

Choreography of a Homecoming

A Narrative Exploration of Cross-Cultural Experience in Third Place/Space

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I am a part of all that I have met
Yet all experience is an arch where thro'
Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
(Tennyson, p. 95)

I MUST CONFESS that I didn't come across Tennyson on my own. Several years ago, just before my return to Canada after three years of teaching in Japan, my Grandfather sent me a copy of the poem. He didn't send just the poem; he told me about his relationship to the poem, his discovery of the poem, the time he memorized the poem as a teenager. As always, there was a story. I grew up hearing Grandpa Stories—the famous tales of his childhood as the son of missionaries in Western China in the early 1900's. I grew up hearing Chinese nursery rhymes (Chinese by his approximation), stories of Asia, East meets West. *I am a part of all that I have met*. I only just heard the words of Tennyson's poem, but in fact they've been woven into the tapestry of my life since I was a small child, old enough to plead for one more Grandpa Story. Please, just one more.

Starting Point

In the spirit of *currere* (Pinar & Grumet, 1976), I am embarking on a curricular journey, one that walks me from childhood to adulthood, pulling memories forward as I seek to understand how my conception of culture has drawn me to cross-cultural experiences. What I discover is that my cross-cultural engagements did not begin when I arrived in Japan with a job as an English teacher. I choose Grandpa Stories as a starting point of this critical engagement with

culture because they lay at the foundations of my worldview, which provides part of the impetus for my arrival on the other side of the world.

Reflexive Motion

I grew up in a white Anglophone middle class town in southern Ontario, but I always knew that the world was much bigger than that. Visits to Grandpa's house were journeys to another place, with his Asian tapestries on the walls and cushions, the ritual Chinese dinners eaten with chopsticks, Grandpa teaching us how to slurp noisily while we ate. *I am a part of all that I have met*. The sum of my experiences contributes to my experience of culture, thus I am a part of my culture and it is a part of me. Culture is at once personal and public; shared and unique. From the day we are born, we have unique experiences; each previous experience shapes the next one. Therefore we can say that culture is something that everyone owns for themselves; it is a lens through which to interpret new stimuli and challenges. On the other hand, culture is shared because it does not begin with us. It has a history that we inherit through stories. As we live these stories, we are connected to our outer culture; we share a discourse that allows us to find commonality. Yet, we all experience and tell these stories in a unique way. Stories are powerful in reflecting and shaping how we relate to one another and the world (Sharkey, 2004); consequently, we are both creators of culture and products of culture (Kramsch, 1993). We must understand our personal engagements with culture and how these personal engagements are reflected back to us from the public.

When Grandpa sent me Tennyson's *Ulysses*, I felt immediately drawn to it. I knew that I had been given some wise words—words to hold on to. The poem speaks to connectedness in history and links this history to a continuous looking forward to new experience. *All experience is an arch wherethro' gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades forever and forever when I move*. Grandpa chose the poem because he knew I would identify with this theme of continuity and reflexivity of experience. He knew this because he was instrumental in weaving those threads into my being.

A Theoretical Framework: Third Place/Space

Thus far, I have argued that culture is both personal and public. Although these concepts have been stated in dichotomous terms, I cannot conceive of one straight line with finite, opposing points on each end. Instead, I see fluidity, reflexivity and necessarily, ambiguity. This perspective is in line with Edward Soja's (1996) notion of Thirdspace, defined as "a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (p. 2). Thirdspace rejects binary thought and invites critical exploration of space as both real and imagined. Thirdspace embraces the concrete and the abstract, the real and the imagined experience of culture. Space, according to Ellis' (2004) work on children's place attachments, provides a sense of freedom to explore. Space, however, cannot exist without a strong sense of place, a place that invites critical exploration. To develop a sense of place, we need space to explore all the (real or imagined) nooks and crevices that we encounter or seek out. If I want to create Thirdspace, I must also find a third place.

The field of second language education offers such a conception of place. Claire Kramsch (1993) provides insight in her book *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, in which she stresses the importance of the emergence of third places in second language classrooms. Teaching in a third place means that I do not expect my students to leave the culture of their language behind at the classroom door, a request that propagates the colonialist history associated with English teaching (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Rather, I agree to meet them half way. Here, I can critically examine the “shared characteristics, prejudices, fixed habits of thought” (Said, 1996, p. 27) that my speech community, and any speech community, shares. I can also invite my students into this critical practice.

We should seek to adopt a framework that necessarily contains elements of both Soja’s Thirdspace and Kramsch’s third place. I will call this *third place/space*. We need to develop a sense of security in a third place before we have the freedom to engage in a critical exploration of the spaces. Third places/ spaces are there, hovering beneath our words and our actions, but they must be actively created (Wang, 2006). From these vantage points, we have the opportunities to explore our “own cultural myths and realities” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 216), thereby challenging fixed notions of culture, and “our own social and historical positioning” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 16). This is not easy, should not be easy—it involves moving into what Britzman (1998) calls difficult knowledge. This is the knowledge that informs us about why we are who we are and that opens doors for educational experience.

Within a third place/space theoretical framework, I realize that my cross-cultural experience is not contained to the years I spent in Japan. My entire life, if I stop to look, has been rich with cross-cultural experiences; there is an ongoing crossing between personal and public cultures. Actively seeking out these third places/ spaces, which are there anyway, is a critical practice through which it becomes possible to theorize a curriculum that recognizes, seeks out and explores blind spots. As Grumet (1988) argues, it is in the place between private and public, the third place/space, where the greatest amount of learning occurs.

Shaping a Teenager’s Worldview, in Retrospect

In my curricular journey, I have not yet reached Japan. I am still a teenager and there is another discourse that I find has shaped my conception of culture. Just as Grandpa Stories shaped my view of culture, so too did the feminist argument that the personal is public. I am the daughter of a purple-clad matriarch who decorates her house with goddesses and who sews, knits and bakes, but does not allow those hobbies to carry the weight of her generation’s silence. In fact, there’s not much silent about my Mom. With her, I’ve had my fair share of Women’s Day Marches, Take Back the Night Marches, and singing Carolyn McDade in a Women’s Choir. I sang empowering words like: No woman is required to build the world by destroying herself. Despite all that singing and marching, I always thought that the *real* feminist work was my Mom’s. It’s her choir, after all. She’s the one who is still singing those words, loud and clear, giving voice to many women who may just be discovering that they do indeed have one.

I look back on my choir days as a phase—one of many. It was an exploration of my self as a young woman, one that I thought I left behind when I stopped singing. My Mom’s voice is loud enough for both of us and really, it’s her generation’s battle, or this is what I thought. “No woman is required to build the world by destroying herself”. At the time, I didn’t really grasp the meaning of those words; they didn’t speak to my personal experience. I mean, I was a white 15-

year old, living in a world of opportunity and advantage. However, I am not just a woman in the present, but a woman in history. I am a part of all that I have met. And it is a part of me. My mother's words, then, are mine, as much as they belong to all of our mothers. In thinking back through my mother (Grumet, 1988), I discover that feminist discourse shaped my personal culture and coloured my experience of public culture. This discourse, just like the themes in *Grandpa Stories* that are captured in Tennyson's poem, frames my conception of culture by forming part of the lens through which I view the world and interpret my surroundings, past, present and future.

My own personal history of culture seems to be a history of change, of redefinition in light of new, often confusing, situations. My parents divorced when I was three. Dad remarried and moved to Antigua. Annual visits there brought me into contact with a West Indian culture and a *creole*¹ that terrified me. It terrified me, because I was told that Antiguanians speak English, but I could never understand what they were saying. I remember asking my older brother Doug to do the talking when we went through customs. I was always afraid that the officer would ask me something that I wouldn't be able to answer and then we wouldn't be allowed through. The irrational fears of a child seem so trivial now, in light of my later experience.

Around the same time that Dad remarried, Mom married her sister Kathy's ex-husband. Kathy had met and fallen in love with another woman. At age 7, my uncle became my step-dad and my cousins became my step-brother and sister. The nice thing about this arrangement was that we all got to keep the same Grandpa; therefore, the same stories. It sounds messy to outsiders, but we were always told by our newly blended parents that it wasn't messy at all. What is most important, we were told, is love and support. We certainly had that. But it was still messy, or at the very least, confusing. I *have* always felt loved and supported, however certainly not in the way that was fed to me by the outer culture of southern Ontario. This was the culture that taught me the words to describe family: This public discourse could not bear the weight of all of my experiences or give me the words I needed to explain my life story to myself or to others.

There was a time when I called my step-dad (who used to be my uncle) "Uncle-Daddy" because, well, that's what he was. By definition. Those were the words that I was given by the public culture—but not in that combination. I quickly learned that I couldn't just go around calling him that in public. In the culture of my newly blended family, I was told that it's okay to call parents by their first names. That saved me from adopting the Uncle-Daddy label, but using first names was still different from what my friends were doing at home. Plus, at school, my sister would talk about "Dad and Beth" and I would talk about "Mom and Nor" and then we'd have to explain how those are all the same two people and that yes, we really are sisters. In the culture of my immediate family, I learned that a step-parent was just like a regular parent—someone who cared for, loved and supported his or her children. Just the name was different.

My understanding of this definition was challenged when I decided to buy a birthday card for my Dad's new wife. At the time, Hallmark didn't sell step-mother or "Dad's New Wife" cards. I bought a mother card but craftily snuck the premodifier 'step' in the appropriate place. I was so proud of myself for figuring out how to address all these new people in my life! When she opened the card, she said in a tone that I now understand, but then found mocking and cold, "I'm not your step-mother!" She put the card on the shelf with the others, displaying my embarrassment and shame to the world. It seemed I didn't quite have it all figured out yet. And my outer culture wasn't helping me any. It gave me words, but the words didn't fit.

Dwelling in Third Place/Space: On Words

How do we become the owners of the words we use? This can only be understood in terms of the security and freedom that are central to third place/space. I use words like ‘uncle’, ‘daddy’, and ‘step-mother’, because they are given to me from the public. Learning a language, first or second, is both a private and a public process (Kramsch, 1993), thus words have to cross over from the public sphere into my personal culture. Words become mine, or they are rejected, depending on how and in what context the personal meets the public, and how the public reflects back on the personal. Bakhtin (1990) articulates the idea of ownership of words clearly: “Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with intentions of others” (p. 294). Some words, as Bakhtin (1990) reminds us, stubbornly resist being transformed into private property. ‘Step-mother’ has never become part of my language, even though the word appropriately defines my father’s second wife. I do not own that word because it failed to pass my test. Same with ‘Uncle-Daddy.’

These are just two small examples, but they demonstrate that every word is a “tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of a language” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 272). A single word is embedded with the values and beliefs of a collective culture so that people can share the experience and understanding of ‘step-mother,’ for example. On the other hand, our individual experiences of ‘step-mother’ will be unique because they fall on the backdrop of our personal stories and interactions with culture. We need a sense of security and freedom, place and space to test out new words, and then we need place and space within which to interpret the public’s response. Language is the medium through which we explore, create, and negotiate culture and experience. Language, if we take the time to notice, is full of third places/ spaces because language represents the place where private and public meet (Said, 1996). We become authors of our own words in third place/space.

The Dance of Culture in Third Place/Space

I have described a feeling, which is not entirely unique, of disconnection from my outer culture and its words. What emerges from my own narratives as well as from others’ (e.g., Eva Hoffman’s (1989) *Lost in Translation*; and Edward Said’s (1999) *Out of Place: A Memoir*) is the reflexivity of culture. There is an ongoing dance of give and take, push and pull, between personal and public. Then there is a parallel struggle to find the right words to describe the dance. Changing perspectives, changing languages, changing cultural landscapes; with every change, we must “interpret [our] present circumstances, but must accomplish a revisioning of [our] history” (Sumara, 2002, p. 245). In order to find a sense of place in a new landscape, the steps of the dance have to be re-learned, and a language re-constructed. In the process of constructing this landscape, personal history is created. Developing an awareness of this creation can be accompanied by a true sense of homecoming, as Feuerverger (2000) found in her narrative search for a ‘home’ in her first language, Yiddish.

In this critical inquiry of my lived experience, I am realizing that I have been learning the dance of culture for my entire life. The nature of the interactions between my personal and public cultures drew me towards the cross-cultural experiences of teaching and living in Japan. What appeals to me about cross-cultural experiences is that people from different outer cultures come

into interactions expecting difference. It doesn't hide behind the veil of an assumed sameness. Difference, if approached in a third place/space, becomes a common ground upon which to build a relationship. This is where attachments, real and imagined, are formed. I have come to understand that it was Grandpa Stories that gave me the yearning for adventure and cross-cultural experience; it was my history of cross-cultural experiences with my outer culture that gave me the motivation to act on that yearning.

Crossing Cultures

When we first try to make sense of new situations, we have a tendency to rely on the words of others to guide us through the initial phases of adjustment and acceptance. Jamie Zeppa's (1999) *Beyond the Sky and the Earth: A Journey into Bhutan* was my guide. I read her book before I went to Japan, several times while I was there and again when I returned to Canada. In every reading, I found myself relating to different phases of Zeppa's experience. Her story moves from an account of the daily challenges of teaching and living in Bhutan, to a more personal connection with the people and places of Bhutan, to a full blown feeling of belonging. In short, Zeppa's story (1999) maps a journey from arrival to entrance.

Arrival is physical and happens all at once. The train pulls in, the plane touches down, you get out of the taxi with all your luggage. You can arrive in a place and never really enter it; you get there, look around, take a few pictures, make a few notes, send postcards home. When you travel like this, you think you know where you are, but, in fact, you have never left home. Entering takes longer. You cross over slowly, in bits and pieces. You begin to despair: will you ever get over? It is like awakening slowly, over a period of weeks. And then one morning, you open your eyes and you are finally here, really and truly here. You are just beginning to know where you are. (p. 101)

Just when I start to think, "I've done it; I've finally entered," then I find myself entering some more. It is not a smooth process. One step forward, two steps back. The same dance of give and take going on between inner and outer cultures, in third place/space. It is the kind of dance where, I am increasingly becoming aware, it is not entirely clear who is leading. *All experience is an arch.*

A couple of years ago, I was at a conference in Japan and the speaker said, "If you live in Japan for one year, you could write a novel, but if you live in Japan for ten, you would struggle to write one page." It is in the arrival phase that words pour onto pages, because everything is new, every stimulus challenges the senses, inner and outer cultures collide and ricochet off each other, fighting for precedence. When I arrived in Japan, I felt like I was upside down. On the globe, Japan is as far from Ontario as you can get before you start coming back. The distance was not only geographical, but cultural too. There was a lot to write about and I, like Hoffman when she first arrived in Canada from Poland, was feeling rather "excited by my own otherness" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 179). After awhile, though, novelty wore thin and I sought acceptance from my Japanese friends and colleagues, as much as I sought to accept them. I wanted to be a part of this "culturally shaped world...governed by rules of conduct and socially accepted behaviour" (Aoki, 2005, p. 337). That fuelled my need to enter, to be on the inside.

Furthermore, I needed to enter because in order to teach a foreign language, I must be able to see and understand the foreignness from the perspective of my students (Kramersch, 1993). I have to understand my position as a foreigner in Japan, where even the word ‘foreigner’ betrays my expectations. It does not mean ‘anyone who is not Japanese.’ Foreigner, in Japan, means ‘white Anglophone.’ How do I reconcile the tension of being labelled something that excludes most people? This problem of reconciling “one’s identity and the actualities of one’s own culture, society and history to the actuality of other identities, cultures, peoples” (Said, 1996, p. 60) is fundamental. I need keep practicing and re-learning the dance of culture in a third place/space, adding new steps all the time, getting back on my feet when I trip and fall down. So the dance doesn’t stagnate. So I don’t stagnate.

Arrival

I arrived in Japan with a job as an assistant English teacher in a public high school, loaded with values and ideas of a culture that I did not feel entirely connected to. I was asked again and again to explain my ‘native’ culture in words that did not always fit. I was living a tension situation (Aoki, 2005), one in which I had to balance my ever changing inner culture, with that of a new outer culture, in which I was struggling to find a sense of place.

“Alison, what does it mean to be Canadian?” The search for the right words is ongoing, but I did find some that were usually accepted. I could say the words multicultural, ice hockey, and Rocky Mountains and these would be received with nods of understanding. But I grew up in a white Anglophone town, I don’t know the rules of ice hockey, and I’ve only been to the Rocky Mountains a couple of times. How do those words actually speak to my unique experience of being Canadian? Every word “tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin, 1990, p, 293). These words are bursting with flavours that I cannot describe. I was not even trying to speak Japanese yet, and the words could not translate. English to English was not as straightforward as it sounds; words carry different weight in new contexts. They leave a different aftertaste in my mouth.

When I arrived in Japan, I was prepared for the slurping because of dinners with Grandpa, but I had to learn that women should not cross their legs because it is unfeminine and that I should not blow my nose in public because it is rude, however I could sniff loudly anywhere. (Sniffing, I discovered, is an entire socially governed language of its own). There’s a lot more I had to learn, but I forget what it was now. That’s how I know that I did enter Japan, because those differences are no longer salient. I “changed and changed and changed, like Ulysses’s ship changed one part at a time” (Zeppa, 1999, p. 264). Arrival was a public affair, a wholly outer experience. I felt like I was wearing someone else’s glasses. I was still seeing through my Canadian eyes but the lenses had changed. My perceptions were all fuzzy. I couldn’t read the signs, linguistic or cultural. Gradually, as I entered, taking those steps in and then back out again, my vision became clearer. How did it happen? How did I find myself living in a place so different from where I’d come from, and calling that place ‘home’? What was it that pulled me in?

Snapshot: Narrative

I'd like to explore these questions further with the help of a photograph. Photographs are emblematic because they are “simultaneously personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday and historic” (Kuhn, 1995, p. 7). Narrative based on photographs can create new understandings of the past and the present, and of how these connections to history resonate across the personal and the political (Kuhn, 1995). The following narrative is based on the protocol outlined in Annette Kuhn's (1995) *Family Matters* (p. 7).



There are two young women in the centre of this picture. They are standing in the hallway on the first floor of Kashihara high school, where one is a student and one is a teacher. But not for long. They are both leaving soon. The young women are looking at the camera and smiling. They are standing close together and holding their fingers in a V, a sign of peace. The girl on the right is Japanese, and a student. On the left is the Canadian, the teacher. Both young women are in uniforms, though of different sorts. It's the uniforms that tell who is the student and who is the teacher. The student is Erika² and she is in her school uniform for the last time. The teacher, that's me. I'm in my most formal black suit. Erika is wearing a navy blue wool cardigan under the jacket of her uniform, the arms stretched too long from being pulled over her fingers all winter. The clock hanging in the hallway tells us that it is 1:25pm. It is Graduation Day, March 1st, 2005. The ceremony in the gym is over, parents are filing out of the school and students have free reign to say their goodbyes to classmates and teachers. Graduation—the marking of an end, the closing of one chapter and the opening of a new one. It is the third Graduation ceremony for me at this school, but this is the most important one, because it is the last. It is when I say goodbye to the first students I taught when I arrived three years ago. There's a mixture of sadness, farewells and the giddiness of new beginnings all around and inside us.

What is not captured in the framing of the photograph are our feet. I am wearing my brown leather indoor shoes. Other teachers' indoor shoes are usually open-toed, plastic slippers, sometimes with heels. I am used to the suit and slipper fashion now, but I still feel more comfortable in my sturdy Roots shoes. Erika is wearing the same blue plastic indoor slippers that all the other third graders have been wearing since they entered high school. Green is for second graders and red is for first graders. That's how you tell them apart. That, and the 'S' for senior, 'J' for junior and 'F' for freshman buttons that all the students wear on their uniforms. The distinction is important because it tells students immediately who is older and who is younger. This hierarchy dictates every social interaction. When I arrive in Japan, I think it's strange that students are always publicly marked and located in their place. Learning to read the symbols that define one's status relative to others is a big step in. I begin to see how I, as the youngest teacher, as the only foreigner in the school, fit into my outer culture. One step forward.

This photograph freezes one moment and silences the noise and excitement that is echoing through the halls. In the moment when time starts again, I take Erika's hand and tell her "good luck at university". It was *she* who took *my* hand when I first arrived at the school, when she led me around, introducing me to her friends. When I had been in Japan for less than a week, she walked to school with me, struggling to use her few English words. What we were lacking in words, we made up for in laughter and giggles. Erika met me when I had just arrived. Now, she tells me that I've become so "Japanese." She was part of that becoming. I tell her that she was so kind to me when I first arrived and didn't know anything about anything and thank you. Our eyes fill with tears and she hugs me, making me wonder who the teacher is, as I so often do. One Canadian in a school of 1200 Japanese. What could I possibly have to teach, when there's so much to learn?

Entrance: A Balancing Act

When I look at this picture, I know that it was taken at a time when I felt I had truly entered, when my inner and outer cultures had found a way to move together. I know this because of the peace sign. It no longer looks like a foreign pose, like something silly to do in a picture. I do not look awkward in my body like I did in earlier pictures. However, as Eva Hoffman (1989), points out "you can't transport human meanings whole from one culture to another" (p.175). Although my peace sign looks 'authentic,' notice that I still haven't stepped out of my Canadian shoes. It takes time for that dance of give and take to become better choreographed, to step beyond arrival and into entrance. Entrance is a word as richly and as contextually flavoured as any other word and underneath its surface is the pitter-patter of the countless little steps of my dance.

When I look at this picture, I do not notice the peace sign anymore, unless I am looking at the picture with Canadians. This changes my experience of the memory because of the difficulty of transporting meanings between cultures. I do not, however, want the peace sign to be rendered a transparent gesture; I want it to remain full of the experiences and attachments it represents. I have to work to keep my balance in this third place/space in which I move between the margins of two cultures. My positioning gives me "the unique opportunity to see two landscapes simultaneously" (Wang, 2006, p. 122); however, my audience cannot possibly see the same two landscapes that I can see. A balancing act.

Snapshot revisited: Full circle

I have described one way of looking at the photograph; looking back. In Eva Hoffman's (1989) *Lost in Translation*, she finds relativity of cross-cultural experiences by triangulating her perspective to a third place, which "we all need to find...in order to know that we exist not only within culture but also outside it" (p. 170). We need to "triangulate to something—the past, the future, our own untamed perceptions, another place" (p. 276). We can manipulate the points of the triangle, thus the points of view, and a different tale emerges. Narrative looks back and tells the story of a memory. It gives voice to a process of change. What if I place myself as a child on the third point of the triangle, looking forward from the past? This is a changed child, however. She now has the self-understanding that comes from a journey in third place/space, where "[e]verything comes together" (Soja, 1996, p. 56); everything being Grandpa Stories, feminist discourse, cross-cultural experience and all that lies beneath the surface of those words. This child has a new framework within which to conceptualize herself.

From the point of view of the child, it is not surprising to find myself in this situation where I am different from those around me. I am already no stranger to being different. I have an 'Uncle-Daddy' and a 'Dad's new wife.' I can imagine myself in a place where the norms of my Canadian outer culture are challenged and recreated by the interactions with each new person and situation. I can imagine myself in Asia. Because of the stories I heard as a child and the journeys to Grandpa's house, the images of Asia are already woven into the tapestry of my life story. From the child's perspective, I can see departure from Canada. I have left Canada already, in stories and in person. I can see an experience, an adventure to be sought out. I can see arrival. I can imagine the initial culture shock. This is something I have already felt in those early visits to Antigua and again each time I returned to Ontario. On each trip, I am a bit changed, so I know that Japan will change me. All experience does. But, I can not fathom how it will get inside me, how it will change me. From the eyes of this changed child, the peace sign is a transparent gesture, unattached to any place/space. It is only from the perspective of the ever-moving present, looking back, that I can see the entrance. Child, adult, child: Full circle. A three placed/spaced circle.

Re-entry: 'Home'

My fear when I left home in Japan to return home in Canada was that the 'Japan experience' would become a finite event with a beginning and an end that could too easily be placed on a shelf and collect cobwebs and dust. Taking this journey in third place/space has given me a perspective of continuity that I need in order to re-create a sense of place in Canada. Home. I am not sure if it is a concrete place right now, or if it is more of an abstract feeling. In this betwixt and between state (Kramsch, 1993), I can only be at home in a third place/space. From here, I gain a new perspective on my cross-cultural self. Entrance into Japan is now a part of my life narrative and it will continue to weave its way into my life experiences. *I am a part of all that I have met.*

Moving on

Dwelling in third place/space, between personal and public cultures, is a critical curricular journey that advances the reconceptualization of *currere*. This journey is transforming my past, my present, and my future. I am writing my history and in writing, I am creating my history. I have no intentions of making a clean, tightly structured theory on experiencing culture. It is by nature complex, multifarious, ambiguous. What I hope I have argued for is the importance of creating and dwelling in third places/ spaces because this is where experience becomes educational. Sometimes, this just involves noticing things that are already there, like the words we use on a day to day basis, from a different angle. This practice informs our understanding of ourselves and our stories, which informs our teaching.

My engagements with culture, do not end here on this page, nor do they begin on page one. They continue, as I do, with one foot in the past and the other one stepping into the future, the dance of give and take. The dance of culture. *I am a part of all that I have met*. And the untrav-elled world is gleaming.

NOTES

1. Antigua gained independence from Britain in 1981 and although British English is still the language of education, Antiguan Creole is the variety of English learned as a mother tongue. British English is primarily reserved for public broadcasting and interacting with tourists. Sociolinguists make a case for considering creoles as languages (rather than 'broken' forms of English) on historical, social, and psychological grounds (see Leith, 1997 for a more detailed and historical account of creoles).
2. Erika (英里佳) is a common name for Japanese girls.

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