You got tuh go there
tuh know there. (Hurston 1990, 183)

Irony doesn’t come easily to anyone, not the complex kind of irony that allows you to know the tricks you play on yourself. (Denby 1996, 337)

All the articles in this issue of *Curriculum Inquiry* reinforce Zora Neale Hurston’s conviction that, whether the spot is physical, metaphysical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, or some combination of these, you really do “got tuh go there tuh know there.” And you’d better try to be aware of “the tricks you play on yourself.”

Angela Calabrese Barton takes us to her “there.” It is an evening class of a community college, fifteen women and six men. As she suspected, most of the students have been away from formal studies for some time and most have not enrolled in Chemistry out of passion or even curiosity but because it is a requirement of the program in which they are enrolled. Why is she nervous before the class? Her own reasons, and those the reader may find between the lines, make sense. She is aware of the tricks one can play on oneself and she keenly interrogates her own premonitions. The fragility of the trilogy of student, subject, teacher is always with us and only the nervous-beforehand teacher, however experienced, is going to have the cutting edge that yields a classroom alive and bristling, on the brink of something. For this feminist teacher of science, the odds are higher because of the chasm she perceives between student expectations (material to be memorized, presented in lecture and textbook form) and the standards and style of the teacher, who hopes to heal divisions among teacher, student, and text and who plans to use a language of science that will not automatically alienate or marginalize, or both, most of the class members. At first, it may seem silly to suggest that whether atoms attack one another or connect with one another matters a whit. It does not matter, of course, to the chemical equation but it may to people on the fringes of formal education, at the periphery of scientific knowledge and at high emotional risk as well as with feelings of low self-confidence. It may, of course, matter to all students. We can never know how outcomes and attitudes would have been different if approaches to, and conceptions of, the learners and the intellectual turf to be traversed had been different—in this case, had been feminist. Have we
been there, done that? Tough questions. And questions they must remain, although hints, guesses, and hunches may spur us on. That we can “do” science, whoever we are, may be accurate enough; but to make discoveries, breakthroughs, to become in fact the scientists who not only study but are themselves studied may still depend on the “big man, busy man” syndrome—whatever the gender of the contender. Do only the ruthless and/or those who are prepared to travel light in terms of human entanglement and commitment ever arrive? Who makes it into Who’s Who in Science and what personal and professional characteristics must she exhibit? To begin with, if the changes we all claim to desire are to obtain, the “feminist liberatory science education,” which Barton espouses and so eloquently describes, must be given breathing space, a genuine opportunity to take hold and take off.

Deirdre Kelly continues Barton’s plea for another perspective, another way of looking and being in the academy and in the world. Kelly writes of a foray into theater as the spot in which we come to know ourselves, the tricks we play on ourselves and how, against considerable odds and courageous vulnerability, we may ourselves be known. The scriptwriters, performers, producers were twelve teenaged mothers going against the grain of stereotype and talking, writing and acting about the common denominators they share with mothers of whatever age. Even in this arena, however, the kidnapping of art for ideological purposes was at play. There were older participants in the overall drama, determined to turn the enterprise into a cautionary tale—a warning to other teenagers that they should not go and do likewise. This had nothing to do with the intentionality of the twelve young mothers who found much in their situations about which to rejoice. Although the young women exhibit impressive insight and maturity, they are still young women. As a character in Elizabeth Bowen’s novel The House in Paris muses, “young girls like the excess of any quality. Without knowing, they want to suffer, to suffer they must exaggerate” (quoted in Byatt 1991, 246). One may quibble about the suffering angle, but a proclivity to excess and exaggeration is one of the life skills the young possess. It may be “socially constructed” but it seems more likely to be a rather glorious combination of hormones and the imagination at a time when life fiercely beckons. In any case, these twelve women are engaged in theater and theater is dependent upon hyperbole. They are in a play, not a laboratory.

Kelly relates how at the writing stage particularly, much muddy thinking, avoidance, and distortion got sorted out and clarified. There remained the importance of twelve stories, twelve different experiences. The ever-present danger of a seductive monomyth taking over and becoming one story, representative of twelve, had to be avoided. That some of the arrangers and audience had a particular agenda or aspirations that differed from the teenaged mothers had to be recognized and endured. But the question of whose interests are being served by art—its intentions, its productions, its interpretations—remained palpable. Nevertheless, theater as a place to
meet oneself, one’s heart’s desire, one’s present predicament, remained intact and very much worth the tremendous effort expended. And the teenaged mothers had gone there and knew there in a way that no one outside their experience ever could. The arts of imagining and bridging gaps, however, are also applauded in this article which maintains a delicate balance throughout.

Michal Zellermayer brings the water of wondering to the desert of collaborative curriculum-making, which has certainly been used as a catch-all phrase in education. Many teachers who have participated in what was called “collaborative curriculum-making” have entered into the process wholeheartedly only to find that they were being used as very tiny pawns on somebody else’s chessboard. Others have found that their efforts were labeled “collaborative,” and a team got the credit for the hard labor of two or three. The idea that teachers are wise in the ways of curriculum-planning, and given the opportunity to collaborate will do it that much better, often becomes perverted. When it does, teachers find that they are on a trip, often with good food and drink and socializing, which is actually indoctrination most foul. Expressions such as “ownership of the program” are likely to be tossed about deceptively. Thus Zellermayer’s article is welcome in its very beginnings for it “first explores the individual meanings that the teachers [in question] assigned to collaborative curriculum-making and the themes associated with collaboration.” In the present study, the context is writing instruction and it is through this context that the possibilities and pitfalls of collaborative curriculum-making are explored. The roles of authority, the significance of personal knowledge, and the regard for differences are the three organizing concerns that shape this article. We get to know Iris, Liora, Marcia, Orna, Aliza, Esther and, if we have been at the game for some time, they may all seem strangely familiar. None of the three major concerns will be new to the readers of *Curriculum Inquiry* but they remain concerns—ones that can become obstacles to learning if they are not addressed. As Albert Camus writes, “to recognize the full emotional force of [a character’s] existence, one has simply and necessarily to have lived through a certain amount of time” (1995, 243). The sense of not being able to leapfrog or rush understanding is a constant in this article. “The complex kind of irony” about which David Denby writes shares a delightful correspondence with a quotation from Michael Connelly that Zellermayer uses to effect: “One may live one’s own identity in a more ironic, humorous way, laughing occasionally at one’s ridiculous predispositions.” This is the kind of irony that does allow you “to know the tricks you play on yourself.” It is perhaps “the gift of laughter and a sense that the world is mad” which was Rafael Sabatini’s (1927) *Scaramouche*’s famous inheritance.

We hear so much about difference and diversity in education that one can only wonder if the eight-year-olds he or she knows have anything in common. Their chronological age and the fact that they must one day endure their going hence even as their coming hither seems at times to count for
precious little (*King Lear* 5.2). We talk a lot about “celebrating difference,”
and the first two articles in this issue do just that as they focus upon
particular groups within educational settings.

Students will not countenance the notions of distinctions between people because
they assume that all distinctions are invidious. . . . Distinctions have oppressed peo-
ples in the past, therefore all distinctions must be invidious. It is the antilogic of
correctness. . . . The idea that “different” may mean “different” has not yet gotten
through. (Denby 1996, 398)

The teachers about whom Zellermayer writes seem to have grasped that
“different” may mean “different,” and when this happens we can rejoice in
our differences, not just pretend to celebrate them with a strong under-
current of phoniness. Writing of his own childhood in Algiers, Camus says
simply, “And it was just their separateness they felt, not inferiority. They
were from somewhere else, that was all” (1995, 223). You got tuh go there
tuh know there, but there are an infinite number of “theres” and that too
may make a difference.

The three articles are followed by an embarrassment of riches in the
book review section. All five book reviews do their proper job of arousing
interest and whetting appetites. The first is Stephanie Kirkwood Walker’s
“Life Classes. A Review of *Reading and Writing the Self: Autobiography in
Education and the Curriculum*, by Robert J. Graham”—another instance of
“going there to know there.” Walker’s review of Graham’s work is profound—
an essay on the book which pays it great tribute by taking it seriously. Walker
respects Graham’s work—reinforcing his stance on autobiography in lan-
guage arts and curriculum design. She applauds the sense of place Graham
emphasizes, deftly contextualizing it in the temper of the present time and
reconciling his approach to the philosophies and needs of students now. The
marriage of autobiography to other kinds of writing—epistolary, journal
keeping, and so on—is in contrast to its apparent divorce from the arts and
other forms of writing lives. Graham ponders whether autobiography is a
method to use in other disciplines or an educational pursuit on its own.
Walker ups the ante considerably by pushing autobiography beyond
schooling—into the world at large. Quoting Sidonie Smith (1993, 188), she
forces the reader to recognize that

On the eve of the twenty-first century, we find autobiographical subjects all around
us, and they are stretching textual forms, multiple media, and diverse occasions to
fit their excessive negotiations of subjectivity, identity and the body.

Walker sees Graham’s work as a particular aspect of the grand movement
and autobiography—the written life and the living of a life—as intertwined.
She also sees Graham’s geographical stance from a historical perspective
and encourages the reader to read Graham’s text and a number of others
hovering near to it.

Benjamin Levin reviews Mark Holmes’s *Educational Policy for the Pluralist
Democracy: The Common School, Choice and Diversity*. He declares it “large-scale
in its sweep, unflinching in its analysis, bowing to no shibboleths, and most stimulating to read.” Except for an insider audience, of how many books on educational policy can this be said? Levin shows Holmes pointing to the dangers of the public school that would offend nobody, a school not only bland but offensive in its inability to espouse openly any moral or ethical code of any strength or magnitude. According to Levin, Holmes’s conception of traditional values includes courage, honesty, and humility with “far less mention of the feminist virtues of compassion, care, and nurturing.” As a feminist who has read Nel Noddings, I wonder if women have a monopoly on compassion and care and more than a corner on the market of nurturing. I wonder, too, if it does not take courage to show compassion in our mean, lean society, honesty about the way of the world and oneself to feel the necessity to care for the most vulnerable among us and humility to see that we are nothing if we do not nurture those who follow us. While women historically have done more of the emotional work of the world than men, is it helpful to the healing of this same world to continue to list virtues in traditional categories as Levin attempts to do? Perhaps I am biased because I am a colleague of Holmes, albeit in fields far removed from his. Nevertheless, it is impressive when a person lives his creed, and there is a rare consistency between Holmes’s life and his rhetoric. Levin’s perceptive analysis of Holmes’s analysis of school policy sees the flip side of tolerance as intolerance toward anyone with an out-of-step conviction—expressed and lived—to her name. He also queries the amount of power Holmes attributes to policy and sees politics, not policy, carrying the day for any change or reform in the pattern of Canadian schooling. Levin’s review of Holmes’s book not only presses one to read this clearly readable book but to ponder as well the many variables it juggles. Why do parents prefer certain schools? Is it atmosphere, academic status, social caché, familiarity, language, religion, physical geography, or a myriad of other characteristics that they value? Holmes will opt for the best we can have since no ideal system will ever exist. Levin assures us that Holmes outlines clearly what he considers this “best” to be. Readers would do well to entertain Holmes’s best and to put it alongside their own version, which Holmes provokes us all to do.

Gila Strauch provides a thoughtful review of Robert L. Deaton and William A. Berkan’s *Planning and Managing Death Issues in the Schools: A Handbook.* She considers the text, written by social workers, from her own scholarly perspective as an educator who has herself done a comprehensive study on “death education.” Strauch applauds the attention being paid to deaths of the young, often risktakers extraordinaire and extremists who can be plunged into despair over bruised egos, the unfathomability of life, and the intimations of mortality that strike in childhood or adolescence. The moment when one realizes that death can never be prevented, only postponed, leads to various behaviors. They range from a desperation to live life to the full (and fullness is susceptible to many interpretations) to a resignation that asks “Why wait?” Actually I have heard many rebuttals to this youthful question, but all of them have been built on adult assumptions. What guarantee can we give that there will ever be a “better moment”
to leave this vale of tears, laughter, and forgetting than the present one? The conditions and motivation for suicide vary widely and as Camus's character says, “If I commit suicide, at least it will be my choice.” Canada, for example, has removed suicide from the criminal code, and some religious groups, heretofore considering it a “sin,” have relaxed their rules about funeral and burial rites for those who “die at their own hands.” Yet, assisted suicide is still very difficult to come by. There is irony in the attention paid to the “Socratic method” in this review, for the discussion does not proceed to the Socratic method of dying—one the writers do not seem to favor. Are we to forbid gallows humor as somehow in bad taste or may we look again at laughter as remarked by Connelly, by André Moreau (Scaramouche), by all those able to extend the comic vision of life even unto death. Prevention of suicide among the young and help and counseling for young people who have had those encounters with the “eternal footman” one can but applaud. It may be, however, that there are as many dangers in too much concern for another’s behavior, as there are dangers in allowing too much freedom. It is always a delicate balance. And there are forever the young who somehow believe they have two-way tickets to the great beyond.

As adults we nurture our young only to send them off to be killed, and even the curriculum of the absurd cannot prevent students from learning early that this too is human behavior. Keeping the school on an even keel and providing structure that issues in security are advocated by Deaton and Berkan—their ways of “coping” in a secular world make considerable sense. Everyone agrees that the show must go on whatever combination of denial, courage, engagement, and detachment this entails. Strauch’s review intrigues because her stress is on understanding and support, whereas the writers of the handbook are, in keeping with the times, planning to “manage death issues.” As John Ralston Saul (1995) emphasizes, “management” is the word of our times, so much in life is to be managed, why not “death issues in schools”? The social workers have a definite agenda to match their management skills, and dialogue between the two sets of professionals (social workers and teachers) would, as Strauch seems to suggest, be beneficial.

Many points will prove fascinating to probe. Here are two of them. First, the idea of death as “natural,” which Strauch stresses in her work and her review, might be examined. We are not part of the natural world. Nature would kill us off earlier and faster than our interventions allow. We are, as St. Paul said, “tied to a dying animal,” which may be a little different from actually being one. For better or worse, we have cut ourselves off from nature and set up intricate mechanisms to hide ourselves and each other from our mortality. Nancy Mitford’s The American Way of Death and romps such as Evelyn Waugh’s The Loved One show to what fantastic lengths we are willing to go to evade facing the grim reaper. Children, and the rest of us, receive contorted and contradictory messages. As noted earlier, we must endure our going hence, yet only in nature can creatures die with the dignity we rave on about. As Sherwin B. Neeland (1995) has noted, in our
present culture, there is no death with dignity—only the more or less humiliating kinds. Dropping dead without benefit of an agent of destruction is relatively rare. How do you put “birth, copulation, death,” as Ezra Pound described our brief sojourn, back into a “natural context” when we have long since torn them from that context. Birth, sex, and death do “come naturally,” but since culture has kidnapped them, we now need “death” as well as “birthing” and “sex” education. (The embryo is the only one who, thus far, does not need a rehearsal!) Unfortunately, consolations offered by culture for “managing death issues” are not emphasized at least in the review of this book, and these consolations include more generally accessible ones than the important rituals and ceremonies that particular communities employ. If students have been nourished upon a diet of novels, films, plays, poems of any substance (not the bland pap that sometimes passes for content in school), they will already be familiar with the deaths of humans as well as animals. The idea of death gives shape to literature and all the arts as it does to life. Nature and culture continue—only we stop.

This leads to the second point—that of “managing death issues.” Much stress is placed on having students accept the finality of death. Yet this will be impossible for many teachers for many reasons. As I scribble, I listen, and partly listen to the work of a composer who died two hundred years ago and the performer, whom I heard in person forty years ago, has been dead for thirty-five. For me, their deaths do not have much sense of finality about them. I have just been quoting several dead people upon whose ideas and words I depend. In fact, the references for this issue of Curriculum Inquiry show forth a veritable host of the dead who have not departed with finality from the land of the living. Perhaps it is sadder, but it may be more accurate to say that many shades fade away and others never depart during our own breathing space.

Though the lovers be lost, love will not
And death shall have no dominion. (Thomas 1952)

Elsewhere, Dylan Thomas (1952) urges us not to accept death with complacency but to “rage against the dying of the light.” During the dance of avoidance and silence so well described by Deaton, Berkan, and Strauch, it is important, of course, to “consider Phoebus who was once handsome and tall as you” and to remember that no one knows the hour. There may be many ways to face our certain end and that of our fellow travelers (to manage death issues, if you will). But there may be unexpected encores after the supposed final curtain too. Surely it is important to read this guidebook for its new insights and suggestions as a point of departure to the great discussion that includes us all. As Oscar Wilde remarked, “love is a greater mystery than death.” But both may be mysteries not entirely susceptible to management but well worth talking about and reflecting upon across all generations. We owe a debt to Strauch and the authors she reviews for insisting that we pay attention.
It is curious how articles and reviews speak to one another; intertextuality is always an element in *Curriculum Inquiry*. Jack Miller and Susan Drake review James Moffett’s book *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual Awakening Through Education* and unintentionally invite the reader to entertain Gila Strauch’s work. Throughout their review and, one presumes, throughout Deaton and Berkan’s book, the aspect of human life that is under erasure is the spiritual. As Miller and Drake declare at the outset, “Educators avoid the word spiritual,” and the avoidance of that word was palpable in Strauch’s review. Think how differently we might have read about the handbook prepared to “manage issues” surrounding death if we had been permitted even to consider that a “divine spark” could be present in each person—a spark that even death might not entirely extinguish. As Soren Kierkegaard observed, “it requires moral courage to grieve: it requires religious courage to rejoice.” Let us go back further to the review of Mark Holmes’s book. He is no advocate, one suspects, of holistic education, yet we find a similar plea in his work, this time for religion as the underpinning of education. Clearly these reviews together equal something more than the sum of their parts.

The goals presented by Miller and Drake may seem a bit daunting, a touch utopian, yet an argument can always be made for aiming high. Moffett is quoted as claiming that “advocates of holistic education insist on the total development of all levels of a human being.” I cannot think of a human being in any time or place who has developed totally on all levels, but good luck to them. The very language of insistence may be strangely at odds with that of spiritual recognition and growth. Insistence upon this “total development of all levels” in addition to being impossible is a pretty heavy-handed mandate. It feels out of tune with spirituality infusing education, as Miller and Drake clearly present it, and with the lopsided development of most of us who nevertheless hunger for the spiritual dimension. It is chilling to entertain the belief that all institutions, including schools, are concerned with control rather than learning. Certainly many of our institutions are medieval, creaking and groaning now with the weight and pressures of the ages and expending disproportionate time and energy on self-defense. It follows that to divide and conquer must be the organizational credo, and one watches with horror as teachers are prevented from working through and across curricular divides by forces that encourage competition for student hours, departmental jobs, and other special interests far removed from those of students and their learning. Marshall McLuhan declared that “fragmentation was the only obscenity,” and left to their own devices, children do not separate what is to be learned into chunks or compartments. They have a sense of awe and wonder about the world which teachers who are not themselves bereft of it can encourage. The arts, which disturb and show rather than stroke and tell, are an important part of this process. We cannot, however, be harsh on teachers, for in the present political climate and within the culture of many schools a stifling pragmatism prevails that is an anathema to awe and wonder. The human spirit is resilient, however, and books such as Moffett’s and educators such as Miller and Drake can cross the drawbridge bringing fresh supplies of
what so many teachers crave—reinforcement and affirmation of their own spiritual awakening. While recognizing the many inspiring elements of Moffett’s work, Miller and Drake point out that he is not, as he may think, a voice crying in the wilderness: many teachers and groups are already advocating and doing the things he deems essential. Miller and Drake find that Moffett is not only a bit out of touch with reality—the art of the possible—but has not considered the day-by-day implications of his theory. In addition, they list a number of omissions and inadequacies in Moffett’s work; yet even these are questions his work itself, whatever its limitations, have provoked. There seems to be a great deal of what we should do, even a number of whys, but a serious dearth of hows; and all three are needed if we are going to accomplish enough before it is too late. We all can benefit from understanding the tricks one plays on oneself. The probing analysis Miller and Drake have offered is welcome. They identify what is of great value in Moffett’s present work and look forward to his addressing pertinent and practical aspects of spirituality-in-education in the future.

This issue concludes with Sandra Hollingsworth’s review of Effective and Responsible Teaching: The New Synthesis; and in its personal voice, thoroughgoing manner, and emphasis upon the narrative biographical aspects of all research, it harks back to Stephanie Walker’s review which introduces this section. The book is edited by F. K. Oser, A. Dick, and J.-L. Patry. It is a collection of papers in which Hollingsworth finds, by and large, the improvement model holding sway. She encourages collaboration with her review, and so it begins with Kathryn Stewart, principal of the Pondok Indah Elementary School campus of the Jakarta International School, discussing the chapter by Elliott Eisner and pronouncing that he “makes good sense.” A group of international scholars write about patterns of education and educational research that, according to Hollingsworth, emanated from the United States. The theme seems to be one that has outgrown “teaching effectiveness” as a center of concern and has moved to its inclusion of “responsible teaching.” This synthesis sounds promising but it is apparently not without its difficulties. Roger Simon and Joel Weiss (1979) make a helpful distinction between “accepting responsibility” and the question of how this responsibility can be fulfilled. The book’s stated aims are “to inspire reflection, to trigger debate and to stimulate research that will lead to a more humane approach toward schooling.” If Miller and Drake are near the mark in their review, the research, however well meaning and “humane” in its approach, will not easily translate into the actualities of schooling. If schools aim to control, the responsible teacher, as described in this book, may come a cropper. In our litigious times, how much responsibility are all but the most powerful permitted to take or all but the most courageous willing to attempt? Teachers have been conditioned against taking organizational responsibility, even as the real responsibilities of this world—its young and their needs—are heaped upon them.

Hollingsworth takes the title, “Leaving Normal,” from a film about a young woman leaving a place called Normal, Oklahoma, for an unknown destination—certain only that she must depart. Hollingsworth wonders just how far from “Normal” some of the contributors to this text have come.
Are they really able to leave “Normal” or do they simply travel a lot and end up in the same old place—trying to improve what is already in place? Lee Shulman wants to incorporate morality into the pedagogical debate. Just as we begin to see parallels with Walker and Miller and Drake’s work, we find ourselves on the familiar ground of “improvement.” As Hollingsworth discusses David Berliner’s work, the PEEL project on action research and all the chapters of this clearly important book, she keeps asking Hollingsworthian questions, implicitly inviting the reader to ask more. There is irony and “hidden laughter.” How ethical is it for researchers to teach in other people’s classrooms? How does their presence affect the overall dynamic? What constitutes a moral dilemma? Presumably, some kind of morality, articulated or not, is present in all classrooms, all groups of people gathered together. How much does understanding really help if it does not lead to resolution or reconciliation? It is ironic to have to name schools as “caring communities” as if they have never been so until we named them that. What does naming do? Focus attention? Soften the heart? Improve the ethical climate? Force competition and revenge out, or underground? Extend us to where we have perhaps always been—beyond cognition? Are schools really places pandering to the intellect or even respecting it in the first place? And if it is respected, is this not a moral stance? The “high degree of reciprocity and mutual respect” of which Jean-Luc Patry writes would seem to be fundamental to the “responsibility model.”

Trygve Bergem laid blame on the preparation of teachers, claiming that it had not provided teachers with the moral vocabulary they needed. It has always seemed to me that “teacher education” was full of moral language and often the heady language of altruism. But as teacher education proceeds, it is often sad to see that moral language empties its meaning or is dropped altogether as “unrealistic” or “naive.” Often the first few years of teaching are a struggle between the high ground of moral convictions and the low ground of school culture, demands, and control. The tricks we play on ourselves abound. There is a nice point made on the difference between taking responsibility (often a short-lived activity) and being responsible—come what may. And—all the while—in this well-wrought review, Hollingsworth keeps nudging writers and readers to ask questions. In spite of our determination to move on, how far have we really moved from Normal? The ideal of educational effectiveness combined with moral responsibility surely is not new, but our times call for the articulate vision and the mutual support to follow through. One ingredient, perhaps implied, perhaps taken for granted, is an atmosphere that is relatively safe, where the smell of fear does not lurk in the corridors or at the postmodern decentered centers of the classroom. Without this climate—named and claimed—how effective and responsible can anyone be? You have to leave Normal. “You got tuh go there, tuh know there.”

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