

The Garden as Metaphor for Curriculum

By Karen Wilson Baptist

The imagination is not only holy,
It is precise
It is not only fierce it is practical
Men die every day for the lack of it
It is vast & elegant
—Diane DiPrima, *Rant*, 1985

Twenty seven years ago in William Pinar's (1975) ground breaking collection of reconceptualist thought, *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists*, Herbert Kliebard focused the attention of contemporary curriculum theorists on the descriptive power of metaphor as an aid to re-imagining curriculum.

In his brief contribution to Pinar's collection, "Metaphorical roots of curriculum design," Kliebard characterizes curriculum through three metaphoric descriptors:

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production, travel, and growth. Production is described as a curricular form in which "the student is the raw material which will be transformed into a finished and useful product under the control of a highly skilled technician" (p. 84). Kliebard's (1975) production metaphor emphasizes predictable outcomes, efficiency, and effective channeling of resources.

Through Kliebard's metaphor of travel, the educational experience is seen as a journey of discovery for

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the learner. Both the nature of the road and the nature of the learner are considered in determining the course of the experience. As guide and companion, the educator is concerned less with a need to “anticipate the exact nature of the effect on the traveler” and more with providing a journey “as rich, as fascinating, and as memorable as possible” (p. 85).

Finally, the metaphor of growth describes the learner as a member of a community of plants growing in a greenhouse. Here, the educator acts as gardener, taking responsibility for the development of each plant according to specific individualized needs. In this context, Kliebard observes: “No attempt is made to divert the inherent potential of the individual plant from its own metamorphosis or development to the whims and desires of the gardener” (pp. 84-85). This paper seeks an expanded definition of Kliebard’s garden metaphor as a means of re-imagining curriculum.

Arts-based curricular theorists such as Greene (1995) and Eisner (1991) provide a historical and intellectual context for employing metaphorical thinking in expansive ways. Diamond and Mullen (1999), Slattery (1995), and Snowber (1999), amongst others, have explored the potential of a postmodern interpretation of metaphor through artistic, hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches to contemporary curriculum theory. The use of metaphor as a figure of comparison by scholars generates new ways of examining curricular forms by merging two or more seemingly unconnected concepts together. “Metaphors are not just the concern of the poet or the literary critic ...”, states Sarup (1993), “they represent one of the ways in which many kinds of discourse are structured and powerfully influence how we conceive things” (p. 48).

This article explores the notion of the garden as metaphor for curriculum, because like curriculum, the garden is primarily a social construct that reflects the intent of the maker and the prevailing cultural ideologies of the time. The lived experiences of the person within both curriculum and garden are a synthesis of orchestrated and phenomenological experiences. The garden and the curriculum employ a common interpretive stance by referencing the artistry of creation within an aesthetic of experience. Within this hermeneutic relationship lies the potential for moving dreams and visions from private contemplation to public interpretation. Gardens, like curriculum, can be rigorously planned, plucked and nurtured, leaving as little as possible to happenstance; alternatively, they can be wild, left completely to nature. The garden and curriculum invite participation through physical movement, intellectual engagement and creative imagination. At their best, each can awaken the senses, provide delight, evoke love; at their worst, each provokes hatred, prejudice and terror. Spinning a web of meaning between curriculum and gardens, I hope to generate compassion for a re-imagined curriculum that welcomes dreams and visions: a curriculum that honours the senses, that engages our bodies; and a curriculum that connects to ourselves, our communities and to the earth.

Re-conceptualizing Curriculum through the Garden Metaphor

Mead (1936) describes the educational milieu as a place where the learner, insulated from the external environment, engages in a process of self discovery and invention. By association, the garden as metaphor for curriculum can therefore be a medieval *hortus conclusus*, the biblical Garden of Eden or a post romantic garden in the wild. Yet as the student killings in Tabor, Alberta and Littleton, Colorado have so tragically illustrated, the innocents seeking the apple of knowledge arrive in the garden with gym bags packed heavy with artillery. Who brought the serpent to the garden? Was it Marc Lépine in Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, or Dan Kebold and Eric Harris in Colombine High School. Or paradoxically, did corruption flourish within the garden as others would have it, through promoting tolerance for prejudice and hate? Was the school curriculum so restrictive, so fragmented, that these angry young men could find no better way to express themselves than through an eruption of violence and revenge?

In an enclosed garden, outside elements such as sun and rain cannot be shut out. No matter how proficient the gardener or the curricularist, no one can predict or control the factors which could potentially influence environments such as these. Each student and each teacher brings into play, the varied elements of individual life-worlds-elements such as experiences at home, the cumulative effects of previous schooling and individual social intentions and interactions. Curriculum can be constructed in a way which either celebrates or suppresses these individual experiences, thereby enriching, or alternatively, polluting and corrupting the educational milieu. Slattery (1995) aptly illustrates this form of “hidden curriculum” when he uses the 1993 floods of the rigidly controlled Mississippi River as a metaphor for “teachers and students whose movement through the places of education is often confined, restricted, and polluted by those who seek to conquer the mind and spirit” (p. 186). Alternatively, in Morton’s (1992) image of Anna’s Garden, a collaborative moment between artist and gardener illustrates how an alleged concentration camp survivor expresses her inner terror through the making of a garden of un-earthly delight and disturbance. Anna’s garden becomes Anna’s voice. Yet Anna’s story as told through her garden both fascinates and frightens the viewer with its dark complexity and obsessiveness. As Balmori and Morton (1993) comment:

We have here two gardens juxtaposed: a Garden of Eden for animals and plants and a garden of evil for the doll-humans. Wholeness is set against the wounded, and a feeling of imminent danger is pervasive. (p. 39)

Anna’s garden illustrates the darker side of human inventiveness. If Anna could not speak through her garden, she could potentially express her fear and anger through internal or external destructiveness. To see Anna’s rage so clearly depicted

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Anna's Garden © Margaret Morton, 1992

evokes a counter-reaction of fear, vulnerability and horror. If you were to discover Anna in your classroom, would you honor her need to express these unpleasant human emotions, or would you attempt to silence her? As educators, are we willing to allow the full spectrum of human experience to exist within our learning environments?

In Ontario, Canada, a Supreme Court case is still pending over the educational displacement of a high school student who submitted a violent story to his teacher. Recently a Winnipeg, Manitoba boy was expelled from school for posting hate messages about his teachers on the Internet. In curriculum, as in gardens, errant “growth” or expression is often unwelcome. As Jamaica Kincaid (1999) comments, “A gardener wants the garden to behave in the way she says, and when it does not, she will turn it out, abandon it, she will denounce the garden” (p. 229). If the goal

of curriculum is the creation of optimum conditions for growth for all learners, how can this be facilitated?

In the community of the garden, all elements are considered equally essential to the overall success of the garden. Gardens exhibit the consummation of deliberately selected components: plants, objects, soil, color, forms, and shapes. Similarly, the commonplaces of curriculum consists of a combination of subjects, learners, teachers, experiences and environment (Schwab, 1970). Thus, the quest of the gardener is not unlike the goal of the educator. In a successful garden, individual components act in concert, evoking a holistic experience for the observer/participant. Similarly, van Manan (1990) speaks of “restoring broken wholeness by recollecting something lost, past, or eroded, and by reconciling it in our experience of the present with a vision of what should be” (p. 153). Pedagogical holism can occur through classrooms and through educational events where each learner is honoured and his or her individual life-worlds respected. The following passage from Slattery (1995) illustrates this gestalt:

Curriculum development in the postmodern era respects and celebrates the uniqueness of each individual person, text, event, culture and educative moment, but all within the context of an interdependent cosmological view.” (p. 142)

Responding to a post-millennium longing for connectiveness, recently emerging strands in curriculum inquiry commit to that same holistic tendency by incorporating elements of theory, practice and experience. This form of inquiry and research could potentially reconceptualize an image of curriculum that is individual, relevant and whole (Bowers, 1997). Therefore as a metaphor for curriculum-the garden-expresses the need for an “ecology of interrelatedness and connected thoughts, spaces, activities and symbols” (Francis & Hester 1995, p.2).

The Garden and Curriculum as Simulacra

The similarity between curriculum and garden occurs because they are both mimetic constructions based on nature and natural forms of knowing. According to Jameson (1991), simulacrum is “the identical copy for which no original ever existed” (p. 18). Therefore, as fabrications of natural and cultural ecologies, the garden and the curriculum exist as simulacra. These idealized interpretations of nature and culture are potentially “powerful settings for human life, transcending time, place and culture” (Francis & Hester 1995, p.2). Our romance with the simulacra of gardens and of curriculum reference our human desire to connect with self and with nature.

Schubert (1986) observes that those who subscribe to “naturalism” as an educational premise are concerned with individual development, self-directed experiential learning, contact with nature, and the rejection of cultural reproduction (p. 129). Accordingly, observations of animals acting within natural settings suggests that learning occurs when the more experienced animal engages with the

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offspring in the transfer of crucial skills and knowledge systems. Combining imitation with a process of experimentation allows the younger animal to individualize techniques for survival.

Similarly, through trial and error, a learner can discover the optimum way to individualize knowledge through actions which will initiate personally desired outcomes. Therefore, in its best constructions curriculum mimics natural forms of learning through experiential learning modes which encourage individualized interpretations of knowledge and environment. The fluidity of this form of curricular model allows for the flourishing of spontaneous growth. However, curriculum can also distort natural forms of learning through organizationally institutionalized, constrained modes of education; just as in some gardens where the processes of nature are deliberately arrested as the gardener imposes monocultural order by weeding out all diverse forms.

Genetically encoded by our biological heritage, our natural curiosity for knowledge is not easily suffocated by rationalist curricular rigidity. Curriculum which is based on the imposition of power, dominance, rules and order is a distortion of nature and natural ways of knowing. High stakes testing, “canned” curriculum, formalist approaches, and directed, outcomes based learning objectives are politically and economically driven constructs sustained by a circle of fear and reductive reasoning. What kind of human sensibilities and understandings will such a rigid view of curriculum produce? How can educators inspire emancipatory forms of learning under such prescribed conditions? As more parents turn to charter schools and private forms of education, the erosion of public schools continues. Perhaps, as Kincaid suggests:

What turned wrong with Eden is so familiar: the owner grew tired of the rigid upkeep of His creation, of the rules that could guarantee its continued perfect existence. ... And the caretakers, the occupants (Adam and the Eve), too seemed to have grown tired of the demands of the Gardener and most certainly of His ideas of what the garden ought to be. (p. 223)

As a model for curriculum as simulacrum, gardens suggest that curriculum must seek a balance between controlled cultivation and unfettered growth, between the constructs of nature and of culture. Curriculum as simulacra is not “nature”, yet curriculum can encourage “natural” life-enhancing learning by nurturing a “ecology of meaning,” where connectivity, experience, imagination and growth dominate. Drive by an abandoned farm on the prairie and witness the restorative powers of nature merging with the remnants of homesteaders’ gardens-lilac bushes, a wizened apple tree, purple irises buried in a sea of grass.

Re-imagining Curriculum

Metaphoric inquiry can liberate the inquirer from disciplinary and philosophical boundaries, creating new possibilities for meaning-making. Thus garden as a

metaphor for curriculum and for curriculum inquiry potentializes creativity and imagination. The fluidity of metaphor as an imagining/imaging device encourages the inquirer to paint personal portraits of meaning, and yet, metaphor invites the reader to enter into similar phenomenological interpretations of text and of image. “A metaphor is not merely a linguistic expression,” states Johnson (1987), “it is a process of human understanding by which we achieve meaningful experience that we can make sense of” (p. 15).

Each curricularist frames curriculum inquiry through a form born in personal meaning systems and observations of social life. Yet the inquirer trusts that the inquiry, like a garden, will have relevance within the larger human community. Once these awakening ideologies are placed into the communal realm, they reflect the act of the gardener, who plots, plans, and toils in private, yet whose actions become a part of public life. Reader/viewer, as both observer and participant, is invited to process these ideas through his or her own personal meaning systems. Ideas become dialogical in nature, efflorescent transactions between creator, creator as viewer, viewer, and viewer as creator of meaning. This hermeneutic reflectivity encourages a blossoming of visionary possibilities for re-imagined constructions of curriculum and of inquiry.

This open-ended personal synthesis of public and private, of theory, ideas, practice, and the requirements or restrictions of contributing modes of inquiry can be difficult to explicate. Again, the garden provides a model for resolution through the acceptance of contradiction. Francis and Hester (1995) observe that “In the garden these apparent irreconcilables are clarified and mediated because the garden accepts paradox. Anyone who has ever gardened knows that a garden represents constancy yet is ever changing” (p. 4). Seeking to inspire, rather than direct, to illuminate rather than enlighten, the garden as a metaphor for a re-imagined curriculum reveals more possibilities than “truths.” The garden metaphor enables us to conceive of curriculum and of curriculum inquiry as evolving contingencies which could be transformed through each encounter with a new recipient.

Six Views of the Garden Metaphor

Gardeners speak of the process of making gardens as an act of trust and possibility. Each season brings different climatic conditions, opportunities to experiment, and new varieties to seed. If the gardener attempts to completely control the “event” of the garden, these possibilities may never emerge, rather they become lost in intent.

The metaphoric possibilities ignited by the idea of garden as a metaphor for curriculum and for curriculum inquiry reaches into the future with a promise of what could otherwise be, restructuring habitual patterns of knowing and seeing. To explore some of these contingencies, I introduce here a conceptual premise for curriculum and curriculum inquiry that demonstrates the versatility of the garden

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metaphor. Derived from Francis and Hester's (1995) work, these six muses of the contemporary garden-spirituality and faith, power, ordering, cultural and personal expression and healing-provide a unique stance from which to view curriculum.

Faith

Curriculum and curriculum inquiry based on faith creates a space for the spiritual nature of humankind, by cultivating connectivity with self, with community and with nature. According to Francis and Hester (1995) "Faith can also form a creative future by providing alternatives to those forces of modern life that deaden humanity" (p. 10).

Webster informs that the word *spirit* was born of the Latin *spiritus* which means *breath*. Because I connect my own sense of spirituality to particular geographies, I reflect upon how this word *spiritus* relates to how I feel both completed and connected in certain places. For example, I breathe when surrounded by the vast vista of sky and water of Lake Winnipeg; I breathe on my daily morning walk through a nearby river park and I breathe as I toil in my garden. Gardens are consummate places to breathe-plants absorb the by-product of human breath (carbon dioxide)-just as we inhale plants' reciprocal gift of oxygen. As I breathe in, I oxygenate my soul with the fragrance of soil, water and sky. Breathing is more than a simple intake of molecules, it is a liminal activity which activates the threshold between our collective bodies and the earth. As Hejduk (1996) poeticizes, "When I breathe the air in I breathe in all the sounds from all the voices since the beginning of time" (p. 21).

I developed an understanding of the compelling human desire for spiritual places, for places of faith and of breath, when I encountered Margaret Morton's (Balmori and Morton, 1993) images of New York city gardens. Through her photographs, I learned that homeless people crave gardens too and that they constructed gardens; this knowledge forged new definitions of the meaning of gardens for me.

Gardens express a human need for connectivity. This need to commune with the earth is an essential dimension of human spirituality and faith, nurturing mutual understanding through caring thought and action. Contemporary inquirers have begun to explore ways of educationally embracing this spiritual imperative. For example, Samples (1999) observes, "The human soul is the sacred connection to all life and the world that sustains it, to our membership in the human family, and within the spirit of our personhood" (p. 199). Miller (1999) writes of education for the human soul, observing that contemplative educational practices such as journaling, visualization, dream analysis and the arts provide a "curriculum for the inner life" (p. 215). Purpel (1999) states, "As educators, we need to ground our work in a vision that in some significant way, resonates with what matters most and is of the most profound nature, to matters of cosmology, religion, and spirituality" (p. 62).

Spirituality and faith, like gardens and curriculum inquiry can be life-long

actions - hopeful journeys - rather than destinations. Spirituality is reaching, and stretching, and almost touching; trusting and “opening up to the mystery” (Caputo, 1987, p. 267).

Pollution, habitat destruction, the loss of natural and human diversity, the appalling care of our sick and elderly, the cultural proliferation of weapons, crime and murder, are all evidence of a society unhitched from faith and spirituality. And learning institutions, as our most prevalent cultural filter, must assume some blame for this state of spiritual disruption and bankruptcy. The cultivation of spirituality could be attained through a curriculum which values attentiveness, imagination, and contemplation-curriculum that invites learners to breathe. This transformative possibility is expressed through the words of inquirers such as Muxworthy Feige (1999), who states “An education for greed, alienation, and control is transformed by an education for story, aesthetic at its center, dancing rather than processing, alive rather than dead, seamless rather than fragmented. Thinking becomes an experience” (p. 106).

Curriculum inquiry that celebrates our imaginative self, fostering caring towards human and natural communities, potentializes a paradigmatic shift from a fragmented world view to a spiritual consciousness of deep sensitivity and empowered, faithfilled action. Like the biblical Adam and Eve repositioning themselves in a perilous post-Eden landscape, within contemporary society we are struggling to center ourselves in a world increasingly dominated by empirical, technological and economic paradigms. By pausing long enough to breathe, we begin a pilgrimage of connectivity with ourselves, our communities, and nature. Look to gardens and see how the interface of mind, body, and spirit ignited there provides reflective intervals for connection and faith-for breathe-and seek to sow these notions into our educational milieus. Curriculum and curriculum inquiry based on faith shall rekindle the spiritual nature of humankind.

Power

The ideologies represented in various new forms of curriculum inquiry (Short, 1991) embody the potential to evoke and document powerful cultural or political change. Curriculum, like the garden, can be a symbol of individual or political prowess. Louis the XIV’s garden at Versailles is an example of how a garden can express the power of the individual and of the political structure. Versailles, with its ordered layout and severely clipped flora, symbolically communicates the dictatorial structure of the pre-revolution French monarchy. Alternatively, the diverse enclaves embedded within New York’s Central Park allow users to democratically interact with the park.

Curriculum can also express the desires of a hegemonic power structure, forcing teachers and learners to conform to rigidly controlled conditions. Our voices can be awakened or silenced through curriculum, for as Slattery (1995) predicts, a curriculum which seeks to “suppresses individual visions and dreams in

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the content and context of education” will either asphyxiate individuality or worse, will result in the backlash of anger and violence which currently plague our schools (p. 135).

Grumet (1988) describes curriculum as “artifice,” suggesting that curriculum is “deliberately designed to direct attention, provoke response and express value, it reorders experience so as to make it accessible to perception and reflection” (p. 79) Therefore, curriculum is a construction of vision and intent-often “hidden” vision and intent. Sometimes that vision may be narrow and confining, as in conditions of cultural reproduction or repressive practices. The facilitator of curriculum may seek to reproduce what is comfortable or familiar to her, indoctrinate members of a specific religion or profession, or enslave apprentices according to her distinct ideologies and methodologies. Often these forms of curriculum are predetermined, outcomes, controlled. But can the meeting places of learner, teacher and milieu, like the gardens of Versailles, ever be truly controlled? Critical theorists suggest that curriculum *can not* be controlled and have demonstrated by deconstructing the constructions of curriculum, thereby “proving” that such attempts at control often mask repressive practices (Arent, 1961; Haggerson, 2000; Lather, 1991; Slattery, 1995).

When I recall my own schooling, I remember how I felt silenced by the domination of linear, positivist, and rationalist forms of learning in the public school system. Not only did my education make it difficult for me to succeed academically, but the alienation of this “foreign” schooling left my psyche gravely damaged. However, developing an empowered curriculum does not necessarily mean “wiping the slate clean,” for if the pendulum was to swing the other way, those who favour, or even require more rationalist forms of knowledge, would then be excluded. Could schooling, as Slattery (1995) suggests, encourage learners to develop a holistic worldview by embracing curricular forms which celebrate “indeterminacy, aesthetics, autobiography, intuition, eclecticism, and mystery” (p. 23). Can inquirer, or conciliator of curriculum convert a curriculum of power into a curriculum of empowerment? As in the garden, curricular alteration requires sensitivity to existing strengths and a penetrating vision, weeding out invasive ideologies which have overgrown their original intent. This transaction of alteration is a visionary edit, for one must act with trust, hope, and wisdom. This is path of uncertainty-a notion which is ill at ease with the aspirations of a society which is becoming accustomed to generic solutions. However, as Doll (1993) suggests it is with this state of ambiguity that a new “social vision” is formed (p. 62).

To experience the gardens at Versailles is to see how the hand of a collective power was imposed upon the landscape and the lives of the people of that time and how constant vigilance is required to maintain that vision. Alternatively, to create a garden of one’s own is an act of openness and trust in the generative powers of the self.

Order

Order provides structure to garden and curriculum. Social, mathematical, biological, ecological, and aesthetic ordering in the garden speak of the purpose and underlying philosophy of the garden. In the curriculum, order may be provided by aesthetic, phenomenological, normative, critical, action based, religious, and hierarchical framing modes. "Uncovering the order is a key to the meaning of the garden" state Francis and Hester (1995, p. 11). This holds equally true for curriculum. The learner's view of world and self will be determined by how these ideological patterns are placed into action.

A task of the curriculum inquirer is to uncover the implicit meaning systems, to make the invisible patterns-visible. As in the garden, interpretation may be disabled by an inquiry method that seeks the truth only in surface details, refusing to look beyond the obvious. According to Smith (1991), curriculum is enacted through our personal "macro-frames" thus we must constantly seek to understand the structures which underlie our ordering of curricular constructions.

Order in the curriculum may be provided by documents-curriculum guides, plans, outlines, lecture notes, tests, essays, and assignments. Yet, I envision curriculum as an event or a "happening", a "realm of possibility" which occurs when making comes together with intent and with enactment; where learner, teacher and milieu collide. Through this collision, new visions for learning are collectively formed. Gablik (1991) states that imagination potentializes a new world order, stating that "visionary seeing is a force against the literal mind, which believes that things are only as they appear" (p. 52). Perhaps, as Gablik suggests, by tapping into myth, mystery and magic we catch a glimpse of what otherwise might be possible.

Doll's (1993) notion of a "dancing curriculum" suggests that learning could occur through a shifting interaction between teacher, learner, and text. For Kincheloe (1998), "The frontier where the information of the disciplines intersects with the understandings and experience that individuals carry with them to school is the point where knowledge is created" (p. 135). According to Greene (1995) imagination can provide a means of divorcing the familiar and "carve out new orders in experience" (p.19). If the re-ordering of curriculum means imagining new patterns and possibilities such as these, then curriculum inquiry could construct new frontiers through visionary approaches to inquiry, to theory, and to practice.

As inquirer, I sweep through the ample landscape of research, attempting to make visible the patterns which emerge for me. I struggle to make meaning, weaving the words of others into the fabric of my lived world-into my educational questions, my experiences, and my visions. Williams (1998) observes, if in the inquiry, as in the garden, I begin with a predisposition as to what shall be, the inquiry will be tainted and skewed towards self-favoured outcomes. According to Pallasmaa (2000), "focused vision makes us mere outside observers" (p. 83). Artists speak of the process of letting images emerge from the matrix-embedded within the virgin

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canvas or stone lie unknown possibilities. Yet, if the artist attempts to completely control the making, the image may never emerge, rather it becomes lost in intent. The act of the inquiry, like the act of the artist, or of the gardener, is a dance of control and release, a geomancy of thought, ideas, theory and practice, propelling the past and present into the promise of the future.

Cultural Expression

As cultural expressions, garden and curriculum are reflections of their place and their time. Both mirror the prevailing social systems that formed them. Puerto Rican social clubs have created a piece of home in empty lots on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Casitas are more than a community garden—they are a social centre—where people gather to celebrate, converse and find shelter from the harsh social realities of immigrant life (Woodard, 1999). Curriculum can act to both encourage or to preserve cultural forms. For example, in Winnipeg, Aboriginal schools are struggling to achieve a balance between academic rigor and cultural preservation (Martin, 1999). Yet the preservation of diversity is not the only problem facing our society. Homogeneity encouraged by mass media, big box retailers and globalization threaten to flatten human reality. Retailers encourage consumers to seek comfort in the ubiquitous. “Everyone in leather,” ordained a recent Gap campaign.

In the natural world, bio-diversity is threatened by habitat loss, agricultural monocultures and the extinction of species. Likewise, cultural diversity is under attack as globalization and technology traverses geographical and political boundaries. “We believe that it is essential to maintain and celebrate cultural diversity in a landscape increasingly made uniform,” state Francis and Hester (1995, p. 12). Curriculum inquirers can encourage such diversity through the creation of curricular forms that encourage and celebrate multiple ways of knowing.

Maxine Greene (1995) observes that learning should begin with the pursuit of local knowledge, encouraging learners to begin to look for understanding within their own schools, institutions, and neighborhoods. Orr and Eagan (1992) suggest that programs of study could be focused on place. They have developed a curriculum of environmental responsibility which utilizes the locale of the university.

Four critical reasons for including the local in education are: place stimulates the development of intellect through experience; place downplays the isolation of overspecialization by promoting inter-disciplinary diversity and connectivity in thought and action; place reeducates “people in the art of living well where they are” inspiring care and concern for local cultural and natural communities; and finally knowledge of place and knowledge of self are intimately intertwined (Orr, 1992, pp. 129-130). Orr is concerned with the creation of empowered “inhabitants,” residents of place who are concerned enough about their communities to take action. This idea of citizen praxis is a view he shares with Paulo Freire (1970), Ivan Illich (1971) and Wendell Berry (2001).

While Freire seeks to emancipate an institutionalized oppressed citizenry, Illich seeks to de-institutionalize culture and society. Illich expresses fears that the institutionalization of society will lead to “physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery” (p.1). Berry (2001) defines a counter measure to Illich’s depowered society by developing a plan for locally sensitive economies. Berry also observes that current consumer practices and land use methodologies are accelerating in destructiveness as our inability to revision sustainable cultural practices leads to greater socially, culturally, and ecologically ruinous practices.

For Griffin (1988), contemporary culture could be deeply woven into place and community, stating that “social policy should be directed toward the preservation and re-creation of various forms of local community” (p. 18). Lippard (1997) speaks of knowledge of place as a “virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy that is rare today both in ordinary life and in traditional educational fields” (p. 33). If as Dewey (cited in Ezrahi, 1997, p.318) states, “That knowing is not the act of an outside spectator, but of a participator inside the natural and social scene,” then it is essential that learning institutions include the worlds right outside our windows, the places in which we live.

Some educators may be familiar with a program called “Landscapes for Learning,” where schoolyards are turned into ecological learning laboratories. Vast expanses of grass and barren asphalt playgrounds can be converted into interactive gardens, play spaces, and green classrooms. These landscapes can be used for studying science, art, and music, for developing visual and physical abilities, and for connecting and communing with others within naturalized environments. Stine (1997) states: “To learn about, to value, and to ultimately protect their world, children need to experience it fully in both its natural and built forms, where process is interwoven with product” (p. 33). As today’s children spend more and more time in structured activities, perhaps these eco-classrooms could provide opportunities to develop a kinship with place.

Landscapes for learning reconceptualizes the place of knowledge acquisition and inspires innovative interpretations of curriculum. Meaningful gardens are skillful blends of local ecologies and encoded cultural practices. Gardens which are rooted in “place” extend habitat and interpret communal beliefs and values. In that same spirit, a pedagogy of place allows us to begin to redescribe the world by highlighting that which lies beneath our feet. To combat our tendency toward the banal, the mundane, and the anti-aesthetic, we must heed Hwu’s (1998) invitation to “think differently,” (p.30) embracing a new way of seeing which unites us with the place and the people where we live.

Personal Expression

A garden creates opportunity for personal creativity and expression. Gardens provide delight. Can curriculum do that too? Imagine a curricular

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experience that rewards personal engagement in the holistic manner of the garden. Toil and labor result in self-gratification and in a public expression of beauty. The impetus for the garden of inquisitive school boy Max Wood of Merryall, Pennsylvania, was predicated by a question: How is bread made? Max cleared a plot, planted cereal grains, nurtured and finally harvested the results of his labor, describing his experience thus: "We rototilled the ground, then we planted the wheat and rye. Then we watched it grow. I was happy. It was fun" (Wood, 1999, p. 10).

Delight results from educational opportunities which allow the learner to explore personally relevant questions that develop the confidence to act upon personal and community values. This evolution of private ideologies to public action, requires courage, knowledge and above all a commitment to collective action. Through community gardens, individuals work together to counter urban and cultural decay and to re-establish a relationship with nature. "Mediators between nature and culture," states Lippard (1997), "gardens are paradoxically, communal places that encourage solitude and self reliance" (p. 253). In gardens we express our private vision in public ways. Gardens are both a reflection of our making, and a reflection of ourselves. Thus, the garden and the individual are intimately united-each gives and receives. Similarly, through curriculum, learner and knowledge merge, forging new levels of understanding.

The gardener and the garden grow together, as do the learner and the elements of curriculum. Neither the plants of the garden, nor forms of knowledge in the curriculum are frozen in this scenario. Each are transitory, ever changing, like life itself. According to Greene (1995) "We should think of education as opening public spaces in which students . . . can identify themselves and choose themselves in relation to such principles as freedom equality, justice, and concern for others" (p. 68). Curriculum inquiry which potentializes our imaginative self fosters caring towards human and natural communities. Could this position potentialize a paradigmatic shift from a fragmented world view to a collective consciousness of deep sensitivity and empowered, informed action?

Curriculum is not merely characterized by the acquisition of knowledge. It is an evolving process of self-knowledge, knowledge which allows the learner to interpret the world and be interpreted by the world through spiraling progressions of self-understanding and informed meaningful action.

Healing

The healing power of the garden is well documented. The gardens of the dispossessed in Balmori and Morton (1993) demonstrate how even a person without home desires a place in the world. Yet "The truth is that all gardens are transitory, . . . we build them to give an illusion of permanence" (p.1). Thus tuned to the rhythm of nature, gardens remind us that we are participants in the cycle of life and death. Morton's (1991) image of Jimmy in his garden highlights our desire to establish a place of our own upon the earth, where through love and care and

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tillage we can create beauty, make food, heal our souls and our communities. Here is the tale of Jimmy's garden:

Not one of the components of Jimmy's garden is permanent. There are no underground pipes running into the pool; no concrete has been poured to make its basin. The pool, in fact, is but one example of the impermanence of nearly everything here, a site that overtly confronts the essential characteristic of landscape: the limits of time. At times, teenage boys come into the lot and steal the goldfish; other times, for cruel sport, they take them out of the water and leave them to die. Jimmy always finds a way to obtain money to replace the fish. (Balmori & Morton, 1993, p. 62)

Jimmy's garden is attempt to recover a place in nature, a place of one's own. We live in an age when many of us feel lost and alone in the world. Curriculum can help us to live inside the world again. As educators we must commit to the creation



Jimmy's Fishpond © OmbraLuce LLC 1991, Margaret Morton photographer.

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of curriculum that can potentially promote healing and growth; that re-establishes a sense of personal meaning and balance.

In a recent issue of the *Manitoba Gardener*, journalist Jackie Shymanski (2001) shares her story of healing. After spending several years reporting on the war in Yugoslavia, she returned to Winnipeg emotionally shattered and unable to rejoin society. "I was at a loss until a family friend nudged me in the direction of gardening. Leave your troubles at the garden gate and just work hard. Brawn instead of brains. The appeal was irresistible" (p. 38). After three summers of working in a local public garden, Shymanski began to recover her damaged spirit.

Gardens are powerful embodied healing experiences because they engage us holistically, uniting our minds, our bodies, and our spirit. But curriculum has often been deliberately fractured, engaging our minds in the classroom, but expelling our bodies and spirit from the learning experience. The body as an educative site is an idea that runs counter to the notion that the mind is the location of all knowledge. Indeed, I can trace my public school experiences through the memories of my body. I recall sitting on the back bench during team sports, the smell of the classroom, the rigidity of the seating, and the social scenarios of inclusion/exclusion played out in the hallways. I cannot abolish these haptic tattoos which haunt my being for as Kingsolver (1998) suggests "to live is to be marked" (p. 385). Experience has shaped my sense of self more than all the "facts" poured like concrete into my imprisoned mind. Shapiro (1999) observes that "Experiences are perceived in coordination between our minds and bodies—that which forms our being. This forming is the historically situated, culturally inscribed 'reality' in which we live" (p. 26). As learners construct body experiences, memories and meaning through interactions with the living world. What in curriculum shapes this reality?

Perhaps educational encounters which seeks to honour all aspects of human knowing, including the knowledge of the body, could invigorate new forms of knowledge. I detect rising discontent with schooling, with social conditions, with global economies, and with the state of our natural world. Fragmentation, dismay, helplessness, fear—these are but a few of the maladies that afflict our collective psyche. And witness the litany of blame—schooling, government, corporatization, globalization—each are cited viruses in the rise of these conditions. The penalty, however, is something we all suffer, in terms of rising human misery, environmental and cultural deprivation and the proliferation of a new global corporate caste system.

Inquirers need to initiate new forms of critical praxis that could inspire human sensitivity, healing, and action. Looking to our physical engagement with gardens demonstrates how body knowledge could potentialize such changes. As Shapiro (1999) notes, "We have learned to live so much in our heads that we no longer feel connectiveness to other living things" (p. 98). Inquiry which consummates the unification of mind and body in holistic, experiential learning events could inspire new forms of human connectiveness. In the words of Merleau-Ponty (1964), "My

perception is not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens. I perceive in a total way with my whole being” (p. 19).

The Garden as a Metaphor for Reconstruction

Curriculum can help learners verify their vitality by forging links with the world. As theorist, researcher, and teacher, the inquirer can create curricular forms which energize participants for action beyond the confines of the learning milieu. The destruction of individual dignity, the erosion of a collective commitment to the social good, and the widespread degradation of our planet result in part from an educational system which objectifies both knowledge and learners. Curriculum, like the garden, is an environment that could restore and heal the self, the community and the earth. Hence, the act of the inquirer falls like a pebble in a pond. What may begin as a tiny splash, may have the potential to evoke ripples of change

The garden metaphor is a generative concept. This story of gardens and curriculum seems to resonate with educators, and each time I share these ideas I am greeted with a flood of ideas for extending, deepening and expanding this premise. For if you and I each describe a garden, our stories are likely quite different. If we are to define curriculum or curricular inquiry, we again spin a unique tale. Each of us has some form of internal script or image file through which we order the elements of our life world. This study of the social and cultural evolution of the garden can broaden our collective conceptions of what a garden can or could be, of what a garden can or could mean. Similarly, interpretive, artistic and aesthetic forms of curriculum can open eyes to new roles for curriculum and curriculum inquiry. The garden metaphor allows us to let go of the necessity to enclose, define and frame a particular meaning for inquiry. Metaphor inspires fresh ways of seeing through discovery, imagination, and play. Garden as metaphor for curriculum sows new beginnings, new forms and new possibilities for re-imagining curriculum.

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