the notion of teaching “methods”¹⁵ implied, Madeleine developed exercises, and by mid-decade, we were, I confess, teaching “methods,” referenced in our (1976) *Toward a Poor Curriculum*. That first year, I would also meet Janet L. Miller, an MA student with whom I also became close. Janet¹⁶ would move to Columbus to do her PhD work with my mentor, Paul R. Klohr.¹⁷ Later, Janet and I would direct the Bergamo Conference and collaborate on *JCT*.¹⁸

Also that first year, I met Jeannine Korman and Margaret Zaccone, secretaries in the department with whom I became friendly. In France, Jeannine would be my guest for dinner at the restaurant Chez Jean Pierre on Alexander Street, where she taught me French cuisine and I subjected her to my three years of college French. Her interventions to improve my pronunciation were exemplars of teaching: gentle but firm, correcting my errors, encouraging my efforts. Born and raised in Rochester and formerly on the staff at the Eastman School of Music—yes she had stories tell—Margaret Zaccone¹⁹ would come to handle the finances of Bergamo and *JCT* and (with her friend Dorothy Horton) manage the conference registration desk.

In addition to the “teaching methods” course (during September), I supervised—with help from the teaching assistants—the students as they “practice taught” (during October-December). Visiting their classes in various Rochester city and suburban schools not only provided glimpses of their teaching and of these schools in this once vibrant upstate city, it helped me find my way to “complicated conversation,” my conception of curriculum with which I concluded *Understanding Curriculum*.²⁰ While dialogical encounter was for me a crucial concept, it was never a technique to be utilized to achieve outcomes. I encouraged those student teachers to think of teaching as a professional responsibility for keeping conversation going, contributing to its quality,²¹ even if that meant on occasion speaking in slang or lecturing. No objectives, no outcomes, nothing knowable in advance;²² instead, I advocated unswerving support for specific students in specific classes on specific days encountering specific assignments. One could not know in advance what that would look like. Improvisation—spontaneity—informed by erudition, professional ethics, and self-knowledge—that was the *mode d'être* I recommended. No formula, teaching was participation in a conversation complicated not only by the singularity of those involved, but as well by the past, including the absent

presence of significant others, as well as by the presence, in print, of those writers whose works we were reading and discussing, as well as those scholars whose analyses of these works were also influencing what it was occurring to us to say. For me, student teaching supervision was a continuation of the theoretical²³ course I had taught earlier in the fall titled “Teaching Methods.”

In the spring, I taught two graduate courses, one on English education and one on curriculum theory. While curriculum theory had been my secondary area in graduate school, that first year it became “promoted” to my primary interest. By spring 1973, I was emphasizing educational experience—a concept I had heard theorized by Dwayne Huebner²⁴—by providing an intellectual history of the noun. Martin Jay’s definitive study²⁵ was decades away, and so I lectured on the concept of “experience” in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. As an undergraduate, I had been allowed entry into graduate courses in the philosophy department, and my notes²⁶ from those and from my graduate courses proved handy that spring. As any teacher knows, one learns one’s subject more deeply through teaching it.

In his communications with contributors to his envisioned collection on the dignity of the calling,²⁷ Andrew T. Kemp posed two questions: 1) how did you become successful? and 2) what advice would you give yourself if you were to start today? I’ll start with the second and in so doing imply a reply to the first. The truth is that I’m not sure I *would* start today.²⁸ While 1972 was no “golden era” of higher education in the U.S., 2016 represents...well, let’s say...no improvement upon it. The anti-intellectual tendencies evident then—often summarized as the “corporatization” of higher education—have become almost complete; they seem to encompass almost all aspects of life in academe.²⁹ Departments develop “signatures” and universities have “brands.” For three years, I sat on the Dean’s³⁰ Promotion and Tenure Committee: expectations for promotion and tenure are comprehensive and quantified. We examine measures of teaching “success,”³¹ numbers that purport to measure “impact” and determine which journals are influential. “Service” means not only attending Department, Faculty of Education, and University meetings, but reviewing manuscripts, acting as external examiner at dissertation defenses at other universities, serving on editorial boards, and being elected officers of professional associations. Service to local professional associations is scrutinized too: “community involvement” is increasingly important and can be linked with research productivity.

Impact, service, and student evaluations I did not face in 1972. While greeted skeptically—not only my age was in play as I was, senior colleagues reminded me, the only graduate of a *public* university hired that year—I was also given time to do something that would be judged important.³² Such a demand positioned my scholarship and research as central, not teaching and certainly not service.³³ While the three may have been conjoined with conjunctives even then, there was no mistaking how far behind number one teaching and service were. Research was everything. For someone trained in literary theory and criticism, research meant—means still—reading, thinking, writing. My mentor in graduate school—Paul Klohr—had always encouraged me to read scholarship outside the field of education. Much of my coursework had been in the English Department, where I had been introduced to the fiction of Virginia Woolf (1920, 1924, 1925, 1927/1955). The major intellectual event of that first year was Quentin Bell’s biography of Virginia Woolf.

Juxtaposed to Bell’s biography was my study of *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Voyage Out*.³⁴ The emphasis in these novels is on the everyday: its momentariness, its momentousness, its nestedness in what escapes our conscious attention and rational understanding, the radical decentering of subjective experience

that Heidegger was philosophizing at the same time Woolf wrote. Each of these aspects of Woolf's work captivated me. Still today, I am eager to read what literary scholars³⁵ are writing about Woolf. Woolf's poeticity, her sheer brilliance, her sense of the sacred and bawdy still steady me when I feel that it's Weimar,³⁶ that catastrophe is coming, as it must have felt—as it *was*—for Woolf. I think suicide too, but my cowardice means it will be sleeping pills, not stones and the River Ouse.³⁷ In 1972, it wasn't the end of her life that preoccupied me, however, it was the beginning: the excitement of the Bloomsbury Circle. In Rochester, Francine Shuchat Shaw³⁸ and I fantasized forming a group focused on the humanities and education. I remember walks down Park Avenue in Rochester and coffee at Jine's where, a decade later, Philip Wexler³⁹ (while having coffee with me) would meet his wife.

It was Virginia Woolf's life and writing that intrigued me as a first-year assistant professor wondering what I should do. Yes "should" because I felt keenly, if subliminally, the duty the privilege of professorship brings, the dignity of the calling, as Andrew Kemp phrases it. The demand to do something important was definite but diffuse, and I would not have claimed to know what "something important" was, except that Virginia Woolf and her writing and her life were expressions of it. It was specifically her stream-of-consciousness writing and its invocation of the everyday⁴⁰ that I would reformulate as *currere*, curriculum as the lived experience of study and teaching and their consequences for me as an actually existing person in this time in this place. Those words had not yet occurred to me during that first year. I'd left my dissertation⁴¹ behind and was focused on what was left of the sixties: heightened consciousness and cultural revolution.

Arriving in Rochester in July, I had moved into an abandoned—but rentable, after I tracked down the owner—cottage in an abandoned agricultural field south of town⁴² where I was soon joined by two women, one my former high-school student Nancy Fruchtman and her friend Marjorie Harper. Not initially conjugal, we were close and communal, conscious of the continuity of our relationship with the 1960s, even though the decade had turned over and a Republican president was now in charge. In retrospect, that ménage provided a kind of counter-weight to the University and the demand pressing down on me to clarify what was then still an unfocused "research agenda." Soon, I started sitting zazen at the Rochester Zen Center on Arnold Park⁴³ where Philip Kapleau taught, and there were, of course, the usual "supplements," marijuana chief among them. In stiff prose—very unlike Virginia Woolf's—I would try to make something of it all in an essay I delivered in May.⁴⁴

The 1973 Rochester conference must have been Paul Klohr's idea. I can't imagine having had the confidence to convene a national invitational conference wherein I would insert myself among those whose work I had admired as a graduate student: Donald Bateman, Maxine Greene, Dwayne Huebner, James B. Macdonald, William Pilder, Robert Starrett. Certainly, I wouldn't have known whom to invite to listen to them. So, Klohr must have concocted the idea and perhaps even prepared the proposal, which I may have "tweaked" before taking it to the dean, James Doi,⁴⁵ who funded it. After the keynote addresses, small groups assembled—with leaders—to discuss the implications of each keynote address, a nod not only to my interest in "dialogical encounter," but also to the groups that spontaneously assembled after George Counts' legendary 1932 speech.⁴⁶ I began to think what the curriculum field might look like if it were reconceptualized after the work of these six scholars. My initial sketch of the "Reconceptualization"⁴⁷ would wait another year.⁴⁸

That first year, nothing seemed settled. Almost everything seems settled now. I am grateful to be alive, but it is long past the sense (however false it always was) of unlimited space and time to explore what being alive might mean. As does its disappearance

now, the panorama apparently before me then provoked profound anxiety. Like now, I responded to that anxiety by alternating detachment and contemplation with engagement and calculation. Regularly, I retreated—retreat still—into solitude where I ruminate over what needs to be done. Especially with the multiplication⁴⁹ of institutional demands, there is always a “next” thing to do, today, tomorrow, this week, next month. I sequence the tasks, starting early on larger projects not due until later, bribing myself (if necessary) to do what must be done *now*. Punctuating this sequencing is the intrusion⁵⁰—glimpses of persons, places, events—of the past, thanks to this assignment of that first year. Despite the riptide that is the present and the occasionally crushing weight of age, reactivating the past keeps the calling loud and clear.

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Endnotes

¹ Expanded both temporally and spatially, as it “houses” more from the past and anticipations of the future. A more expansive subjectivity means, perhaps paradoxically, a smaller (more humble) ego.

² For the original formulation, see Pinar and Grumet, 1976/2014.

³ As of December 2016, the time of this writing.

⁴ Pinar, 2015, pp. 109-125.

⁵ Speaking of Torah study, Michael Fishbane’s (2008) insight spiritualizes my conception of reactivation: “Through recitation and assimilation of the words of the past, the oral tradition becomes alive in one’s mouth” (p. 147).

⁶ My thanks to University of British Columbia Professor, Steven Taubeneck, for bringing this issue to my attention. In section one—Reactivation—Grant’s critique rings loud and clear (I trust); in section two—Reconstruction—Grant’s voice audible still—synthesis occurs (I trust).

⁷ Remembrance is different than regression, as the former means bringing to mind past events while the latter emphasizes re-experiencing the past, as much as is possible. While the past may inform the present through remembrance, it does not alter my emplacement there. By contrast, regression is in the service of reconstructing the present, providing passage to the future through the past.

⁸ I have identified seven of them: Pinar, 2015, pp. 1-10.

⁹ Dinshaw, 2012, p. 116.

¹⁰ Why? Certainly, I had had enough of the highway I-70. I was lonely. And in retrospect I’d say my destination—San Francisco (then the gay capital of the U.S.)—may have been a factor, if unconsciously. Not for a few years more would I be ready to “go there.”

¹¹ I cannot overstate Lowe’s kindness to me, especially in the early years. There were intellectual differences between us, but he never used them against me. His conduct was impeccable, as was the conduct of almost all my colleagues that first year. Even the snide remark about me coming from a public university (which I’ll reference in the main text momentarily) was intended as a compliment. Today, the situation for faculty has dramatically deteriorated, and not only in the United States. The “intensification” of academic labor—in part due to regimes of “accountability”—has left few faculty feeling affirmed.

¹² On one occasion, I listed several of my teachers, in gratitude (Pinar 2009a, pp. 147-148, n. 2). My impressive colleagues at Paul D. Schreiber High School also required my respect.

¹³ A phrase from Freire (1970), whose work I had studied during my last undergraduate year in a seminar on what they called “urban education” with Professor Donald R. Bateman. Daniel Johnson-Mardones (2016) has documented Freire’s influence on what would become the reconceptualization of curriculum studies in the U.S.

¹⁴ While we met that year, Madeleine didn’t become a teaching assistant until the year following. In March 2014, my husband Jeff Turner and I visited her in Chapel Hill, where she continues to teach at the University of North Carolina. She is also an on-site grandmother to her daughter Jessica’s newborn Talia. See Grumet (1988) for a brilliant exposition of curriculum theory.

¹⁵ Now the conception of “methods” has morphed into “best practices,” but the standardization and anti-intellectualism standardization installs remains. Then, the problem was in the profession; now, it is shored up by politicians, especially (it seems) in the United States. There is, evidently, even a National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, busily standardizing the U.S. school curriculum to create “a more

highly skilled workforce that is better equipped to meet the needs of local, state and national economies” (Signatories, 2013, p. A7). So much for citizenship or character—the classic concerns of American education—as only economic functionality counts. Absent is any conception of “practice” as a “cooperative activity” with “potential for the moral transformation of the self” (Bielskis, 2011, p. 303).

¹⁶ Janet and I, too, have remained lifelong friends. See Miller (2005) for a stunning account of her—our—work since that first year we met.

¹⁷ As I will soon recount, Paul played a major role in my life that first year (see Pinar, 2009b).

¹⁸ See Pinar, 1999, pp. xi-xii.

¹⁹ On the side, Margaret did taxes, and she has prepared mine since the early 1970s, even learning the Canadian tax code so she can continue to help me now that I work in Canada. We talk every couple of months, complaining about the Republican Party and remembering our time together at the University of Rochester.

²⁰ Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 848.

²¹ Its liveliness, its subtlety, its precision, its complexity, its directness and sometimes its indirectness: “quality” is always contextual and never independent of judgment.

²² Now, I would say that “no objectives” is too emphatic, a revision I make to guard against that stance becoming another (if negatively stated) “objective.”

²³ Important in itself, apart from—even in generative tension with—practice (Pinar and Grumet, 1981/1988), theory is also crucial in legitimizing “new kinds of activity” (Knight, 2011, p. 281).

²⁴ I was a student in his seminar in 1969 (see Huebner, 1999, p. xv). On a March 2014 trip to North Carolina, Madeleine Grumet, Jeff Turner, and I spent an afternoon with Huebner who lives (with wife Ellen who teaches theology at Duke University) in Durham. With University of British Columbia PhD student Joseph Kyser, I returned to Durham in 2015 to conduct an extended interview with Professor Huebner, an interviewed videotaped by Mr. Kyser, who is completing a PhD dissertation on this great man’s life and work.

²⁵ Jay, 2005.

²⁶ I have notes from other undergraduate courses as well, now archived at the LSU Library. My undergraduate textbooks remain with me. My husband pinpoints past years, relationships, and residences through music (I do that too), but I also gain access to the past through the books in my library.

²⁷ Not having heard from Professor Kemp in several years, I concluded he had abandoned this project. It is an important project that he—or someone else—will perhaps take up again in the future.

²⁸ Certainly, I could not be a public-school teacher today. Forty years of school deform leave many schools unfit for children or educators. Mooresville, North Carolina, would seem to be one example (see Pinar, 2013, pp. 31-32), although Idaho may remain a site where professional ethics need not be entirely sacrificed when fulfilling contractual obligations (see Pinar, 2013, p. 33).

²⁹ Still, as Alasdair MacIntyre (2011) points out, “good work...still goes on” (p. 327). But as he (and many others) acknowledge, the corporatized university deserves little credit for it.

³⁰ Bly Frank, Dean of Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

³¹ I am hardly the first to point out that the questions listed on student evaluations skew the answers.

³² “Important” was not then quantified: “productivity” had not yet substituted for quality, however problematic that term now is, given our culture of suspicion and

the displacement of ethics by politics. The final judgment regarding my promotion and tenure would be made not only by the usual means—a file of “external” letters testifying to the importance of the work to the field it addressed and of course the votes of colleagues in one’s department—but by the University Committee. At the University of Rochester at that time, there was one committee organized for each promotion and tenure case. “Important,” then, would be a judgment made by colleagues (I later learned) in the English, philosophy, and history departments. Their seventeen-page single-spaced typewritten review of my work remains the most insightful I have received.

³³ At the University of Rochester in 1972, declaring an interest in serving on committees risked one’s scholarly reputation. Anything remotely resembling bureaucratic work was considered “housekeeping,” unsuitable for a serious scholar. Despite the (probably gendered) elitism, the attitude isn’t mistaken. Bureaucracy is not only tedious and time-consuming, it is intellectually deadening.

³⁴ See Bell (1972). I’ve reread *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* in the last several years, for the third or fourth time. *The Voyage Out* was the text on which I focused (Pinar 1978, p. 325) to demonstrate “educational experience” through academic study—the method of *currere*—presaging my argument that study—not learning—is the site of education (Pinar, 2006, pp. 109-120). In 1973, I would also publish an affirmation of lived educational experience drawn from Woolf’s *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (Pinar, 1994, pp. 19-27).

³⁵ Even more so when they are composed by my UBC colleague and friend Janice Stewart (2010). I quoted from one study—Berman (2001)—in my keynote address at the 2013 meeting of the European Association for Curriculum Studies and from another—Agathocleous (2011)—in my keynote address at the 2014 meeting of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies.

³⁶ After the horrifying result of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, I feel it more than ever. For a sketch of the Weimar Republic as an allegory of the present, see Pinar, 2012, pp. 69-101.

³⁷ See Bell, 1972, p. 226.

³⁸ For an example of her early work—composed while we were in conversation—see Shaw (1975/2000). My close friend during graduate school, Francine had come to town the year after I moved there in order to teach film at the Rochester Institute of Technology. After a year, she left Rochester to teach film at New York University. We fell out soon after she arrived upstate but met again, cordially, maybe ten years ago when I sponsored a birthday party for our PhD supervisor, Donald R. Bateman, living in Granville, Ohio. Professor Bateman died in December 2013.

³⁹ I headed the search committee that hired Wexler in 1981. We would become friends, spending summers with similarly-aged sons. After I left Rochester in 1985, Wexler became dean, leaving later for Jerusalem. In the early 1980s, he was a critical theorist in the Frankfurt School tradition; now, he reconciles sociology with mysticism (see Wexler, 2013).

⁴⁰ Everyday life is a major focus of curriculum research in Brazil (Pinar, 2011, pp. 206-208).

⁴¹ Starting from a R. D. Laing-inspired analysis of schooling—later published as “Sanity, Madness, and the School”—I focused my dissertation research on humanities curriculum organized around dialogical encounter and solitude. I revisit the “dialogical encounter” emphasis in the 2011 book (pp. 18-20)—it comes from Freire whose work I read as a fourth-year undergraduate—and “solitude” reappears in my emphasis on “study” (2006). The humanities, I never left.

⁴² In Henrietta, just southeast of Scottsville, where I moved after our household broke up in 1974.

⁴³ At the Zen Center, I met Denah Joseph, with whom I fell in love. On September 15, 1976, our son Gabriel would be born. Today, he is married to Jane Virga. With their daughter, Olympia, they live in Brooklyn.

⁴⁴ See Pinar, 1974.

⁴⁵ Later Doi become dean at the University of Washington from which he retired. Doi and I exchanged greetings through email after a 2009 conversation with James Banks in South Korea. Turns out Professors Banks and Doi remain in touch with each other.

⁴⁶ See Perlstein, 2000, p. 51.

⁴⁷ See Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, pp. 186-239.

⁴⁸ See Pinar, 1975.

⁴⁹ Regimes of “accountability” are enforced through the electronic media. The screen on my computer becomes the panopticon. While email is an enormous convenience, it imposes on me an hour each day of labor—often welcome—that I did not have before its creation. (It is an hour because I refuse to spend more than 60 minutes on email. Correspondents have learned that a several-days delay is likely when communicating with me.) In 1972, when I waltzed in the office mid-morning, Margaret Zaccone would sometimes say “you’ve a letter” or “there’s a phone message,” but not everyday. Still a correspondence accumulated, now in the LSU Library archives.

⁵⁰ Intrusion in its geological sense, as the movement of molten rock (magma) into preexisting rock. *Magma* is a “recurrent, significant word” for Pier Paolo Pasolini, Lawton (2005, xxxii) points out, “used figuratively—as it can be in Italian—to indicate a confused and unpredictable mass. It also retains the charge of its literal meaning of incandescence, of molten energy ready to erupt and flow, willy-nilly.” See Pinar 2009a, pp. 99-142.