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The Synoptic Text Today

William F. Pinar

[P]robably the most durable, widespread and self-destructive fallacy of American school men and women [is] the belief that there is an eternally true, ineluctable content of school subjects.

Joseph J. Schwab (1983, 250)

Understanding always therefore entails what might be called ... proleptic paraphrase or anticipatory synopsis.

Martin Jay (1988, 59)

Synoptic textbooks have played an influential role in the advancement of U.S. curriculum studies (see Pinar et al. 1995, 1108 n). In part because the genre is associated with probably the major school curriculum artifact – the textbook – the synoptic text in curriculum studies has served to summarize curriculum scholarship and suggest its significance. Because the field emerged historically within the social-efficiency movement (see Pinar et al. 1995, 6; chapter 2, section V), that scholarship tended to focus on protocols or “principles” of curriculum development, an administrative interest that triumphed, despite being challenged by the social-reform wing of the Progressive movement, in Tyler’s (1949) infamous and pithy proceduralization of that interest.

Losing professional jurisdiction over curriculum development as a consequence of the 1960s national curriculum reform movement, the curriculum field went into paradigmatic crisis during the 1970s, and emerged in the 1980s a

complex field devoted to the scholarly understanding of curriculum, curriculum-in-place and curriculum-as-possibility, the latter emphasizing pedagogical innovation and subversion of the tightening control of the official curriculum, achieved increasingly by focusing the curriculum on assessment by standardized examination (McNeil 2000; Pinar 2004).

The synoptic text I completed in 2000 (Pinar 2001) and the one on which I am now working (for an introduction, see Pinar 2003) is focused not on curriculum and teaching in their traditional institutional senses. Indeed, I am calling upon us to “speak of the schools sparingly” (Pinar 2004, 175). While curriculum studies must always allocate time to studying the schools, I will propose here “something [else] for curriculum professors to do” (Schwab 1983; see Block in press). (1) As another strategy for understanding curriculum, I suggest we research interdisciplinary reconfigurations of the intellectual content of the curriculum.

(2)

What I am proposing is that curriculum studies scholars research “throughlines” along which subjectivity, society, and intellectual content in and across the academic disciplines run. Such “content” (itself an old-fashioned and synoptic curriculum term) becomes not simply derivative from - a “bad copy” of - the academic disciplines, but, rather, a conceptual montage enabling teachers to complicate the conversations they themselves will lead in their own classrooms. Composing such synoptic textbooks for teachers constitutes, I am suggesting, a new form of contemporary curriculum studies research (3).

One example of such research, I offer, is *The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America*. In that synoptic textbook for teachers (Pinar 2001), I drew

upon several disciplines to summarize the research on lynching and prison rape and, in so doing, portray the problem of “race” – and, by implication, attendant problems of anti-racist education - as gendered and, as, I argued, “queer.” In conducting such research, I was asking what knowledge is of most worth. From history, from criminology, from feminist and queer theory, I constructed a montage that pointed to the educational significance of that interdisciplinary knowledge for the subjectively-existing individual in this racialized society. In the juxtaposition of paraphrased research conducted by historians, feminist and gender theorists, prison researchers, and literary critics, I was suggesting how anti-racist education might be refocused, what “teaching for tolerance” might entail, what the very construct of “multiculturalism” must acknowledge: namely, that the very category of the civic is, in the United States, saturated with the sexual.

Contemporary curriculum research is nothing less than the intellectual formation of a public sphere in education, a resuscitation of the progressive project in contemporary subjective and social terms, in which we come to understand that self-realization and democratization are inextricably intertwined (4). That is, in addition to providing competent individuals for the workplace and for higher education, we curriculum studies scholars must renew our commitment to the democratization of American society, pedagogical process that requires the psycho-social and intellectual development of the subjectively-existing individual. In the synoptic texts I am proposing that we produce, we aspire to contribute to the intellectual self-formation of teachers committed to the reconstruction of the public sphere in education (Pinar 2004).

This new form of curriculum research teaches teachers more about the subjects they teach and, especially, more about related and interdisciplinary subjects. After reading the new curriculum research, teachers will not only know more about the school subjects they teach, teachers will also know more about related and interdisciplinary subjects and how these subjects might be extended to “self” and “society.” Indeed, in the new curriculum research we are demonstrating how academic knowledge might contribute to the restructuring of students’ subjectivities for the sake of social reconstruction. In a certain sense, what I am proposing we curriculum studies scholars offer teachers – and teachers offer their students - are sophisticated, knowledge-based versions of William Heard Kilpatrick’s (1918) much maligned (see, for example, Hirsch 1999 or Ravitch 2000) “project method.”

This is not a place to consider the method as originally formulated and those criticisms of it, including those of Boyd Bode’s and John Dewey’s (see Pinar et al., chapter 3; Westbrook 1991, 504-505); I invoke it here to underscore the historical continuity of the work I am proposing we curriculum scholars undertake. While “advocacy academicians” (Shaker and Heilman 2002, 1) like E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (1999) and Diane Ravitch (2000) have drawn simplistic and often false oppositions between “knowledge-based” schooling and the progressive tradition, the scholarship I have undertaken and am proposing here makes their inextricable interrelationship unmistakable. In *The Gender of Racial Politics in America*, I put the matter this way:

Let our students carry into school classrooms what is missing in their district-mandated textbooks and, as circumstances allow and their

professional judgement suggests, complicate the conversations there. Employing research completed in other disciplines as well as our own, let us construct textbooks – like this one, perhaps – which enable public school teachers to reoccupy a vacated “public” domain, not simply as “consumers” of knowledge, but as active participants in conversations they themselves will lead. In drawing – promiscuously but critically - from various academic disciplines and popular culture, I work to create a conceptual montage for the teacher who understands that positionality as aspiring to create a “public” space. By so working, we curriculum theorists are working to resuscitate the progressive project. (Pinar 2001, 21-22)

By doing so, we are giving lie to the claim libelously made by Hirsch and less polemically by Ravitch that education professors are only interested in “pedagogy,” not “knowledge.” That has always been a lie, but, thanks to Hirsch and Ravitch and the right-wing scapegoating of schoolteachers and now education professors, it appears to be a lie widely accepted.

Especially during this time when the academic field of education is under savage attack by politicians, it is incumbent upon us to maintain our professional dignity by reasserting our commitment to the intellectual life of our field. One form such a reassertion of our intellectual commitment might take is the study of those academic subjects that speak to social and subjective reconstruction in this time of right-wing authoritarianism and cultural decline (see Pinar 2002). That is a broad terrain indeed; it requires us to deepen, make more sophisticated, and then extend, our disciplinary expertise to theory and scholarship not only in curriculum studies but in other academic disciplines as well in as popular culture

and cultural criticism. Such intellectual labor requires us to situate ourselves as embodied subjectively-existing individuals living in (against) the historical moment. Conducted in order to make pointed the convergence of intellectual inquiry and pedagogical engagement, situating is, in part, the work of autobiography, especially as this has been elaborated in curriculum studies (see Pinar et al. 1995, chapter 10; Miller in press; Grumet 1988; see, too, Simpson 2002). As well, the new curriculum research requires situating ourselves historically (see Baker 2001; Pinar 2004).

Who invited us to do this work? No one, of course; it is a task we take upon ourselves because the convergence of the historical situation and our profession calls us to the work. During this time of academic vocationalism, in which the academic disciplines (or, at least, their derivations, the school subjects) are assumed to be the inviolate units of school curriculum, we must reassert our interest in the overall school program (as our predecessors used to term it), our interest in the intellectual content of the curriculum understood as the structuration of educational experience. The academic disciplines play the major role in such structuration, but their educational (a term subsuming their academic) significance requires interdisciplinary research that connects new and ongoing scholarship in those disciplines to subjective meaning and social significance.

In addition to curriculum theory and history, what intellectual traditions inform the construction of the new synoptic text? One such tradition is intellectual history. The consequence of the curriculum research I am recommending is the provision of summaries of extant research concerning

various subjects, especially where summaries do not exist. Where summaries do exist, they might be updated, made more complete, and/or connected to related subjects while rendered accessible to teachers struggling to educate the American public. In my study (2001), I connected the research on lynching to studies of violence against women and to criminological studies of interracial prison rape in order to disclose, I hoped, the gender of racial politics and violence in America.

Summaries of extant research could be invaluable to overworked teachers without time to read original studies and texts, but they are, I suggest, only starting points. In the new curriculum research we will provide not only synopses of important and timely individual essays or books; we will then juxtapose these in order to create complex and novel interdisciplinary configurations not before constructed. We work to create views (e.g. montages) of especially interdisciplinary configurations not visible in the compartmentalized curriculum organized around the school subjects and focused on standardized exams (5).

What informs this process of curriculum construction in this post-Reconceptualization era? In general terms, to study the relations among subjectivity, society and academic knowledge requires autobiographical and cultural (including political, economic, racial and gender) research, intellectual labor given subjective meaning – indeed, existential urgency - by the former and social significance by the latter. In more specific terms, to render this study as curricular montage – while, of course, a matter of originality, creativity, and the capacity for “improvisation” (see Aoki in press) – requires a technical expertise in the subject and a pedagogical formulation of its possible import for the education of the public. I employ this last phrase to make explicit that public education

(that is, the education of the public) is not necessarily identical with the acquisition of knowledge in the academic disciplines as these are currently institutionalized in colleges and universities. The point of such research cannot be (only) improved test scores on standardized examinations (to establish bragging rights for politicians) or to prepare students for success in college classrooms, although no educator can be opposed to either. The point of such research is to strengthen the intellectual content of school curriculum while *suggesting* its subjective meaning and social significance.

I italicize that gerund to underline that connecting academic knowledge to subjectivity and society must never become *de rigueur*, a customary, taken-for-granted ritualization of study and teaching. The point of *suggesting* the subjective meaning and social significance of academic knowledge is to encourage interdisciplinary inquiry and understanding, as well as critical thinking, originality, the capacity for wonder (see Huebner 1999), and independence of mind. Without bodies of knowledge, dispositions are mere skeletons, and they will constrict rather than self-reflectively structure our intellectual lives if they become commanded, made ideological, or bureaucratized. In *suggesting* subjective meaning and social significance of academic knowledge, moreover, we never lose sight of the original text.

To help us think about this last issue (crucial because it has embedded within it the current controversies concerning “traditional” and “progressive” education [see Hirsch 1999; Ravitch 2000]) let us turn to Martin Jay’s discussion of research methodology in intellectual history. This specialization within the discipline of history – like curriculum studies, an academic discipline that

straddles the divide between social science and the humanities - is one upon which we might draw in this early stage of thinking about the new synoptic text in curriculum studies. The historiographical controversy concerning the status of the paraphrase, especially in relation to the original text, can be instructive for those of us constructing versions of the new curriculum synoptic text. One vulnerability of such research, after the matter of its faithfulness to the original text, is the tendency of paraphrase to “replace” the original text.

“Documentary” and “Worklike” Research Methods

Yet, it is the tear, or the separation of the self from its sedimented identity, that enables a redefinition of becoming and freedom from its sedimented identity, that enables a redefinition of becoming and freedom from the liberation of identity to the continuous “surpassing” of oneself.
Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (2001, 39)

Martin Jay is one of the nation’s most distinguished intellectual historians, the author of intellectual histories of the concept of totality in Marxism (see Jay 1984) and of the denigration of visuality in twentieth-century French thought (see Jay 1993). Jay’s discussion of “worklike” and “documentary” methods in intellectual history enables us to focus on key methodological concerns, including faithfulness of the paraphrase to the original text and the attendant danger of over-simplification. Given the politically precarious character of our political situation today, we curriculum studies professors must attend extremely cautiously to these methodological concerns.

Employing the “documentary” method, intellectual historians summarize the thought of key figures. Such thought is then connected to the historical moment,

formulating, as Jay (1988, 53) succinctly puts the matter, “a relationship between ideas or mind and world.” Such documentation is a key phase of the new curriculum research, both summarizing new scholarship on provocative topics and then connecting them to the world, both public and private (as each domain is embedded in the other). This is the intellectual – and pedagogical – labor of “synoptic content analysis” (LaCapra1982, 55; quoted in Jay 1988, 52).

This “documentary” research method Dominick LaCapra contrasts with the “worklike.” “The worklike is critical and transformative,” he writes, “for it deconstructs and reconstructs the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing into the world something that did not exist before in that significant variation, alternation, or transformation” (1982, 53; quoted in Jay 1988, 52). Due to their training, Jay (1988, 52) acknowledges, “most intellectual historians ... lean toward a documentary rather than worklike method, avoiding particularly complex literary texts in favor of ones more easily reduced to a paraphrasable core of meaning.” In order to make ideas accessible to students with varying ability, interest, and background, teachers tend to reduce ideas to “a paraphrasable core of meaning.”

Is the provision of such paraphrased “cores” sufficient for understanding the subject? Paraphrasing LaCapra, Jay (1988, 53) identifies the epistemological issue embedded in the question: “The relationship between text and context ought, therefore, to be conceptualized as another form of intertextuality rather than a relationship between ideas or mind and world.” What is the nature of such an “intertextual” relation between curriculum research and the research and

scholarship upon which it draws? That question is implied by Michael Ryan's criticism of the synoptic strategy.

I was struck how faithfully the method of intellectual historiography followed the pattern of conceptualization as it is found in Western rationality. That method consists of giving a brief synopsis of the arguments of such thinkers. The synopsis in such historiography is analogous to a concept that it abridges and reduces a complicated, heterogeneous mass to an abstract, homogeneous form. (1982, 144; quoted in Jay 1988, 53)

What renders the synoptic method problematic for Ryan is, Jay (1988, 53) summarizes, "its normative and hierarchical exclusion of everything that falls outside such a synopsis." This is an allegation Jay rejects.

In defense of the synoptic method, Jay (1988, 54) invokes a Habermasian notion of communicative rationality, which he characterizes as "an inherently intersubjective, symmetrically unhierarchical relationship." A public sphere characterized by "communicative rationality" would not be structured, Jay (1988, 54) offers, "on the essentially pedagogical model of the lecture hall" because (and here Jay quotes Habermas) "in a process of enlightenment there can be only participants" (1974, 40; quoted in Jay 1988, 55).

In a field whose main organizing concept is "complicated conversation" (Pinar et al. 1995, 848), the notion of "pedagogical" would not be identified with the lecture hall model only (if at all). But curriculum studies scholars can only agree with Habermas' insistence that all become participants (even when listening to a lecturer). Moreover, if participants in the reconstruction of the public sphere

communicated “rationally,” citizens might well be described as trying to “teach” – rather than impose - their points of view. Explaining one’s point of view while working to understand others’ in dialogical encounters enacts a pedagogical model of the public sphere wherein social relationships become less combative, manipulative, and self-serving and, instead, more educational.

“There are certain resonances in the very notion of synopsis,” Jay (1988, 55) allows, “that may account for the hostility it has aroused.” Etymologically, he points out, the word derives from “the image of a view of the whole, an image which implies a single, totalizing gaze that freezes what it sees into a synchronic and static picture” (Jay 1988, 55). Recalling “the panoptic gaze of the jailer in Jeremy Bentham’s model prison, of which Michel Foucault has made us all so aware,” Jay (1988, 55) acknowledges that notion of “synopsis” can be judged “a subtle tool of discipline and domination.” Given its pretense of presenting a “whole view,” in Sartre’s word a “totalization,” Jay allows that “synoptic content analysis” can be construed a form of the technological perspective that Martin Heidegger (6) criticized in “The Age of the World View” (1977). By means of this technology, reality is converted into a picture to be seen by an allegedly distanced and separate spectator, a conversion criticized as well by John Dewey (1991 [1927], 219): “Vision is a spectator; hearing is a participator.”

While Jay (1988, 55) judges that “this is not the place to launch a critical examination of the Heideggerian-Derridean distrust of monologic vision, which is now, and now without some justification, so widely shared,” he will do so later, in a synoptic summary from which I will draw in my present project a study of scholarship surrounding the “founding” moment of “race” in the West, the so-

called “curse of Ham” (see Pinar 2003). (One of the major exegetical traditions focused on Genesis 9:24 reasons that when Ham gazed upon his father’s naked body, he broke the ancient Israelite taboo against looking, thereby provoking the curse.) Nor does Jay probe the possibilities of the Heideggerean visual metaphor of *Umsicht* or circumspection, with its pre-reflexive, non-objectifying, anti-representational implications. Instead, he poses a series of questions:

Must synoptic intellectual history always be understood as a variant of what might be called the monologic visual fallacy or the discipline of the totalizing gaze? Is the intellectual historian who practices it necessarily playing the questionable role of omniscient narrator who pretends to be above the fray, looking down with a God’s eye view on the events or their documentary residues he or she summarily records? And in so doing, does a historian inevitably smooth over the tensions, iron out the contradictions, and reduce the complex play of the texts whose narrative relation to each other and to their contexts he or she synoptically reconstructs? (Jay 1988, 55-56)

Given our pedagogical commitment, we might reply that our profession compels us to simplify, to “reduce the complex play of texts” in order to make accessible texts students who otherwise could not comprehend them. In so doing teachers and students create new complexity, not in the simplification paraphrasing requires, but in the juxtaposition of paraphrased texts never before in “narrative relation,” including the narrative relation of “texts” comprised of student questions, comments, and teachers’ pedagogical engagement with them.

There is another sense in which the pedagogue's relation to the "text" complicates "synoptic content analysis." In addition to connecting the "text" to students' and her or his own subjective intellectual experience, the teacher enables students to connect "text" to "social text," to society, a concept I understand in no static sense, but in time, which is to say, historically. Enabling these connections, the pedagogue can be said to expand, not reduce, "the complex interplay of texts." The *educational* significance of a text is comprised, in fact, of the intellectual articulation of the text and its significance for subjectivity and society.

The *disciplinary* significance of the original text is hardly excluded in its educational significance, of course. Its disciplinary significance cannot be separated from what Jay (1988, 56) terms the "irreducible integrity" of text, an integrity at risk if we were to focus *exclusively* on connecting the text to other texts in its tradition or exclusively to its significance to subjectivity and for society. But, Jay points out, drawing on the work of Della Volpe (1978), that even poetry is polysemic, its irreducible integrity comprised of other poems, of felt subjectivity in society at a particular historical moment.

Jay finds Della Volpe's argument interesting because it challenges the notion that original work and critical paraphrase are totally antithetical. Moreover, it challenges the naïve assumption that the essential identity of the original text is captured in its paraphrastic double. What Volpe's work underscores, Jay (1998, 56) asserts, "what might be called the always already paraphrastic nature of the original texts." "[B]oth primary works and secondary accounts," Jay (1988, 57-58) points out,

are alike in their reliance on signifiers that are, on at least one level, universalizing abstractions that inevitably yoke together heterogeneous particulars. The perpetual search by poets for a more imagistically concrete and non-conceptual language is thus already frustrated by the limits of language itself, at least insofar as it function as a medium of intersubjective communication.

Not only “secondary” scholarship is derivative, then, so is the original text upon which it draws.

What this suggests for curriculum research – and, as Jay notes, for intellectual history - is that the synoptic method cannot be judged a betrayal of the original work it paraphrases. For even original or primary texts “always already” contain within them the act of paraphrasis. For Jay, that “always already” paraphrased quality of original texts invites us to paraphrase them (again) in order to document the ideas or concepts or the historical moment to which they refer or express. For curriculum studies, the “always already” paraphrased quality of single texts suggests we do not necessarily betray the original text when we focus upon their subjective meaning and social significance. We do not do so if, at some pedagogical point, we make the “return move” to the original text.

The “Return Move”

Currere is a reflexive cycle in which thought bends back upon itself and thus recovers its volition.

Madeleine R. Grumet (1976, 130-131)

The intellectual historian cannot rest content, Jay cautions, with merely presenting what seems to be the paraphrasable content of a text or a writer's more general *oeuvre*. To do so would be incomplete, as "what is most valuable in critical paraphrase," Jay (1988, 58) reminds us, "is the return move of comparing it with what it purports to reproduce." While that return may be the "most valuable" moment in the intellectual historian's labor, it is not necessarily the most valuable moment in the pedagogue's intellectual labor. What can be the "most valuable" moment in the teacher's intellectual labor is enabling students to articulate the text's provocative relation to social experience and subjective meaning. While hardly unmindful of the original or primary work – for serious teachers and students there must be, at some point, a return to the original text – understanding the intertextual relations among idea, self, and society is our primary work. Such work is the elaboration of the educational significance of academic knowledge.

Even the enemies of paraphrase – Jay names first the legendary New Critic John Crowe Ransom – concede the usefulness of the critical paraphrase as long as it is compared with the original text. Jay quotes the famous essay "Criticism, Inc." wherein Ransom attacked synopsis and paraphrase by complaining that "high-school classes and the women's clubs delight in these procedures, which are easiest of all the systematic exercises possible in the discussion of literary objects" (1972, 236; quoted in Jay 1988, 58). Jay does not comment on the gendering of Ransom's condescending slur; but he points out that Ransom goes on to argue that even the sophisticated critic must analyze a poem into its paraphrasable and non-paraphrasable elements: "poetry is not, therefore, simply what is lost in the

translation; it should be understood instead as the creative tension between what can be translated into a prose core and what cannot” (Jay 1988, 58). The notion of translation has been aptly employed to depict the complexity of curriculum itself (see Edgerton 1996).

Jay points out that it is the capacity of texts to be paraphrased and re-paraphrased that makes possible what Gadamer (1975, 269) characterized as the “fusion of horizon” between past and present, however provisional and open-ended, to occur. Moreover, Jay suggests, due to the dialogic nature of this process and the porous linguistic boundaries between the original text and its serious paraphrasing, any restrictively visual or monologic position is rendered improbable, if not impossible. Of course, simplistic or simply mistaken paraphrasing is possible, perhaps especially when we encourage students to connect the text to their subjectivity and to the society they inhabit. As Ted Aoki (in press) understood, the pedagogue reside “in-between” spaces of “creative tensionality,” spaces, it is clear from his work, are faithful both to the original text and to students’ and teachers’ transformation of it in complicated conversation.

John Crowe Ransom was not the only famous opponent of synopsis Jay discusses. Theodor Adorno, Jay points out, argued that genuine philosophy (like Ransom’s poem) is exactly that which eludes paraphrase. Jay acknowledged Adorno’s opposition to synopsis at the very beginning of his introduction to his study of Adorno (Jay 1984), defending synopsis (and himself) by reminding readers of the so-called “genetic fallacy,” the mistaken view that an author’s intentions comprise the sole or even primary meaning of his text for his readers.

Jay invoked Adorno's central idea of a force-field or constellation to his study of Adorno's intellectual career. Adorno had used these terms, Jay reminds, to point to a method that avoids reducing the tensions in an *oeuvre* through an essentializing synopsis of its allegedly unified meaning. Like curriculum understood as complicated conversation, the force-field or constellation registers the untotaled, always conflicting energies that resist such reduction or totalization. In so doing, Jay provides the reader a concrete illustration of Adorno's own approach as Jay exceeds Adorno's self-understanding by employing the method, in ways Adorno never did, in his study of Adorno's own work.

The second strategy Jay devised to defend synoptic content analysis was to compose different orders of paraphrase at different distances from Adorno's texts. Especially when self-consciously composed, such photographic "blow-ups" (juxtaposed to more panoramic shots) disrupt the reader's – and student's – possible (naïve) expectation that the paraphrase copies the original exactly. Jay's intention is to persuade readers to return to the original texts, not, he notes, "to lull them into the false conclusion that now they really had Adorno's essential meaning and therefore could spare themselves the pain of finding it out for themselves" (Jay 1988, 63).

Just as paraphrase is not enough, the new curriculum research suggests that the original text is not enough. While we must, at some pedagogical point, return to the "original" text and compare it with the paraphrase of it, the new synoptic textbook must attend as well to the "now" and, as Gertrude Stein once noted, the "there," that is, both the subjective presence of our students and their social

emplacement and the historical moment in which intellectual work is conducted. By stressing the “worklike” as well as the “documentary” character of intellectual labor, we – curriculum studies scholars, teachers, and students – remain self-conscious that synopsis does not simply repeat, but reconstructs, subjectively, socially, intellectually.

Jay endorses the paraphrase (he gives it two rather than three cheers) as a medium of “communicative rationality.” He suggests (Jay 1988, 63) suggests that “synoptic content analysis, in its sophisticated rather than naïve form, may justifiably be defended as a prefiguration” of a futural “human solidarity.” Jay’s hope seems too strong, but we curriculum studies scholars might allow ourselves to be inspired by it. (7) We might imagine our own synoptic content analysis as the “prefiguration” of the reconstruction of the private and public spheres in education, a progressive ambition that converts public miseducation (now misshapen by business thinking and academic vocationalism) to the education of the public (Pinar 2004).

Conclusion

[T]he goal of democratic struggles is redefined ...
as the transformation of the existing power relations,
discourses, and subjectivities.

Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (2001, 219)

“Speaking of schools sparingly,” I am recommending that we refocus our attention to the intellectual content of the curriculum. Academic vocationalism cannot address the interdisciplinary character of this progressive educational

project. While invaluable in its own right and for its own sake, in order to educate the public academic knowledge must also speak to students' subjectivity and to their lived understanding and experience of society. Toward this end, we might devote ourselves to the study of scholarship in the academic disciplines after which the school subjects are copied and, additionally, to provide interdisciplinary textbooks for teachers that traverse the disciplines, especially as they speak to subjective meaning and social significance.

In so doing, we are resuscitating a progressive tradition under assault both from within the field and outside it (8). Contemporary criticisms of progressivism as anti-intellectual are not always mistaken (9), but they are often exaggerated, misleading, and in the service of right-wing agendas of scapegoating teachers and those of us who teach them. In bringing to teachers synopses of extant scholarship we are supporting their promotion from technicians to private-and-public intellectuals, our colleagues not clients, working in educational institutions, not academic businesses (Pinar 2004).

Understanding curriculum today invites us to focus on the complicated conversation in which scholars are engaged within and across the academic disciplines, especially as that conversation enables us to articulate the throughlines among academic knowledge, subjectivity, and society. I am not suggesting that everyone become so focused. Nor do I expect that our colleagues in arts and sciences – as we term them more hopefully than accurately – will always welcome our synoptic reconfigurations of their original work. The epistemological tensions between “original” work and its paraphrase that Jay recounts will be present for us, especially given our increasingly tenuous political

situation, betrayed, as we have been, by both by government and from pseudo-professional organizations (10).

For both intellectual and political reasons, then, the new curriculum research must be both “documentary” and “worklike,” both carefully synoptic and “critical and transformative,” leading us – students and teachers – back to the original texts and forward to our ongoing subjective self-formation in society. As I conceived of my synoptic labor in *The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America*:

I have paraphrased these [original] works faithfully, I believe, but I urge those readers intrigued by what is reported here, and not only in those chapters, to return to the original works. What I have produced here is finally only a residue and remaking of the original; its value here, I trust, is in the composite picture the juxtaposition of these summaries and paraphrasings creates. The mosaic that appears in their juxtaposition – the gendered Civil War next to Christian feminism and their relation to the so-called crisis of white masculinity which occurred, not incidentally, during the zenith of lynching – allows us to see patterns of association and meaning not easily evident in the original work read by itself. (2001, 24)

And by connecting this scholarship to contemporary crises of both black and white masculinity (chapters 13-15), I hoped to show the presence of the past in contemporary forms of racial politics, including in popular culture.

The methodological debate within intellectual history – a discipline from which we can take both inspiration and methodological guidance – alerts curriculum studies scholars to the complexities of such synoptic labor. By providing a

synopsis of Jay's treatment of these issues, I hope to stimulate conversation among those of us who are not defeated by the various assaults upon us and our profession, those of us who are committed to the intellectual advancement of the curriculum field, to the next phase of understanding curriculum. For us, such "understanding," as Jay (1988, 59) points out, "always therefore entails what might be called ... proleptic paraphrase or anticipatory synopsis" (11). What the new synoptic text anticipates is the reconstruction of the private and public spheres in education.

Notes

- (1) While I quote Schwab's essay approvingly above, I do not share its insouciance regarding the history of the field nor its conflation of curriculum studies with administrative interests (even when, as is the case in the 1983 Schwab essay, that interest is imagined as intellectual deliberation). There are other contemporary texts that function to complicate the intellectual content of school curriculum: see, for example, Dimitriadis and McCarthy 2001; Doll 2000; Morris 2001).
- (2) In her sophisticated comments on an earlier draft of this essay, Bernadette Baker (in an email dated October 7, 2003) rightly emphasized the importance of "inter" in "interdisciplinary": "The new meaning of synoptic text also requires what I call 'cross-readings' or what you call juxtapositions and polysemia that deliberately forge the 'inter' in interdisciplinary." Baker's point is well-taken and, admittedly, underdeveloped in this initial statement of this form of curriculum research. I hope to attend to it in subsequent statements.
- (3) In the same email cited above, Baker locates in the notion of the "throughline" the "new meaning" of synoptic text, "keeping in motion complex conversations" and "preparing teachers to do curriculum work." In his insightful reading of the essay, Greg Dimitriadis (in an email dated September 10, 2003) suggests that in this proposal I am "gesturing more to practice than you do in other pieces," and recommends that I comment on this point. In the context of the controversy surrounding the theory-practice relation in my work (see Wraga 1999), Dimitriadis is right. But an adequate discussion of this thorny issue would blur the focus of this paper; it shall be saved for another day. Suffice to say here my concern with the intellectual advancement of the field (see footnote 6 below for a recent expression) has, from my point of view at least, always been in the service

- of (a theoretically-enriched and complicated) practice. The “gesture” toward practice I make here is admittedly a different (indeed, I am suggesting it is “new”) gesture, but, from my point of view, it represents a restatement of the explicitly autobiographical interest that precedes it (Pinar 1994). While taking several theoretical forms, my interest the practice of education has remained constant over the past 32 years.
- (4) For a review of the scholarly effort to connect character structure and political orientation, see Young-Bruehl (1996).
 - (5) While I employed visual imagery that sentence, it is an auditory concept of curriculum – as conversation – that informs my agenda, as the following montage – this essay - reiterates (see, also, Aoki 2004). “Montage” is defined by Webster’s in both visual and auditory terms, the former sense of which is elaborated in Block (1998).
 - (6) There is, of course, an issue concerning the ethical responsibility of scholars employing Heidegger’s work: see Morris 2002.
 - (7) What Jay (1988, 60) terms a “circular” process of beginning with and returning to texts after a mediating paraphrase, or beginning with synoptic expectations and adjusting them after new readings of the original, suggests to him “a refinement of understanding that in some genuine sense can be called progressive.” It is in this sense of the notion “progressive” that I promoted the inclusion of the term “advancement” in the names of both the International and American Associations for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies. It is in this sense I argue now that the emphasis of AAACS’ journal must be such a “circular” –for us, the term “pedagogical” is more suggestive – process of close readings of original texts and synoptic analyses of those texts, a process interwoven with subjective engagement and social commitment. Such a format for the journal represents an institutionalization of “complicated conversation” as the means by which our profession is practiced.
 - (8) For an example of the former, see Egan 2002; of the latter, see Hirsch 1999.
 - (9) The uncritical embrace of vocationalism in the early twentieth century, for example, expressed anti-intellectualism: see, for example, Hofstadter 1962; Ravitch 2000.
 - (10) Regarding the betrayal by government, I am referring specifically to the Bush Administration’s assault on education schools (see Paige 2002). Regarding the assault by pseudo-professional organizations, I am referring to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). By insisting on a “conceptual framework” on which all “unit” faculty agree, NCATE ends complicated conversation; by insisting on countless hours of busywork, it ensures that education schools are unable to advance intellectually. (See Pinar 2004, chapter 9, sections II and III.)
 - (11) For an insightful and inspiring discussion of proleptic hope in education, see Slattery and Rapp 2003, 74ff.

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