A Word: *Currere* as Poetry
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W. F. Pinar (1975) laid out *currere* as a self-investigation of the evolution of educational experiences and interests over time, recommending four conceptual steps be followed: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical. My *currere* poem is separated into these four sections with the use of a numbering system. I have looked back on my educational past, taking notice of school artifacts (Pinar, 1975) from my childhood through graduate school and then on to my time working in education. As the poem title implies, much of educational experiences are connected to language. The poem progresses to a focus on "what is not yet the case" (Pinar, 1975, p. 9) in terms of educational traits, interests, and relationships. The poem's third section appropriately analyzes the present, adding a moral and emotional layer (Pinar, 1975). Finally, the poem concludes with a synthesis of my contributions—or lack thereof—to the broader educational and philosophical condition.

My poem incorporates several structural components of previously published *currere* poems. Like Amatullah (2018) and Cooper (2019), my poem integrates written components into a larger whole while also juxtaposing them. Specifically, my poem is a combination of three separate poetic styles: sestets in iambic pentameter on the left, a villanelle on the right, and a final section that alternates in meter from dactylic to anapestic and resembles a French *lai*. Similar to Bawa (2018), I use symbolism and figurative language (e.g., scent, second-born) to present themes. Grubb's (2017) combination of everyday circumstances and deeper meaning inspired my poetic treatment of everyday tutoring experience alongside ontological concerns. As in MacDonald et al. (2018), my poem blends several different "voices," although mine are all personal. The sestets involve an initial, abrupt listing in "noun-phrase" form of artifacts, events, relationships, etc., followed by a parenthetical statement that less objectively provides an explanation, comment, or sarcasm. This call-and-response stands in contrast to the voice of the villanelle, which is theoretical, questioning, and sagely. In so doing, the poem presents the thematic concerns from multiple theoretical frames in a way not unlike Poetter's (2018) poem about Mars. Finally, Sparber's (2018) oral and visual elements proved useful in my reliance on rhyming, alliteration, assonance, and horizontal alignment of verses.

In hopes of avoiding a simple dichotomy, two divergent educational theories are considered: the value-based approach of Dutch theorist Gert Biesta and the evidence-based learning advocated by Australian statistician John Hattie. The latter's (Hattie, 2011) work on teaching strategies that objectively "work" in the form of measurable outcomes is intentionally relevant to the traditional classroom and consistent with the expectations of administrators in contemporary American higher education institutions. Hattie (2011) is immersed in a numbers-driven world that uses business language like "transparency," "feedback," and "engagement" (p. 139). Education or, more specifically, learning is an evaluative relationship between teacher and student, with the bulk of the responsibility falling on the former (Hattie, 2015). A meta-analysis of quantitative educational studies dealing with strategic learning interventions was conducted by Hattie to create a conceptual framework for learning (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). The model is methodical and statistical (e.g., heavy use of effect size), allowing the educator

to optimize the "science of learning" (Hattie & Donoghue, 2018). At its core, Hattie's learning model is unabashedly empirical, making it intriguing in the modern world of higher education. The poem pays homage to this mindset and its role in my past educational experiences, including memorization of Greek and Latin roots to win the county spelling bee, desires for effectiveness in my work, and an admittedly naïve desire to bundle up the bulk of educational theory into a concise package of dichotomies and perspectives.

Biesta's (2010) criticism of evidence-based practice, a popular perspective he describes as "intuitively appealing" (p. 492), is thoroughly epistemological. He argues that education, by its nature, is not as predictable or linear a system as one might find in a laboratory, and as such, the relationship between causes and effects is not so easily measured. He argues instead for a teacher's decision-making process to prioritize values before outcomes, warning against an overly capitalistic approach to education (Biesta, 2013). His model of education (Biesta, 2017) emphasizes relationships and self-awareness/self-growth as co-partners with skill-based learning. Biesta's (2020) article celebrates the two relational values in an icon like Rosa Parks, whose educational outcomes, he argues, might lack in qualifications but excel in cultural and social measures. This three-fold view of education appears occasionally in my poem, including references to purpose, community, and consensus.

Despite their obvious influence, the ideas of both Biesta and Hattie are ultimately subservient to the primary role of language in my educational experience, giving me not only the tool to make sense of and evaluate their perspectives but also to be heard in my telling and re-telling. The poem wrestles with the balance between self-reflection and external obligations to others who might be considered, metaphorically, as "second-born." Identity, passion, purpose, and community are all topics tied, at a root level, to ontological concerns, but they are also bounded in a lived way by day-to-day responsibilities and work that are more than just mere "words."

A WORD

1
Designed evangelism (Sunday school),
Strategic Hellenism (spelling bees),
Socratic symbolism (English lit),
Linguistic mechanisms (grammar tools),
Determined optimism (Ed. degree),
And … cynicism (teacher "benefit").

> If not for the scent and sway of a word,
> from Naomi to Noam, Webster to Whitman,
> will the story of a second-born be heard?
>
> Nouns do not emerge as names conferred,
> Teacher, Tutor, American, Appalachian,
> if not for the scent and sway of a word.

2

A patient student (test of learner's will)
Or theory master (gauge of scholarship);
A good rapport (ability to lead)
Or some resilience (valued teacher's skill);
A clever writer (mark of craftsmanship)
Or empathetic tutor (guaran-teed).

> If the path of a responsible leader lies inward,
> or the genius of a teacher owes the academician,
> will the story of a second-born be heard?

> Would purpose follow evidence forward,
> outcome upon outcome in human evolution,
> if not for the scent and sway of a word?

3

The English language (disarray aside)
The language learner (practice makes belief);
An innovative project (self-esteem)
A thoughtful conversation (dignified);
Instructing one-on-one (discreet and brief)
Achieving bold consensus (such a dream!).

> Taste the fruits of labor suitably offered,
> but doors shut as quickly as open,
> if not for the scent and sway of a word.

> Such is the course here recurred:
> to listen, to read, to write, to question,
> "Will the story of a second-born be heard,
> if not for the scent and sway of a word?"

4

Sensing a mystery immanent,
seeking identity management,
searching for ego enlightenment—
rudiment.

In the end, a tautology may,
in community, strengthen to, say,
an ontology: "There is no day
like today."

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