

Remembering Roger I. Simon: A Pedagogy of Public Possibility

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Roger Simon's scholarship bequeaths to theorists, teachers, and curators across Canada and beyond a theory of education that opens up responsibilities to past and present others. Writing the call for papers, we were struck by the deep and generative quality of Simon's legacy, which is mirrored in the diversity of papers included in this issue. The papers gathered for this special issue address many of the difficulties that he dared educators to hold in mind. What Simon opens are big questions for education in a time more often consoled by the promise of solutions, best practices, and evaluation. These are questions about the interpretive quality of knowledge, the meaning of responsibility, justice, and the role of pedagogy in the reparation of historical trauma. Indeed, Simon lived with questions as the ground of his pedagogy, and in their articulation, he leaves behind an absence that is brimming with potential to make social and historical knowledge matter.

This issue gathering works inspired by Simon's legacy is needed, now, more than ever. We find in Simon's work a capacity to handle with grace and dignity questions of mass suffering and trauma that affect students and teachers around the world. In this issue readers will find inquiries related to the limits, dilemmas, and stakes of representing traumatic history: ethical questions about practices of remembrance and pedagogy: the emotional significance of reading history: notes on archival study: as well as aesthetic representations in the form of photography and poetry. Across this range of concerns, in form and content, readers will encounter scholars whose work embodies the unmistakable traces of Simon's sense of obligation and care, together with incisive critical thought and judgment. Yet another mark of his influence is found in the sense of intellectual freedom that his work grants to us. Perhaps a testament to Simon's concern about the repetitions of history, we note a hopeful diversity in the contributions to this volume. No one asks the same question. Because of Simon, each of us has something unique to say and to ask of the past.

The poetic representation opening this special issue bears witness to Simon's enduring commitment to the arts as a means by which history can be otherwise represented, engaged, and renewed. Artistic work offers the possibility of viewing Simon's pedagogy and scholarship in ways that transform language, affect, and image into representations of knowledge that support our capacity to attend to the singularities of others. In the first of three such renditions, Carl Leggo creates a poetic rumination on Simon's influential text *Teaching Against the Grain*. Leggo

wisely meditates on the importance of his work for bringing to scholars concerns of a wild world in their studies of education. Through this undertaking he renews Simon's notion of teaching against the grain as the creative work of using "a grain of salt" for "seasoning the wounds of history." Within this inspiring memory work of intellectual legacy and difficult human histories, Leggo suggests that the impact of Simon's scholarship is to renew a mandate of education for a new generation of thinkers. This renewed mandate carries the promise of artistic creation in the development of a world more hospitable to others.

In the article, "Learning from Roger Simon: The Work of Pedagogy in the Social Studies Curriculum," Aparna Mishra Tarc offers a historical trajectory of Simon's scholarship. Mishra Tarc's paper traces key turns in Simon's scholarship that he brought to bear on debates not only in education, but also within such diverse fields as philosophy, social theory, and cultural studies. However, rather than offer an exhaustive history of Simon's thought, Mishra Tarc turns to Derrida's notion of "affirmative reading," which works against the implied assumption made in some forms of critical reading that seek "to demonstrate mastery" over the Other's words. In undertaking this work, Mishra Tarc's paper begins with an affirmative promise, which is to represent the singularity of Simon's writing for the way his words open new insight in the reader and in turn, how they *themselves* can become open to renewal through the practice of reading. Among the conceptual history that Mishra Tarc traces, she highlights the important ways in which Simon traversed realms of school history and public pedagogy at work in the aesthetic curation of "counter histories and narratives" on display in museums and galleries of photography art. At every turn, Mishra Tarc demonstrates her learning from Simon, particularly for the way he insisted on the obligation to represent the hard truths of history, even while inviting open debate, dialogue, and discussion. For Mishra Tarc, reading Simon invites us to "say yes" to the possibility of newness in ourselves to encounter people beyond the world we already know, and in so doing, renew the world through words.

Lisa Farley brings D.W. Winnicott's notion of transitional space to Simon's historical concerns about maintaining distance across connections to the past. Drawing on Winnicott's conception of the creative possibility of play in the child's ontic production of knowledge, Farley conceptually poses historical inquiry as an emotive process and response to the losses that flood the mind in facing the past. For Farley history emerges from the historian's capacity to make meaning from loss through the creative use of facts, events, perspectives, and interpretations. Positioned as a set of "representations from which we all may draw," the historian's work is one of renewal that involves "shaping and re-shaping ties to culture and history." Heeding Simon's ethical concerns about not reworking history for one's own end, Farley suggests that history, nonetheless, involves the self. The question is how history may become emotionally significant, and in so doing, respond to and redress its "terrible gift." Turning to an account of collaboration with Simon in a study group's work with "surviving documents from the Vilna Ghetto," Farley demonstrates how histories survive because of the historian's capacity to put them into a transitional space of creative investigation. Reflecting on this scholarship a decade later, Farley unearths the delicate work of making history matter, which

involves tracing a fine line between the emotional and social significance of the past that Simon himself embodied in the intuitive and rigorous quality of his pedagogy and scholarly texts.

The photo essay of Renée Saklikar attempts to attend to the grief of violence waged against the humanity of passengers on *Air India* flight 182. The visual installation, "Bomb me," assembles a number of images that the artist and viewer are required to piece together to gain a sense of the unthinkable that transpired on June 10, 1985. The "hand" that features in each of the documented images gives us a sense of the artist's and viewer's implication in conceptually curating a barely accounted for event that is past, unfamiliar, and yet remains waiting to be addressed in the numerous pieces of testimony left behind in the wake of the bombing.

Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Robin Milne offer a reflective piece that seeks to "unsettle" educational narratives of history rooted in "settler denial." These authors begin with a reminder of how curricular representations, in the glorification of "hardships and sacrifices" made by French and British settlers, relentlessly deny the ways in which colonial efforts violently "dispossessed" Indigenous peoples. Citing Simon, Ng-A-Fook and Milne suggest that celebratory or apologetic narratives continue to dominate school curriculum. However, they now most often come in the form of public remorse, empathy, or "facile notions of solidarity" that re-inscribe the norm of "settler state citizenship" in ways that continue to "co-opt" the other "in the service of the self." Together, Ng-A-Fook and Milne urge us to begin thinking from a different place, one that shines a light on historical and contemporary struggles among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to speak out about crimes committed in education's name *before* the settlers' mythology is able to co-opt these very reparative efforts. Ng-A-Fook and Milne's narrative emerges at the point where oral histories of the other obligate settlers – British, French, and the "cosmopolitan" among us – to represent a relationship to the difficult knowledge of history beyond guilty performances of "worrying-in-public." The result is a collaborative re-constructive effort that weaves together both authors' school memories of (not) learning from Indigenous history. In exploring these memories, the authors highlight the state-sanctioned violence that, under the school cloak of "settler denial," might otherwise be repressed within an old colonial narrative of rescue.

Lisa Taylor's article turns from scholarly concerns of the terrible fact of history to its more malleable pedagogical implications in her work as a professor with pre-service teachers. Her theoretical framing follows Simon's longstanding concern with the ethical and pedagogical implications of Indigenous and settler historical relations in Canada on the public multicultural imaginary. Her paper "proposes concrete strategies that teacher educators and teachers in Canada might bring to our classrooms as we take up the invitation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to engage the broader Canadian society in the task of publicly witnessing and commemorating the testimonies of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) survivors." In her paper Taylor turns to "aesthetic texts" to support students' learning from terrible history and to confront their personal and social conflicts implicating them in these histories. She describes the ethical tensions that confront students as they work through feelings of "blame and shame" when engaging with survivor testimony. Taylor offers reading lenses' that aim to help

beginning teachers attend to, and perhaps, 'bracket' self-absorbed feelings while listening to the voice of others. She proposes that these lenses can produce re-readings of traumatic history and the feelings it animates that "attend[s] explicitly to the demands of transactive memory and the pedagogical impulse of indigenous storytelling traditions."

Naomi Norquay's paper addresses the question of how traces of "people meant to be forgotten" surface in uncanny forms. Her oral history project unearths the knowledge of a black settler community in northern Ontario's Grey-Bruce County through a study of silences, gossip, and mythic lore that haunt the memories and narratives of those who live along Old Durham Road. Drawing on interviews with contemporary residents, Norquay shows how history can be found in contradictory utterances, even among white residents who seek to deny or negate traces of black settlers to the land. It is this negated history that Norquay's essay seeks to re-claim by animating untold questions, mysteries, and meanings that emerge from history's silences and gaps. Through her analysis, readers find visceral evidence of Jacques Derrida's archive: a metaphor that is as much about what is to be remembered, as it is a metaphor of "what is deemed necessary to forget." Norquay suggests that what is forgotten never really goes away, but rather returns to the historian in the form of an obligation to seek meanings elsewhere, and to revise the very terms of the search in the name of justice and recognition.

Finally, Judith Robertson's luminous poetic renditions intimately recount Simon's influence in the creation of new ideas of the self, other, and the world. Singing of "the poet electric," Robertson brings readers inside Roger Simon's scholarship, where, within ruins and injury, there resided within the trembling minds of his students a world of possibility in the potential of hope. Perhaps more than any other contemporary of Simon, Robertson carves out a space in Simon's *oeuvre* for the thought of beauty that lives despite all worldly attempts to destroy its indomitable spirit of love and creation. Her work, inspired by Simon, reminds us that the world is not simply broken; the world whispers to all of us a call for repair. Robertson's poetic pedagogy teaches us that despite every human obstacle and wish for folly and destruction, justice and love prevail in small, flailing, gifts of the just, the good, the creative, and the beautiful.

Holding each of the contributions in this special issue together is the indelible mark of Simon's commitment to the transformative potential of pedagogy, a quality that Simon himself described with reference to Lévinas's metaphor of the gift. The irony is that to "receive" the gift of Simon's legacy is not to "keep" or "possess" anything, least of all for the self. It is rather an inheritance that obliges us to pass it on to others, to readers, and to students of our own, so that they might pass it on in kind. The future of Simon's legacy—its gift—depends on a painstaking attention to his commitment to the transformative power of historical study and to ethical practices of remembrance, and the care of thought. But it is a future that also depends upon no one among us presuming to "catch" Simon's ever-elusive spirit once and for all. However tempting to hold on in the face of his death, the gift of Simon's pedagogy is also an invitation to freedom, a difficult freedom, that means letting go and giving to others so that he can survive in our collective capacities to write, to play, and to love the world after Simon, *après vous*.