

The Appearance of the Dead: Summoning Ghosts and Conjuring up the Past Through a Virtual Medium

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We draw this title from R.C. Finucane's seminal 1984 study *Appearances of the Dead: a Cultural History of the Ghosts* (Buffalo: Prometheus). This chapter was originally presented at the Provoking Curriculum Studies Conference, Vancouver, BC, February 2015.

THE PAST OF THE PRESENT

In this chapter, we present a unique example of a duoethnographic conversation—one that marks the fluid borders between the past and the present, the curricular ghosts that live in our disciplinary frameworks, and our human desire for *currere*, self and reflexive knowledge.

After Richard D. Sawyer and Joe Norris (2013),

[w]e are interpreting *currere* as one's process of engagement within the contingent and temporal cultural webs of one's life. Critical self-examination is central to this process. In *currere*, this critical self-examination process

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unfolds as a regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic endeavor premised on the recognition that conceptualization is transtemporal and changes over time. (p. 12)

The collective but diverse conversation that unfolded between a class of all-female Early Childhood Education (ECE) graduate students and a male curricula/disciplinary ghost exemplifies how the past works to reconceptualize the present and the present to inform the past, both in, as this chapter attempts to highlight, critical autobiographical and professional contexts. For teachers, such understandings are not necessarily dualistic but part of shared and diverse horizons. Following Gadamer (2004), “truth” or what he terms *aletheia*, can “always be understood differently, and one understanding is not absolutely better than another” (p. 23). “*Aletheia*” works against what is dead; it is about remembering” (Moules, 2002, p. 3). *Aletheia* serves as an opening to what is concealed—remembering what we have forgotten or ignored. This opening is metaphorically akin to opening a grave and/or witnessing a resurrection.¹

While notions of historical consciousness are not new, historians like Peter Sexias (2004) have pointed to concerns about the paucity of historical thinking and consciousness in K-12 and post-secondary education. Such concerns have been exacerbated by neoliberal agendas in post-secondary institutions which have focused on individualism, notions of progress and economic and political advantage that are always aimed at producing future-oriented students. For Sexias, echoing in part Gadamer’s philosophical ideas centered on historical consciousness, it is critical to understand and imagine the interlacing of past, present and future.

For Gadamer, historical awareness is highly valued and is the ground upon which knowledge and understanding are forged. Consciousness, however, is not independent of history since we hold prejudices and pre-understandings. It is only through one’s pre-suppositions that understanding is possible. History is not objective, as context and contingency cannot produce a knowable structure as meanings and interpretations are situated in lives, histories, and relationships. Sawyer and Norris have noted that “... during our lives we internalize historical and cultural scripts These internalized narratives operate, in effect, as ghostwriters in our lives” (p. 289).

Forgetting our histories in the name of the present and future is profoundly problematic. Rather, in our attunement to the past, we find ourselves and others. We are no longer individual entities seeking to realize our own essentialist worldviews but part of broader collectives of kindred

souls seeking to learn from our historical making and from each other. Hearing multiple voices, perspectives, and ideas informs and disrupts where we have come from and where we might be going, as well as experiencing what it means to live alongside others—whether in the past, present, or in anticipation of an indefinite future.²

Likewise, curriculum theory and the disciplines and subject fields it supports is often wilful and uninformed of its manifold pasts. Fields such as ECE are unaware of the lineages, events and figures that have influenced its current pedagogical practices, beliefs and theories. Accordingly, contemporary disciples are ahistorical, gutted of their historical contexts and contingencies. Tightly scheduled curricular programs have forged post-secondary ECE programs of study which have ahistorical certificate, diploma and degree programs (Rose & Whitty, 2013). Rachel Langford (2010) has noted that “the length of a teacher education programme is short and the focus is on the quick acquisition of technical and practical skills” (p. 123). Students are not given adequate time or opportunities in class to think about and imagine the historical past, and its critical impact in shaping our present circumstances. History is discussed and/or “fit in” only after other curricular/course requirements are met. And yet, many of the same ECE pedagogies and issues that are currently enacted and experienced were also discussed in the 1700 and 1800s, so they are not necessarily “new” but rather new *again*. For example, the current focus on nature in the Italian preschools of Reggio Emilia was addressed by Jean Jacques Rousseau, who wrote about nature as a teacher and stressed the importance of educating children in natural spaces. Rousseau (1979/1762, p. 107) referred to Plato’s *Republic* and the important role of play in learning—this echoes play-based learning in the postmodern age.

In what follows we describe, theorize, and interpret the duoethnographic conversations that ensued when the students, as individuals and as a class collective, met a ghost from their disciplinary past. Inviting Enlightenment philosopher and early childhood advocate Rousseau (1712–1778), to participate in the course “Current Issues in Early Childhood Education” challenged the instructional logic and rationality about how one incorporates historical knowledge into a graduate education classroom. Focusing on historical thinking and consciousness itself allowed for a reimagining of critical historical and sociocultural notions of childhood and childcare in Western curricular traditions and inheritances. Rather than using secondary sources to understand histories of ECE education and philosophy, contemporary students engaged a historical agent, who described

his ideas and first-hand experiences about early childhood education and child-rearing.

To promote an imaginative pedagogy, rather than using a lecture format or historical methods approaches, we drew on the work of interpretive scholars who wrote about ghosts, hauntings, and memory; we strove to offer different insights into the past, in the context of teaching and learning.³ We wonder: what does the appearance of the dead, and allusions to ghosts and hauntings signal in contemporary curriculum scholarship? Educational scholars like Claudia Ruitenberg (2009) and William Doll (2002) have written metaphorically about ghosts as inheritances and lineages, and education and curriculum as a *séance*. Ghosts, hauntings, and notions of spectrality have been employed by seminal twentieth-century theorists and thinkers such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and most principally by French philosopher Jacques Derrida (Buse & Stott, 1999).

For Jung (1989), the call to attend to ghostly voices “began with a restlessness,” and he explained:

I did not know what it meant or what “they” wanted of me. There was an ominous atmosphere all around me. I had the strange feeling that the air was filled with ghostly entities Then it began to flow out of me As soon as I took up the pen, the whole ghostly assemblage evaporated. The room quieted and the atmosphere cleared. The haunting was over. (pp. 190–191)

Similarly, our restlessness (prompted by Rousseau) pressed us to record ideas about the past and the importance of raising historical awareness. Perhaps our haunting too will end—the ghost will calm and settle—after this piece is written.

However, Derrida, more than anyone else, has used “ghosts” as an intellectual concept to theorize our responsibility and indebtedness to the historical inheritances, ideas, and discourses that have shaped—unevenly—our present world and our sense of self. For Derrida (1991) “the future belongs to ghosts” (p. 349) and so our present is inherently culpable in the determination of a future world. Derrida first coined the term “hauntology” in his *Spectres of Marx* (1993/1994)—which Kenway (2008) noted “refers ... to the metaphysical logic of the ghost hauntology is built on problematizing the notions of presence and present” (p.3). It was as though Derrida wanted to revive and conjure up the inheritances we consciously or unconsciously refuse to address and critically interrogate. Loevlie (2013) suggests that:

To live is to be haunted We are always caught up in invisible and intangible webs of the past, of the Other, of the future, of death. Our existence is therefore always in-between, defined of course by the materiality of our present being, but also by this immaterial flux that surrounds and situates us. (p. 337)

Significantly, there is an ethical imperative at the heart of Derrida & Dufourmantelle's (2000) summoning of ghosts and its connection to hospitality and the receiving of the other—whether that other is a ghost, a guest, a troubling curriculum text or difficult knowledge.

By the “ghost” Derrida means the trace of the past that is always with us regardless of our attempts to deny or disavow it. While we may sometimes want to believe that the past is dead and buried, according to Derrida, we are indelibly marked not only by those who have lived and died before us, but also by the ideas, ideologies, and histories that have shaped the world as we know it, and that indeed shape our very selves as knowing subjects. (Chinnery, 2010, p. 398)

For Derrida, ghosts were not to be glimpsed dispassionately but rather dialogically and critically. To be addressed by this ghostly presence was for him a deeply ethical practice that was grounded in our collective responsibility to ourselves and others.

To receive the past as teacher—or, in Derrida's words, as “the gift of the ghost”—means being open to questions we did not even know we had, and to learning not only what we seek to learn, but also that which might shatter our knowledge, our identities, and our self-understanding. To receive the past as teacher thus means that we risk being changed—perhaps profoundly—by our engagement with that which we might otherwise seek to avoid. (Chinnery, 2010, p. 402)

To remember is thus an ethical act. But as we know, the ghosts of the past are not always welcomed.

ONLINE LEARNING AND THE ABSENT BODY

The topic of ghosts and hauntings in the curriculum has admittedly an enthralling theatricality to it which provokes poetic inquiry, fictional writing and performativity, and lends itself powerfully to online learning.

Part of the success of this haunting, we argue, was due in no small measure to the course delivery technology. In this respect, a digital environment with its disembodied and ethereal virtuality became a dramaturgical space that elicited and problematized students' sense of presence and present, and their sense of the known and all knowing. It invoked past worlds, voices, and discourses not yet encountered in an immediate and visceral way.⁴ For example, creating an online account for Rousseau, so that he was listed as a class participant, made the experience more tangible than simply reading an article about Rousseau. The ghost's name appearing and disappearing as though he was floating in and out of the online discussion added to the experience of a ghostly encounter.

Writing in 2007, social historian Owen Davies (2007) noted that, “[m]oving from the virtual to the real, computer technology has provided new formats for recording the visual and aural manifestation of ghosts, in other words achieving the intangible” (p. 248). He added:

[C]omputers [act] as mediums ... in recent years the personal computer, which has had an increasingly profound impact on the way we think, what we know and how we interact with others, has provided another platform for ghosts to imprint themselves on our consciousness. History shows a recurring link between ghosts and emergent communication technologies, such as the telegraph, photography and film. They were all seen by some as holding out the possibility of bridging the gap between the living and the dead, between the corporeal and the disembodied. (Davies, 2007, p. 248)

Phenomenologist Norm Friesen (2011) has written about relational pedagogy and technology, noting provocatively that that absence of the body raises stimulating if not ambiguous considerations in regard to online learning. While absence and disembodiment might be construed as problematic, we think it offers our particular pedagogical practice a measure of creative innovation. For while we are cognitively “present” in online classrooms and our body is absent—in a sense, we ourselves become as ghosts. Perhaps this experience is the closest we come to being “dead.” We wonder if while becoming like Rousseau, students were better able to relate to and communicate with him. We ask: how does our being present, yet absent from the body in digital environments, enable us to imagine and differently re-construct our ideas—in this particular context, about the historical past?

Significantly, this chapter seeks to expand upon the duoethnographic methodology as formulated by Norris and Sawyer. As in hermeneutics,

a rich open-ended conversation “allow(s) immersion into the subject matter.” To “conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 361). To explore the idea of a “collective” voice in a duoethnographic conversation, we represent the class participants’ shared ideas—their repeating thoughts and beliefs around the themes—as one “class” voice. We imagined this as a kind of scholarly collective, engaging in an emancipatory discovery and an occasion to re-think the limits of their discipline and the function of history itself. As a “collective voice,” the students illustrated both their individual productive and creative collaboration as well as an orientation toward inquisitiveness, curiosity, and an integrative/interdisciplinary vision. This provided students with a “... a rich opportunity to enable one another to find a voice, encourage one another to think about thinking and acting in/through multiple and diverse forms of representation, open ourselves up to each other ..., perceive the continuity in our experience and help one another deal with the disequilibrium, dissonance and chaos,” that such work entailed and presaged in the work of our teacher education students. Parker Palmer (2010) calls this our “capacity to hear each other into speech” (p. 155).

Carolyn responded as Rousseau. To acknowledge Carolyn’s own contributions, and seminal historical choices to this duoethnographic conversation, we have marked all transcript passages as “Rousseau/Carolyn.” Furthermore, Carolyn did not anticipate, while answering as Rousseau, that the ghost would be persuaded (by students) to change *his* ideas. She has only recently come to see, while re-reading the transcripts, that a transformation took place. Further to Gadamer’s notion of “conversation,” this exemplifies how the online discussion had a life/spirit of its own and took hold of the class participants. Through dialogue, present ideas/experiences changed the past—transformations happened for the instructor, students and Rousseau alike. However, as Gadamer has noted, although “[t]here are judgments that are made on the part of the researcher ... it is the topic that will guide the research ‘over and above our wanting and doing’” (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxvi). For while we provided an imaginal structure for a duoethnographic conversation, we could imagine the fluidity of that conversation. Lastly, in order to visually express the way the past lives in the margins of our consciousness, we have opted to incorporate a watermark image of Rousseau. Seeing Rousseau peering out from between the lines of text, hovering underneath our words enabled us to sense his ghostly presence and reimagine the past as we wrote the piece.

The visual metaphor—the idea of “inbetweenness”—represents our experiences as educators and students, as we stepped into in a liminal space between the past and present, and life and death.

CROSSING THRESHOLDS AND BOUNDARIES: SUMMONING THE GHOST OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

This collective conversation occurred during a six-week graduate-level certificate course—part of the MEd degree program at the Werklund School of Education—in which students viewed contemporary ECE issues through theoretical, historical, cultural and biographical lenses. The class participants all worked in national and international locations, and taught in pre-K to post-secondary contexts. Carolyn, the instructor of the course, set the stage by sending the following evocative email to notify students that an unusual guest would visit the classroom—a dead philosopher:

What better way is there to view children through a historical lens than to communicate directly with scholars and teachers who lived and worked with them in the past? I have invited (called upon) the ghost of Enlightenment Philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau to join our online conversation next week. He seemed hesitant and surprised when I disturbed his 200 yearlong slumber and made my request—perhaps this is an indication that he isn't summoned often enough. In resurrecting Rousseau and raising our own historical consciousness we are in fact advocating for a re-awakening and stronger focus on the history of childhood and early childhood education.

*Inviting Rousseau to discuss *Émile* and his Enlightenment ideas about childrearing and early education with us, might shed some light on the origins of modern child developmental discourses. I warn you—Rousseau can be quite animated (and scary) at times but don't be afraid. I invite you to interact openly and ask him questions, always keeping in mind that this is a friendly haunting. To prepare for our ghostly encounter, please read the attached article –.*

I must admit that I am both excited and nervous about our discussions next week as it will be my first opportunity to co-teach with a ghost!

Carolyn

As an introduction, the students were provided with a brief biographical introduction to Rousseau. The Distance Learning personnel at the Werklund School of Education were asked to set up an online account for the ghost in *BlackBoard*—the online course delivery system. Unfamiliar with Rousseau, Distance Learning staff explained that, because Rousseau's

name did not appear on the course list (perhaps because he had not paid tuition fees), he could not be admitted to the class. Carolyn explained to them that Rousseau was a guest—a *dead* guest. When Rousseau's name appeared on the discussion board there was curious reaction among the class participants. They asked him questions relevant to ECE issues about gender, culture, pedagogical theory and practice.

Carolyn used direct quotes from his 1762 work *Èmile, Or On Education*. Rousseau's treatise provides a kind of "methodology" or "plan" by which to raise and educate a child from infancy to manhood as a model citizen. "Divided into five books; the first three [are] dedicated to the child Èmile, the fourth on the adolescent, and the fifth on Èmile's female counterpart, Sophie, as well as to Èmile's domestic and civic life" (MacDonald, Rudkowski, & Hostettler Schärer, 2013, p. 23). Through the fictional Èmile, Rousseau interwove education, morality, and society, suggesting that nature made man and society corrupted him. As *Èmile* was written in first-person narrative, it was possible to draw directly from many of Rousseau's conversational responses. Carolyn chose to use the text for this reason in addition to the fact that she was personally drawn to Rousseau's rich descriptions of childhood in the eighteenth century. Although the students did not read *Èmile, Or On Education* during the course, the intent was not to read history but to enact it. Where needed, additional historical sources were augmented. Carolyn included a few of her own imagined responses in order to exemplify a different way of thinking about the historical past. Through critical and imaginative thinking she attempted to represent issues from Rousseau's perspective. Attempting to think as Rousseau was a reflexive and transformative experience for Carolyn who, through the experience, came to recognize how her own beliefs, allegiances and understandings as a researcher and educator are shaped by contextual historical ECE discourses.

Student: In our postmodern world, there are now many more people who are very self-reflective about education just as you were. While we are still very solidly following your "idea of the developmental stages of infancy, childhood, preadolescence, adolescence, and young manhood" (MacDonald et al., 2013, p. 26) our perception of mothers, fathers, and children has shifted.

Since your time, when you believed "children [had] no innate abilities to gather their own information or perceptions or

direct their own learning,” and that the sole purpose of education for women was to “breastfeed, nurture, educate, and protect her young from the corrupt influences of society,” much has changed (MacDonald et al., 2013, p. 23).

While there are still instances where the role of women continues to be to nurture and protect their children, their role in society in general has changed. More often than not, women also have a role in the workplace and the responsibility of nurturing and protecting the children has widened to include institutionalized childcare and preschools. Our view of gender roles is changing.

As well, another shift that is in process is that of our perception of children. While there is still a great deal of your belief in the helplessness of children, we are beginning to challenge this view and to see that children are capable of learning within themselves. They do not necessarily rely on adults to fill them with knowledge. Adults are beginning to collaborate with and listen to children and their already present knowledge. I hope that you will take this opportunity to reflect and disrupt your own previous beliefs in order to build a greater awareness of our society and what its diversity holds.

Rousseau/Carolyn: Are you *challenging* me?! If I should reflect critically about *my* beliefs in order to become aware of your society, will you also willingly read my treatise, *Émile*, and increase your historical consciousness about childhood and education in the 1700’s? I ask—is there enough emphasis given to history and to the ideas of [historical] thinkers, such as myself? Thank you for your insights and I assure you that I will attempt to remain open to further reflection and reconsideration of my beliefs. This challenge, however, goes both ways!

Student: The role of mothers as the source sustenance for their wee charges through breastfeeding is currently hotly debated. Yes, you heard me correctly Jean! This is a feminist issue with proponents heatedly arguing their respective points. On the one side, you would be quite at home in your declaration that a woman’s role is to nurture their infants through breastfeeding. La Leche League of Canada (La Leche League of Canada, n.d.) for instance, is a staunch supporter of breastfeeding. Pia de

Solenni (2013) of Real Women Canada argues vehemently that women are uniquely designed to nurture and care for children: “By design, a woman’s body is meant to facilitate this close relationship that no father can experience, no matter how close he may be to his child.” As you can see, in many respects we have not advanced far from your draconian notions of mother-and childhood. Now for the other side of the debate—brace yourself Jean!—the above mentioned organizations, and many others, would have one believe, unequivocally, that “breast is best.” Modern science has argued that breastfeeding reduces all sorts of risks to babies; however, these assertions are beginning to be challenged. Joan Wolf, a gender studies professor, contends that breastfeeding has been oversold because of three factors.

First, we have a cultural obsession with eliminating risk, she says. Second, much of the research into breastfeeding is methodologically flawed. Third, we’re in thrall to “an ideology of total motherhood that stipulates that a mother can and should eliminate any risk to her children, regardless of how small or likely the risk or what the cost is to her own wellbeing in the process” (Groskop, 2013). The dominant (read: white male) discourse is still as prevalent today as it was in your time. Thankfully, however, we (read: women/feminists) are beginning to unpack some of these issues I strongly support a women’s right to choose not to be a breastfeeding mother and a father’s role to support the nurturing, caring and feeding of his children.

Rousseau/Carolyn: La Leche League of Canada? Real Women Canada? Modern science? Feminist views? There are obviously many sides of the argument to consider—how *do* women decide? In my day women also chose not to breastfeed. Those who did not want to nurse their infants gave the responsibility to wet nurses.

[Did] they know, these gentle mothers who, delivered from their children, devote themselves gaily to the entertainment of the city, what kind of treatment the swaddled child is getting in the meantime in the village? At the slightest trouble that arises he is hung from a nail like a sack of clothes, and

while the nurse looks after her business without hurrying, the unfortunate stays thus crucified. All those found in this position had violet faces. The chest was powerfully compressed, blocking circulation, and the blood rose to the head. The sufferer was believed to be quite tranquil, because he did not have the strength to cry. I do not know how many hours a child can remain in this condition without losing its life, but I doubt that this can go on very long. (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 44)

You see, in my day there was more at stake in promoting mother's milk ... or recognizing the rights of women. I argued that infants should be nursed by their natural mothers for the wellbeing and protection of the child!

Student: Here's another concept for you to think about Jean-Jacques. Having children is now a *choice*, not an expectation. Some men and women, such as myself, choose to play a part in children's lives other than by becoming a parent.

Rousseau/Carolyn: I made my choices about parenting too. Although I am not proud of it, I realized that I could not raise my own children. "[I] had no means to educate them, and [I] reasoned that they would be better raised as workers and peasants by the state" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau biography, n.d.), so I chose to leave them at a foundling hospital ... it is a sensitive topic and I really don't wish to discuss it further. It is a private matter!

Student: Regarding people's choices of being parents or not, I am not surprised that you ended our discussion and wish not to discuss it any further. My choice makes people uncomfortable as it is very unconventional, still in our modern times it provokes critical thinking and forces people to question their own decision. I do agree that it is a private matter. I would never ask why people choose to have children, therefore I am always surprised when people question my choice.

Student: Jean-Jacques, I may be in the minority in my response, but I am a firm believer in both natural and logical consequences, assuming that they do not pose undue risks to the child. I certainly would not let a child learn "nature's lessons," with respect to, say, playing ball near a busy street where the threat of serious injury or death ... is a very real possibility. On the

other hand, a child who throws a tantrum in his room, and completely “trashes” his room, would be forced to endure the discomfort of living in chaos until he chose to tidy the room. I also would not lecture the child on this score as I am quite sure, having had to experience the discomfort of living in such a mess, that the child already knows only too well the consequence of his actions.

So, I trust that you do not condone a parent or educator turning a blind eye to “nature’s lessons” that would result in tragedy? Then again, you did condemn your own children to foundling homes which, as I am quite sure you already know, placed them at tremendous risk. How *did* you convince your lover, Thérèse Levasseur, to abandon her newborns to such a fate? Surely Thérèse was more suited to “breastfeed, nurture, educate, and protect her young from the corrupt influence of society” (MacDonald et al., 2013, p. 23) than a foundling home?!

Rousseau/Carolyn: In response to your question: “Do you not condone a parent or educator turning a blind eye to ‘nature’s lessons’ that would result in tragedy?” I say,

let us always arm man against unexpected accidents. In the morning [I] let Èmile run barefoot in all seasons, in his room, on the stairs, in the garden I take care only that glass be removed [I] let him know how to jump long and high, to climb a tree, to get over a wall. [I] let him learn to keep his balance, let all his movements and gestures be ordered according to the laws of equilibrium, long before the study of statics is introduced to explain it all to him. (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 139)

You touch on a sensitive point regarding my own children—it is a complex issue indeed. Placed in an orphan hospital, “they would not have to put up with the deviousness of ‘high society.’ Furthermore [I] lacked the money to bring them up properly. There was also the question of [our] capacity to cope with child-rearing” (infed, n.d.).

Student: Are you available to come to some parent meetings? I think your commonsense approach would invoke (or provoke) much-needed discussion around natural consequences.

Rousseau/Carolyn: Parents need to be reminded to “exercise [children] against the attacks they will one day have to bear.” I say,

[h]arden their bodies against the intemperance of season, climates, elements; against hunger, thirst, fatigue. Steep them in the water of the Styx A child can be made robust without exposing its life and its health; and if there were some risk, still one must not hesitate. Since these are risks inseparable from human life, can one do better than shift them to that part of its span when they are least disadvantageous? (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 47)

Student: How would parents at your meetings react to my ideas? In reference to the natural world, you ask us today: “What are you adults afraid of? Why do you avoid risks and over protect children? Why do you oppose nature’s rule?” These are very good questions. Today’s parents are over-protective of their children for many reasons that are not unique to the 21st century, such as concern over human predators, safety, and illness to name a few. Societal issues impact children’s play and we have become a society that has confused risk with hazards. We do need to let the natural world teach our children in ways that are unique to it. However, I must add a caveat as the “natural world” today refers more to nature than it does to mother-child bonding or father-child relationships. As my cohorts have pointed out, we no longer cling to the notion that mothers, fathers, and children are bound by roles that once were considered normative. In that sense, we do oppose nature’s rule. Is it not important, however, that we challenge ideas that have come before us? I know you were a highly regarded social critic, so surely you can understand today’s educators’ wishes to critically examine your ideas regarding child development. We must examine the ideas that have influenced present-day thinking. According to critical theorists, Ryan and Grieshaber (2004), our practices come from research studies—conducted by dead white men on white middle class students—of which, I respectfully point out, you are the former.

Rousseau/Carolyn: You make your points quite clear dear lady, and they are well taken. As far as being a “dead white man”—just remember that [one day] we all will die. If Èmile’s voice had been heard, what do I think he would have said? Well that is a very interesting question and one that I shall carefully consider. I do not understand why you oppose nature’s rule. What logic is there in this? You say you are concerned about human predators, safety, illness and societal issues—the same corrupt influences that I protected Èmile from. I say, “let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature’s sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be repeopled. This first point, this point alone, will bring everything back together” (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 46).

Student: You raise some interesting and huge issues—our views are embedded in socio-political context. For example, in lower socioeconomic areas, the Head Start program was started to give the “disadvantaged” children a way to access preschool curriculum and boost their knowledge (Cannella, 2002). The assumption was that their parents were not able to provide this for the children, and that it was important for their success. Both of which are assumptions made from the dominating group in power. I am trying to find the exact reference point, but I also read about the pros and cons of a stay-at-home mother educating their child rather than sending them to Kindergarten. The thinking was that the upper class parents were capable of this, but the lower socioeconomic groups, not. Interesting that many of the “upper” class parents may choose to hire nannies to do this instead of the mothers. Rousseau, I assume you feel the mother is unfit and the children are better off in the Kindergarten programs where the experts can educate the children?

Rousseau/Carolyn: I dare say young children should *not* be in kindergarten! Nature is the best teacher at this young age. Keep them away from the corruption of books. Keep them at home in the care of their mothers while they are small. If it is at all possible educate them in the country, away from the sinful influences of the city and the harsh instruction of strict school masters!

Respect childhood, and do not hurry to judge it, either for good or for ill. Let the exceptional children show themselves, be proved, and be confirmed for a long time before adopting special methods for them. Leave nature to act for a long time before you get involved with acting in its place, lest you impede its operations (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 107).

Student: What do you think of this new development of having naturalization areas in school grounds for the children to study in and explore? Is this beneficial for older, school age children as well? There is even a Nature Kindergarten on Vancouver Island where children spend their time outdoors as their classroom. Could you have envisioned this as part of formal education? Do you think there is a point where education *should* be in classrooms with books, paper and pencil and not with nature as teacher?

Rousseau/Carolyn: It is a hopeful sign that Nature Kindergartens are opening! I am starting to take back what I said about the lack of progressive thinking in the present day and age. I am also beginning to understand what [you earlier] explained about “co-constructing understandings of the world.” In writing to you ... I am starting to see different possibilities about raising and educating young children. Regarding your question about teaching children in classrooms with books? When I represent to myself a child between ten and twelve, vigorous and well-formed for his age I see him bubbling, lively, animated, without gnawing cares, without long and painful foresight, whole in his present being, and enjoying a fullness of life which seems to want to extend itself beyond him The hour sounds. What a change! Instantly his eyes cloud over; his gaiety is effaced. Goodbye, joy! Goodbye, frolicsome games! A severe and angry man takes him by the hand, says to him gravely, “Let us go, sir,” and takes him away. In the room into which they go I catch a glimpse of books. Books! What sad furnishings for his age! The poor child lets himself be pulled along, turns a regretful eye on all that surrounds him, becomes silent, and leaves, his eyes swollen with tears he does not dare to shed, and his heart great with signs he does not dare to breathe. (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 159)

I will clarify that,

in taking away all duties from children, I take away the instruments of their greatest misery—that is, books. Reading is the plague of childhood and almost the only occupation we know how to give it. At twelve Émile will hardly know what a book is. But, it will be said, he certainly must at least know how to read. I agree. He must know how to read when reading is useful to him; up to then it is only good for boring him. (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 116)

Student: Oh, Jean Jacques, books are wonderful! I love to read and so do my two sons. We love to lose ourselves in a good story, or find out about something new. It is a pleasure and not just for practical uses. We need to find you some great literature to enjoy, whatever the age of the child!

Rousseau/Carolyn: I know you mean well, but

I hate books. They only teach one to talk about what one does not know Since we absolutely must have books, there exists one which, to my taste, provides the most felicitous treatise on natural education. This book will be the first that my Émile will read. For a long time it will alone compose his whole library and it will always hold a distinguished place there. It will be the text for which all our discussion on the natural sciences will serve only as commentary. It will serve as a test of the condition of our judgement during our progress; and so long as our taste is not spoiled, its reading will always please us. What, then, is this marvelous book? Is it Aristotle? Is it Pliny? Is it Buffon? No it is *Robinson Crusoe* (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 184).

Have you read it to your boys?

Student: Mr. Rousseau, though I am not of the same mind as you on many points, however, I am wondering if children should be in kindergarten. I am partial to Finland's approach to the early years where they seek to preserve childhood and do not commence formal education until the age of seven (if my memory serves me correctly). Nature is important and something our children get far too little of. I do not think, however

[as you do], that books are corrupt, but of course you probably didn't have children's books in your day, or did you?

Rousseau/Carolyn: Yes, indeed there were children's books in the Enlightenment. For example,

[t]reatises on etiquette were in print ... books on good manners, and they continued to enjoy widespread favour until the early nineteenth century. In addition to these etiquette books which were meant for young children, in the early seventeenth century a pedagogic literature for the use of parents and teachers came into being (Ariès, 1962, p. 111).

Finally we are reaching some agreement in our discussion! I should like to meet these sensible Finnish educators! I say,

[I]ove childhood; promote its games, its pleasures, its amiable instinct Why do [school masters] want to deprive these little innocents of the enjoyment of a time so short which escapes them and of a good so precious which they do not know how to abuse? Why do [teachers] want to fill with bitterness and pains these first years which go by so rapidly and can return no more for them than they can for you As soon as they can sense the pleasure of being, arrange it so that they can enjoy it. (Rousseau, 1979/1762, p. 79).

A DUOETHNOGRAPHIC CONVERSATION WITH A GHOST

In the transcripts we have discussed above, two themes stood out and were echoed in the playful and engaging exchanges between the students and Rousseau/Carolyn: Natural Education and Gender (particularly around mothering and caregiving). Rousseau's "veneration of motherhood, including his construction of an image of the ideal mother whose sole purpose was to breastfeed, nurture, educate, and protect her young from the corrupt influences of society," (MacDonald et al., 2013, p. 26) raised the ire of many of the female students in the class. Citing from class readings, the students exhibited a range of emotions, argued, chided, and even joked with the ghost. These themes arose temporally and are reflective of the particular historic situation in which participants found themselves. As Gadamer (1975) noted:

Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. This was, rather, the naive assumption of historicism, namely that we must set ourselves within the spirit of the age, and think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity. In fact the important thing is to recognize the distance in time as a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us. (p 264)

Summoning and conversing with a dead philosopher enabled the students to envision multiple pasts, providing diverse understandings of historical contexts, contingencies, and agents relative to present day ECE beliefs and pedagogies. Through these ideas, class participants were invited to further imagine, create and dream of innovative ways to engage their own students, raising a critical and dialogic historical awareness. In an email sent to Carolyn (Sept. 22, 2013), one student explained how her ghostly encounter was a conduit to her rethinking and presenting historical perspectives—she planned to use similar “haunting” ideas in an ECE post-secondary course she instructed. The duoethnographic conversation increased dialogue, student engagement and offered different ideas for thinking about the history of early childhood education. It disrupted ahistorical ideas and attitudes in post-secondary ECE programs of studies, and opened different possibilities for students to understand current ECE issues and pedagogical theories and practices. In reading Emile and speaking as Rousseau, Carolyn too came to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich history of ECE. Now acknowledging the critical importance of knowing and imagining bygone events, ideas and figures, she continues to view current ECE issues, through a historical lens and attempts to find creative ways to raise students’ awareness of the past in the teacher education courses she teaches. Talking to a ghost allowed the students and instructor to ontologically understand themselves (and each other) in important ways. “Ontology thus becomes hauntology,” Derrida (1993/1994, p. 10) has remarked. Ruitenberg surmises that “Derrida turns the question of being into the question of inheritance, and lets the figure of the ghost emerge as that which comes back from the inherited past to haunt a being in the present that, too often, forgets its indebtedness” (Ruitenberg, 2009, p. 296).

The graduate students in the course expressed curiosity regarding the ghost's arrival in the virtual classroom and playfully engaged with Rousseau in an animated and layered dialogue. They risked crossing boundaries and stepped into a liminal space where they were recipients of the unforeseen. As Sawyer and Norris (2013) have noted:

Currere becomes meaningful when individuals engage in a deeply subjective and honest dialectical process. Individual positionality—the vantage point from which one critiques various temporal aspects of one's life—is critical ... one not only critically examines social, cultural, and political contexts of influence of the past from the location of the present but also examines the present from an imagined critique from the past. This transaction supports imaginative and generative thinking about self, others, and culture. (p. 13)

An ahistorical ECE curriculum summoned the ghost of Rousseau. Perhaps this was inevitable. As Derrida has noted: “A place of haunting ... is a place with no phantoms. Ghosts haunt places that exist without them; they return to where they have been excluded” (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, *Of hospitality*, 2000, pp. 151 & 152). Some students spoke about the way the class transformed their thinking about the past. One person noted:

I continued to find the examination of children throughout the course of history, unique! ... we are always interested in what is happening now and how these methodologies can be incorporated into our practices. However, this view of examining children throughout history helps ground our understanding of where we have come. (Transcription, June 3, 2013)

In an email sent to Carolyn, another student said she planned to use similar ideas and summon ghosts in the post-secondary class that she was instructing.

Arguably, in preparing students for an unknown and digital world, we need to develop their historical thinking about the storied past. We need to support students to address the diverse and often troubling and difficult knowledge from history, however unpalatable or distasteful to our modern sensibilities. Suggestively, online learning technologies may serve as a medium through which to bring forward curriculum ghosts, actual and illusory thresholds and boundaries that mark past and present, life and death, this world and the afterlife. Employing an imaginative approach forged a pedagogical practice that offers significant implications

for disciplinary/interdisciplinary study in post-secondary teaching and learning, particularly as it might affect online learning. Like all interpretive inquiries, this work has taken us on paths that we had not imagined or foreseen. Likewise, now that we look, we see discussions, symbols, and allusions to ghosts everywhere. To paraphrase Jung,

[T]he dead have become ever more distinct ... as the voices of the Unanswered, Unresolved, and Unredeemed; for since the questions and demands which ... [our] destiny required ... [of us] to answer did not come to [us] outside, they must have come from the inner world. These conversations with the dead formed a kind of prelude to what [we and the students] had to communicate to the world about the unconscious [and consciousness]: a kind of pattern of order and interpretation of its general contents. (pp. 191–192)

We sense that ghosts are calling out from beyond the grave—pleading to be remembered and inviting us to take up this challenge. Only then will they rest in peace.

NOTES

1. See also “Raising the House of Rousseau: Historical Consciousness in the Contemporary ECE Teacher Education Classroom” (Bjartveit & Panayotidis, 2014).
2. Historians make a distinction between “history,” “past” and “heritage.”
3. On an imaginative approach in teacher education see: “Thinking/Teaching in Multiple Tongues: The Interdisciplinary Imagination” (Panayotidis, 2011).
4. Teaching history on-line is not new and discussions of it are incorporated within broader ideas about the “digital humanities.”

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