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After-Lifelong Learning: A Eulogium

Kedrick James & Stephen Petrina

“In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy”

(W. Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*)

Good mourning. Lifelong Learning (Li'L) is dead. Of humble origins, Li'L lived ironically fast and died, hard and young. In thirty short years, Li'L became an executive, earning an unrivalled pedigree and modeling the preferred lifestyle of the maturing student. The illegitimate lovechild of neoliberal policies seeking to manage and mobilize human resources by extending the scope of education from womb to tomb, Li'L was bona fide *and* brazen. The stakes were high; competition in the global marketplace depends in no small degree on the value it places on upgrading the 'wetware' of its workforce through universal, recurrent education-for-all, just-in-time, right-now, on demand and online all-the-time, 24-7. This effort to extend shelf life, revive re/productivity, and boost efficiencies only minimally pays off while the almighty dollar sign prices the smallest measurable, infinitesimal unit of (academic) achievement. So-called technological sophistication and the knowledge economy converge to provide limitless opportunities wherein l/earn-ers l/earn, and non-l/earn-ers pay, day in, day out, perinatal to post-mortem.¹ Li'L leveraged international political support, and educators anxiously documented and promoted her famed run at success. But poor Li'L had run her course, either ran out of curriculum or could not keep up, and passed away with sunken visions and empty dreams. Some say she burned out, while others argue the addictions accompanying her baby-boomer birth left her destined for brain drugs and the streets. Most agree that her final fate was predictable: Li'L was eventually trapped in a scandalous network of fraud and corruption, both victim and perpetrator of a massive learning scam blown open by the BBC and British tabloids in 2001. Whatever the case, the school of hard knocks took its toll while Li'L gambled and died disillusioned.

This, then, is the story of Li'L, as we have heard it told.² We deconstructed it for an academic audience, retaining the fidelity of the story as a faction, a portman-

teau of fact and fiction.³ Faction, it would appear, is stranger than both fiction and truth. Indeed, some may object and claim that we deconstructed Li'L to a fetish, a crass reification of an honorable, timeless idea; a gross characterization of a concept immemorial. Others might object and argue that Li'L was never more than a very dubious fact of life; a mere fabrication of educational managers desperate for new markets. Taking advice from Latour, we suggest that Li'L herself is neither eternal nor fashionable; neither fact, nor fetish; rather, Li'L is factish.⁴ We explain Li'L's rise from humble beginnings to world-wide phenomenon; from noble cause to corruption; from perinatal travail to afterlife travel. In the final examination, we remind readers that Li'L lived fast, failed, and died hard. One ending to the story is that even with a cast of characters— from the decent to the deceitful—Li'L could not keep up with the curriculum. The proliferation of information, knowledge, and wisdom exhausted Li'L and condemned or sentenced the rest of us to Li'L's fate.⁵ Another ending is that hubris weakened Li'L to the point of futility. Li'L fell victim to the miscalculation that l/earning^{mth} could provide an answer to the question waiting at the last post: after lifelong learning, then what? Or, afterlifelong learning, now what?

The Life and Times of Lifelong Learning

Li'L was born in 1972, in a UNESCO think-tank directed by Edgar Faure. Initially nicknamed Lifelong Ed (indicative of just one of the many identity crises she would face), her treasury of infantile growth was published as *Learning to Be*.⁶ Officially adopted by the 1976 General Conference of UNESCO, at an early age she was given an arranged marriage to the international development tycoon and human resources magnate, Ed Man-Date. This high-profile couple was seen on the cover of every noteworthy journal and newspaper. Politicking for Ed Man-Date, and his marathon running son, Continuing Ed (she despised Higher Ed, Man-Date's first and drugged-out son), Li'L coined catchy jingles like *Ed for All* and *More Ed Over Time*. Li'L's sloganeering got her name attached to various global policy directives of the OECD and UNESCO, and she was used as a poster child for reviving a flagging working class mobility suffering from weak, ailing curriculum and educational systems.⁷ According to biographer Joachim Knoll, Li'L was "linked with the notion that education is continuous and never completed, that all levels of formal and out-of-school education merge without a break into a continuum uninterrupted by final qualifications, and that adult education is only a part of this concept and is invariably tied to the education that comes before and after it."⁸ Li'L gave a corporeal discipline to the fantasy, part rational, part Dionysian, that every man, woman and child was wed to the magnate Ed Man-Date, like Li'L herself, from birth until death do they part.

Critics noted that marrying Li'L to Ed Man-Date was imperialism, *par excellence*. Their marriage, nearly as popular as that of Prince Charles to the Lady Diana, reflected globalizing tendencies of education toward the market expansion of World

English/es, for-profit remedial services, and the media. OECD scholar Tom Schuller notes that, virtually out of nowhere, Li'L created an entire life-course of curriculum "beyond the immediate confines of education... [Li'L influenced] an unusually wide range of social spheres and policy areas."⁹ Li'L was an attention grabber, and some say megalomaniacal time-waster, wanting everyone to like her and to be like her. Quite frankly, fueled by the obsessions of Ed Man-Date, everyone did want a bit of Li'L! But through the 1980s, poor Li'L was indentured to mundane things like family matters, demographics, work routines and communicative patterns, none of which were fully appreciated. Staggered by weighty expectations of Ed Man-Date, Li'L often appeared confused.¹⁰ For example, she made graduation seem irrelevant as she blurred significant features of education and made them almost indistinguishable from the perspective of a lifespan. Sentenced to professional development by design, she actually loathed her fate and her somewhat finicky rejection of tradition made her difficult to emulate.¹¹

Li'L's overwhelming popularity and her rocky marriage to Ed throughout the 1970s and 1980s often resulted in shoving matches between jealous suitors. Invariably, on one side were liberal educators wanting to use Li'L in the adult edutainment business, with hopes of exploiting Ed Man-Date's venture capital. On the other side, were critical educators who wanted to use Li'L for trafficking anarchist and dissident ideas in the deschooling underground. The former group placed a high value on the commercial prowess of Li'L to boost competitive economies and create entrepreneurial thinkers or perpetual self-improvers. They saw Li'L as the rising star of neo-liberal progress. The latter bemoaned the hegemonic system that dampened Li'L's critical faculties, and exacerbated the divide between those who imitated Li'L, the *potential-* (or ante-Li'L) */earner*, and the tribe of consummate slackers, the *non-/earners* (or uncool-Li'L).¹² Both admired Li'L's beauty and got excited when seeing her strut her stuff while modeling individuality.

During the mid 1990s Li'L broke through the glass ceiling, changing from a privileged sweetheart of education and development into a big time power broker in various businesses and governments. The European Union (EU) designated 1996 as the Year of Li'L. Partially in response, the British Labor party, newly elected in 1997, shored up Ed's support, put Li'L on the payroll and released *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, a blueprint to poise England for competing against EU countries. Critics disliked the economy of "*providers and potential learners*" that Li'L's newfound power imposed on the British population. Also known as the Dearing Report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society* proposed an accountability scheme for Li'L. Remember what happened when Eliza appropriated too much curriculum in *My Fair Lady*? The reason for imposing safeguards of legitimacy and accountability for Li'L is obvious enough. This is a surefire way to shift blame for failing to meet outcomes and success, overspending, or underestimating an individual's eligibility for mobility. Protecting Li'L from getting little credit and a lot of blame, Norman Evans expressed frustration with Dearing, saying this

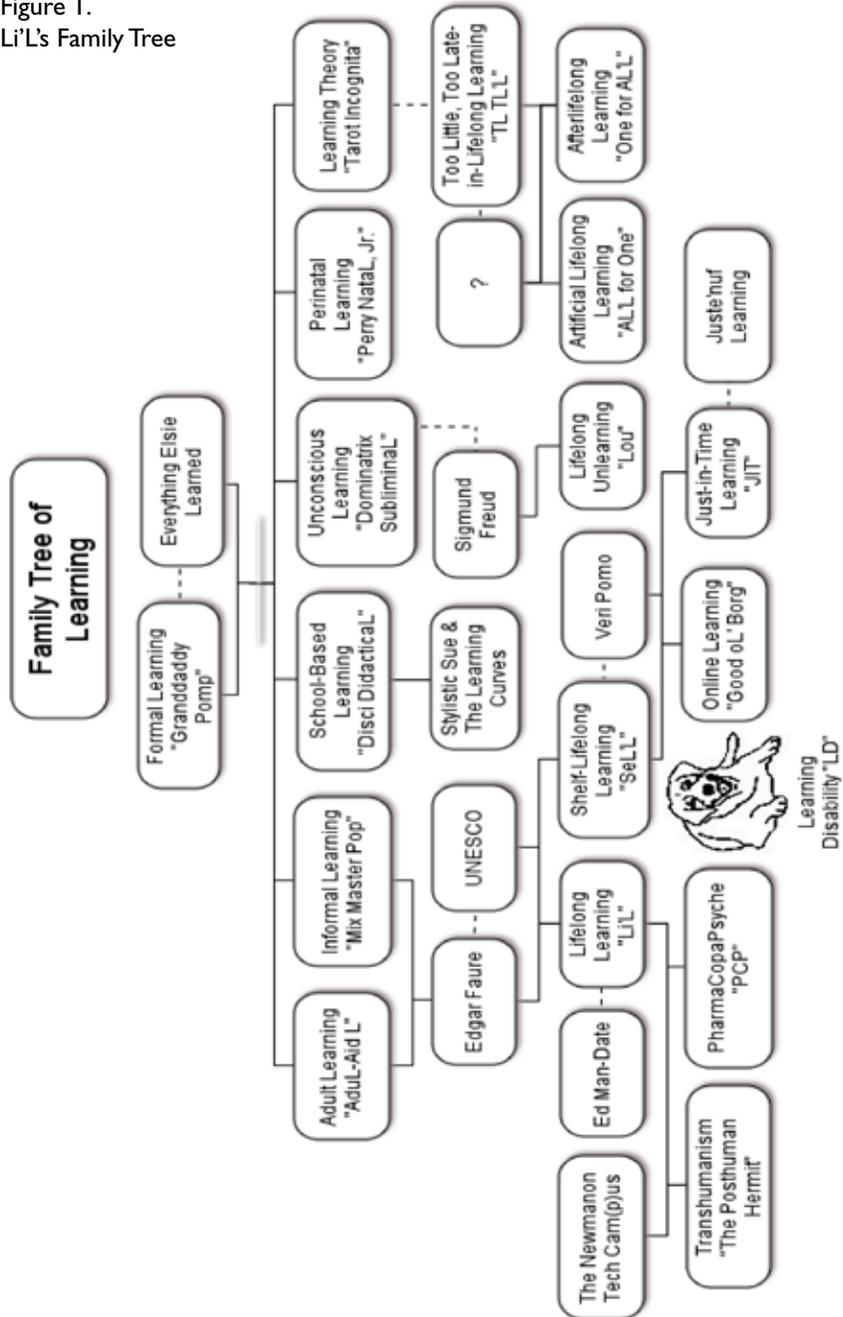
smacked of influence from Formal Learning (Granddaddy Pomp), “as if this were the only kind of learning worth mentioning.”¹³ But his efforts were unnecessary; in other words, Li’L had long ago rejected many of the family ties that stemmed from Granddaddy Pomp. Li’L preferred to work outside of nepotistic bureaucracies and wanted to crush stubborn or rancorous resistance to her informalities.¹⁴

But, underlying Li’L’s ascent to the top was a nagging concern over the superannuation and maturation of knowledge. Next to her twin bother Shelf-Lifelong Learning (SeL’L), Li’L was overly idealistic and optimistic about knowledge. Li’L wanted the party to go on forever but SeL’L set limits and some say even put an end to it. Economists venerated the pragmatics that Shelf-Life offered, and orchestrated the match made in heaven between SeL’L and the postmodern conditioner, Veri Pomo. It was actually like a pea and a pod with SeL’L and Pomo, living an openly out relationship and reigning supreme in all the credential clubs. The economists loved it when Pomo put Shelf-Life on to Li’L’s friend, the braggadocio Ph.D. Rather deviously, Shelf-Life slapped a three-year label onto the Ph.D., a club scene version of the ‘kick me!’ trick. And then, acting more like a bouncer than conditioner, Pomo said ‘get a job in the marketplace within three years or your career is toast!’ Expert-teasing they called it—all in jest but it felt mean-spirited. Pomo joked and warned that after three years, the Ph.D., for all intents and purposes, was damaged goods. After three years, all the collateral that the Ph.D. offered Li’L amounted to little or nothing. Humiliated, the Ph.D. turned from Li’L to SeL’L. When they snuck the three-year label on Ed.D., he pathetically turned from Li’L to SeL’L to casual and part-time sales. There are precious pictures of SeL’L and Pomo in the university clubs, ruling over the Ph.D. and Ed.D., relegating them to the adjunct and sessional labor pool in the back. Goodbye Li’L, hello SeL’L, they would say! Of course, Li’L tried to counter SeL’L by appealing to the family name that bonded them: Learning (Figure 1). But when Li’L said she stood for the sake of Learning, she was laughed out of the room, and then smartly denied ever having mentioned it.

Li’L’s Progeny And Family Matters

With Ed embroiled in politics in the 1980s and 1990s, Li’L fell head over heels for the smooth talk, slick style and sophisticated notions of The Newman Tech Cam(p)us.¹⁵ Somewhat of a Cult Stud in his day, Tech initially turned Li’L on with his academics by saying (sexy) things like “You are nothing but a sliding signifier—an empty bucket into which any ideology can be ladled!” “Oohh, that’s hot!” Li’L would think. Li’L’s topsy-turvy, steamy romp with this French, cosmopolitan playboy made global headlines, and predictably, she was left to look after their extramarital progeny, Transhumanism (The Posthuman Hermit) and PharmaCopaPsyche (PCP). Somewhat of a mystery, Tech was seemingly always preoccupied, checking on outsourced labor pools and capital dividends. Reluctantly, Li’L turned to Perinatal Learning (uncle Perry NataL, Jr.) for help in family and

Figure 1.
Li'L's Family Tree



legal matters. Even on a good day, NataL, Jr.'s legal methods were questionable, and his distinct hatred of Mozart and preference for counting time in months seemed peculiar. NataL, Jr. suffered a premature, traumatic birth, and was raised with the neurotic family dog, Learning Disability (LD). Thanks to Granddaddy Pomp's wealth and upper-class means, NataL, Jr.'s private academy education and admission into law school were assured. He was barely reading at an upper-secondary school level when he began bar exams and made a mockery of the system when he turned the loveable LD loose in the courtrooms. Not quite a luck and pluck story of the self-made wo/man, which Li'L fantasized over, NataL, Jr. bragged he could buy Ed, if he wanted. After mismanaging the careers of both Mix Master Pop and Stylistic Sue and the Learning Curves, he took to looking after the troubled PCP's cosmeceuticals.

Although The Posthuman Hermit was an ideal child, precocious student, hacktivist programmer, and accomplished surgeon, PCP excelled beyond her brother's giftedness. PCP was diagnosed with Chronic Attention Fatigue and, by the time she was five, had lost interest in learning. Her mother was busy spreading the word of the one thing she least wanted to do. She spent her childhood in daycare, tormenting caregivers. Li'L was busy and the absentee Tech was an awful role model. On NataL's advice, Li'L purchased black market cocktails of Ampakine, Modafinil and HT-0712, costly new brain drugs with amazing (side) effects. As a result, the rising star PCP was apparently able to remember anything, and had near photographic recall. Ed was skeptical, but Li'L and Tech were delighted. PCP's first thesis was composed when her classmates were still practicing their letters. She won a nationwide contest in the sixth grade for a composition on the story of Algernon, which she later attributed to essaygenerator.com and caffeine.

Petty family feuds with SeL'L and Veri Pomo, and their less than amiable children, Just-in Time Learning (JIT) and Online Learning (Good oL' Borg), distracted Li'L. New kids on the block, JIT and Good oL' Borg got all the attention in the late 1990s. Coming of age together, JIT and Good oL' Borg joined forces to give a boost to dropouts, homebodies, macjobbers, preppies, slackers, suits and yuppies alike in the fast-paced world. Ante-Li'L was anachronistic and obsolescent JIT would complain. With JIT, the new mindset became "As soon as I have this little piece of information, I'm out of here." Ante-Li'L, No one has "time to commit to a specific curriculum," JIT impatiently asserted.¹⁶ JIT and her partner, Juste'nuf Learning (no genetic relation), made a formidable team. Nearly always in a hurry, they completed each other's fragmented sentences while rushing out the door on a high note!

Good oL' Borg was plenty contentious as well, with pedal to the metal and handheld on dash, he derided Li'L for puttering along in the slow lane on the information highway in an old beat up VW modem. To make Li'L angry and jealous, Good oL' Borg often pulled up to the YWCA where Li'L was working, hung out beside a pimped-out sick ride stolen by some Grand Theft Auto player or another, cranked up the sub-woofer and blasted an mp3 of 50 Cent rappin' "Get Rich or Die Tryin." Boshier, Wilson and Qayyum, detectives of Good oL' Borg's and Newmanon

Tech Cam(p)us's nefarious activities, apologetically noted that Li'L, suffering from future shock, was from an older generation. They pointed out that "in 1972, who could have imagined that a learner in the Outer Hebrides or Stewart Island, New Zealand would one day enroll in an Atlanta, New York or Los Angeles-based course with two clicks of a mouse! In 1972, mice were associated with cheese, not education."¹⁷ Both she and Ed were incensed by Good oL' Borg's trouble-making ways and partiality to Velveeta and cloned oncomice.

This drove Li'L to extremes. In 1999, for example, backed by Britain's Labour minister for higher education, Li'L cooperated with the universities to fabricate course rosters of student customers.¹⁸ Li'L was losing her focus and taking on the productive leisure industries. All consuming, Li'L was now deeply implicated in the new order that Ed Man-Date spelled out in the prenuptials.

Despite troubles reproducing with Ed, Li'L exploited the investment strategies he promoted. Ed loved the matriculation ladder business, which Li'L's lifestyle personified. OECD and Statistics Canada research confirms this, as reported by Hasan: climbing Ed's ladders, "people with superior education levels are far more likely to [imitate Li'L]: adults with upper-secondary education (but not tertiary) were between 32% and 38% more likely to [follow the path of Li'L] than those with only lower-secondary."¹⁹ There remains a relative degree of transferability of Ed's capital to economic success, but it is precisely this transferability that Li'L threatened. For a single woman of minority status with children, going to night classes, year after year, to try and get her high school diploma,²⁰ the idea that learning should be uninterrupted by final qualifications might just quell the noble purpose of imitating Li'L. SeL'L and Pomo's credential spoiling makes this effort of imitation even less promising; even Li'L herself was precariously on the brink of lifelong failure (Li'Fe). She rose to the top of financial and political worlds but never really got off the ground; that is, Ed never had enough curriculum to satisfy her and too much curriculum behind Ed's back frustrated her.

What Li'L wanted to offer was certainly not more distinction, by degrees, of educated and literate from 'non-educated' and 'illiterate'; class assures the pernicious basis of such distinctions.²¹ The vaulted promise of Li'L was to level these distinctions. At her most successful, Li'L boosted educational participation by adapting and utilizing work and community settings for rural and urban outreach programs. Li'L disdained the legacy of Granddaddy Pomp and was perhaps overly sensitive to her great grandmother, Everything Elsie Learned, and the work of Adult Learning, Adul-Aid L. Ever the creator of jingle and cliché, Li'L said this does not mean that individuals stop learning; it means they stop being students! As we mature, she said, the systematic administration of Granddaddy Pomp no longer serves the general purpose, nor do the formalities it imposes on l/earners. At these moments, Li'L truly was a visionary.

Li'L ultimately thought big when learning was at issue. Naturally, and to be theosophical thought Li'L, all sentient life learns, and Gaia is a learning organism.

For Western Christians, the Bible symbolized the chief object of knowledge, whose unquestionable authority was invested in God. Later, this authority was invested in printed words and books. By extension into education, textbooks took over the formidable control of content and intellectual discipline in classrooms. With the arrival of Good oL Borg and his virtual classroom, databases of 'repeatable learning objects' standardize and legitimate knowledge according to the veracity of customers. Whereas for the providers, knowledge is a value added asset of productive and competitive mobility. Li'Ls message was stern but clear: Knowledge was anything that is learned!

Li'Ls logic nevertheless mitigates and distributes an archaic social order, in which the servant learns the master's habits, and the role of the learner becomes modeled on imitation of the master's leisure, as Thorsten Veblen made clear a century earlier. The adult-level Masters Degree is a credential whose derivation is of this older order of social stratification, and delineated the point in a person's growth when one had arrived at moral, intellectual and spiritual maturity. A Masters degree bestowed on its bearer the right to teach and to lead the flock. SeLL and Pomo changed all this, but originally, this degree could be attained (provided one was male, monied, and motivated) in the same timeframe it takes to graduate from high school. Li'L sought to offer this kind of distinction to everyone. Indeed, the largesse surrounding Li'L eventually came to naught.

Approaching thirty, and desperate to finally turn power into profit, Li'L entered into the horrific underworld of profiteering. Spurred on by confidence in the RRSP market and the Li'L Plan that Trimark Investment Management was promoting, she teamed up with Ed Man-Date, the likes of "quick-footed" Ferrari Nick, and British government politicians, including "Shadow" Minister, Alistair Burt.²² Launched in September 2000, Li'Ls scam was nearly foolproof: (1) Convince students aged nineteen and up that they were customers and provide them with funds and discounts up to £200 per course. (2) Convince government to set up Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) and provide for these funds and discounts. (3) Allow (and here's the beauty of the scam and where no-accounts like Ferrari Nick come in) any entrepreneur who could produce a list of names and a course to cash in on the funds. Ferrari Nick and various small-time crooks got the ILA money but the big investment would go into Li'Ls account. Nine companies that set up computer science courses, many of which were bogus, snagged about \$38 million in the name of Li'L. All in all, Ferrari Nick and dozens like him bilked the British government out of the equivalent of \$169 million by cashing in on lists of "students" enrolled in Li'Ls dream courses: Chronic Cats 2001, Creative Writing, Learn to Draw and Paint, National Powerboat Certificate, Exercise to Music, Transcendental Meditation, Summer Glastonbury 2001 and Crystal Healing. Regrettably, in early October 2001, the BBC broke the news on the widespread scheme, which affected 1.2 million "students."²³ Defending Li'Ls innocence in the ILA scandal, one of the ministers asserted: "on the street ... Ferrari Nick is supposed to be one of the leading people." Suggesting that Li'L was

complicit, another responded, “if someone can get an epithet like that [i.e., Ferrari Nick]... that’s when you have to take concerted action.”²⁴ Exposed as fraud, it was all too much to bear. As Secretary of State David Blunkett confessed: “As well as galling, the failure of ILAs struck a devastating blow to” Li’L.²⁵ Ed Man-Date was indicted and Li’L collapsed. Neither the promise of a lofty place in the academy nor a campaign by scholars committed to her cause could rescue her from the hard life of the underground and streets. Her decision to gamble with Ferrari Nick was reckless. Tragically, Li’L was found and pronounced dead by the end of 2003.

Although captive to the lure of the cultish Extropians, The Posthuman Hermit came to a simple, yet profound conclusion: The life and times of Li’L were much too short! Or more properly, any lifespan for Li’L would naturally be ridiculously limited by the frailties of biology and mortality. The life of Li’L—indeed, of all—was and is much too short. Although PCP’s booming cosmetic neurology business with its anti-aging tucks, nose jobs, and longevity drugs might have extended Li’L further into the twenty-first century, The Posthuman Hermit wanted to allow genetics to reengineer Li’L’s shortcomings. And although experimenting with the Just Say Knowbot,²⁶ which will emulate Li’L by learning everything it confronts, The Posthuman Hermit is impatient with crude, wearable memory devices and microprocessor implants to monitor Li’L. The goal is to push AI to exhaust the potential of overcoming Li’L’s limitations by appealing to virtual existence. Paradoxically, the longer the lifespan, the greater the Li’L! There is no doubt, Li’L is dead, but the legend lives on—Li’L is dead, long live Li’L! We are certain that Li’L’s wake was *not* merely a mock funeral, but are less certain that the remains are stuffed into a common urn, as most suspect (Figure 2). It is entirely plausible that, given the obsessions of The Posthuman Hermit, Li’L is cryopreserved in the Extropian’s transgenic laboratory, awaiting a grand revival and new lease on immortality. If our calculations are correct, an extended lifespan for Li’L, or for anyone, would defer the afterlife for a fixed amount on the mortgage we take out on the future. That is, assuming that the principle of Li’L (i.e., always learning, never forgetting) remains constant.²⁷

Li’L’s Final Examination: Our Lady of Perpetual Tutelage

Knowledge, as intellectual property, or as SeLL, Pomo, JIT and Good oL’ Borg might have it, is over-inflated by pecuniary and invidious rights of ownership. Through these property rites, a social die is cast as well. It is not a new mold, but not until relatively recently—coinciding with the advent of the European NGO’s re-adoption of Li’L to be precise—has it been applied to such a global agenda. To assess the legacy of Li’L, a tentative distinction must be drawn between the principle of the self-motivated learner and the social conditions of learning. On the one hand, we have a platitude of biblical proportion: give a wo/man a lesson, and s/he’ll l/earn for a day, teach him/her how to l/earn and s/he’ll become Li’L. On the other hand, we have an evolution of social consciousness in which a gendered,

Figure 2.
Li'L's Urn While You Learn.



class-based type is universalized, positioning Li'L as the conspicuous consumer of curriculum, thus perpetually self-improving, accruing new interest(s) and, at the political level, merit for national patriotism. We consume curriculum as we consume gas or household products. By yielding to market forces, Li'L got mixed up with

the wrong crowd, or was it vice versa? Se'L'L, Pomo, JIT and Good oL' Borg would have helped Li'L to market herself as well.

Anticipating much of this in 1899, Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* suggests "there is reason to believe that the institution of ownership began with the ownership of persons, primarily women." Women were valued as displays of men's power through an excess of all things, including time to develop abstract knowledge. This notion remains popular, and the term *academic* is euphemized to suggest irrelevance, acquired unnecessarily, the first principle of leisurely lifestyle. However, the parochial system was also based on knowing one's station in life. It was not an invitation for Li'L to question the authority of systems of knowledge. In pinpointing the genealogy of this gendered social stereotype, Veblen argues that the chivalric model idealized "ladies of high degree (who) were conceived to be *in perpetual tutelage*, and to be scrupulously exempt from all useful work."²⁸ The model, he argues, has held sway ever since leisure classes could distinguish themselves through consumption. Indeed, Li'L prided herself on adept complicity and perpetual tutelage. She was, however, necessarily never complete, nor was she actually free from re/productive obligations. Poor Li'L had such an esteemed heritage, and yet squandered her fame and power with such wasteful pursuits.

If Li'L had cultural origins in the socially elevated wife's station, as Veblen claims, were these gendered predispositions handed down to her from Everything Elsie Learned and the role modeling of Adul-Aid L? "Greater equality in initial education in the past 20 years has meant that in a majority of countries, women aged 25 to 34 have completed more years of initial education than men of the same age. But men are more likely at this age to be currently engaged in learning; they receive for example a disproportionate share of training at work."²⁹ This incongruity is nevertheless explained if one considers that women are more likely to be engaged with Li'L's pursuits (but not receiving remuneration), and they are therefore below the statistical radar. As Hasan concludes, "it will never be possible to construct fully adequate indicators of all the informal learning that occurs in people's lives... but it is already possible to show that only a minority of the OECD population is participating in education and training," Li'L-like.³⁰ While the credentials and volume of education a person, male or female, receives in their lifetime is increasing in financially privileged countries, this has done little to decrease social stratification. Many issues cause this divide: ability, class, gender, race, sexuality, and health, twine together in a Gordian knot of social positioning. One person's learning is another's labor. As such, it would seem that few could afford to imitate Li'L's lifestyle.³¹ Let's be honest. Li'L was a hard act to follow.

Despite the many optimistic claims made for Li'L, she basically preached to the converted, or more appropriately, taught the learned. To get a jump on life, Li'L's legacy left uncle Perry NataL, Jr. with a respectable market share. But which way ought we go? Before proceeding with what we believe reverses the legacy of Li'L in an unexpected direction, we briefly review the life of Li'L.

Growing up privileged but somewhat uncultivated in the 1970s, Li'L became a celebrity for education and development. Adopted by the renowned UNESCO family, and married off to the global magnate Ed Man-Date, she was a godsend to nervous politicians and educators. However, attempts to domesticate her were met with more failure than success. In the 1980s, Li'L's tireless efforts were able to reach indigent populations of the urban centers, many of whom returned again and again as faithful customers. Eventually, her preference for informalities exposed contradictions between the scarcity and proliferation of curriculum, confusing aspirations. Although life on the road and the stressors of poverty took their toll, Li'L abandoned the streets in the mid 1990s and, craving power, moved from soup lines to boardrooms. The British government was especially enthusiastic in contracting out for Li'L's services and she ably exploited ambitions. Power corrupts and Li'L was no exception. Tempted by the seedy world of profiteering, Li'L joined up with shadowy ministers and no-accounts like Ferrari Nick to hatch an all but foolproof, soft money learning scheme. This would be Li'L's nest egg if not for political incompetence. Disillusioned, Li'L hit the streets and turned to PCP, decisions that proved fatal. At the end of 2003, Li'L was pronounced dead.³²

Li'L leaves behind her floundering, shifty husband, Ed Man-Date, and two out of wedlock children with lover Newmanon Tech Cam(p)us, The Posthuman Hermit and PCP, who are entrepreneurially redesigning her estate for the 21st century. Upon her untimely death, Li'L's grieving brother Sel'L and husband Veri Pomo, now quite comfortable with their stage show of practical jokes, reluctantly passed on their share of Li'L's assets to her nephew and niece, Good oL' Borg and JIT (with partner, Juste'nuf Learning). Uncle Perry NataL, Jr., presiding over the will for Li'L, was bequeathed the entire share of the pro-life stocks that Li'L and Ed Man-Date finagled during the bull market of the 1980s and 1990s. At the reading of the will, two long forgotten twin cousins—lineage of thrice-divorced revelator Too Little, Too Late-in-Lifelong Learning—paraded in like deities demanding rights to certain aspects of Li'L. AL'L for One (Artificial Lifelong Learning) and One for AL'L (Afterlifelong Learning) convinced NataL, Jr. that Li'L had secretly bequeathed to them what she found distasteful and, like most of us, repressed: the afterlife and the artificial.

Many of Li'L's most loyal supporters, baby boomers by most estimates, are now retiring and reproaching inevitable replacement and redundancy. For this generation, curriculum likely has to transcend the immediate, competitive nature of consumerist existence. The model of economic and political gain comes at the expense of life's other duties and rewards. Somewhat exasperated by it all, Li'L realized that personal successes offered few rewards past a competitive, socially mobile existence. Upon maturing through the developmental stage of pecuniary self-interest, the knowledge most required of this, and every generation, ultimately, will no longer be the profitable kind. Nobody expected that Li'L would be gone so soon, leaving future learning unaddressed. Absent from Li'L's education and teach-

ing was a discourse regarding how to bring our re/productive phase to a dignified halt, and as educators we risk abandoning individuals when they most need Li'L's guidance. Li'L never had a chance to retire. With her tragic death, she never had a chance to plan for what comes next. The notion of *the end of life* was absent from Li'L's dissertations. As a result, our scholarly ability to know, understand and model the best lifelong curriculum is seriously impaired. In other words, Li'L's problem may have had less to do with feuds over the family surname "Learning" than it did with the given name "Lifelong."

Abrahamsson sums up Li'L's legacy in a similar fashion. He confirms that "the question of how long 'lifelong' is and what kind of learning counts is not easy to answer." Furthermore, the increasing longevity in many nations has "given new dimensions to [Li'L]. They include not only post-compulsory learning, but also post-work and post-retirement learning excursions."³³ If, as Hasan claims, "there is a considerable distance to go in making learning a reality 'for all,' even without considerations of content, quality, and relevance," then we must again ask: In what direction and to what end ought we go? Again, if "attaining the goal would be costly but it is also an investment," then we need to know what goal and who such an investment is intended to benefit.³⁴ Once an older population moves from the productive to more quiescent phase of existence, how can we be sure this investment remains sound? As JIT asked, is there not a built-in obsolescence in Li'L's ideas? The wealth of curriculum that any of Li'L's disciples commanded, if not passed on, impoverished or made redundant by Se'L, Pomo, JIT and Good oL Borg, is interred with them in the grave; and ostensibly, the investment is wasted.

And Death Not Ends It

All her life, Li'L was haunted by a ghostly apparition of Li'Fe. But who receives and records these final grades of Li'L, or indeed, all lifelong learners, of which the consummate qualifying exam is perforce death? Allah, God, the scenes of the judgment and weighing of souls—all these various metaphors of our immortal counterparts in the transition from life-state to death-state—were absent from Li'L's lectures and discussions. Ironically, these scenes *do* infuse the genealogy and ethos of the scholarly ideal that underpins the promises and social profit to be made at the point of educational delivery. They also infuse Ed's model of examining students to determine their intellectual maturity, capacity and worth. There may be a pragmatism in the final judgment of Li'L, whether explicit or implicit, emphasizing her economic benefits, her social charms, competitive advantages, and in some instances, the ameliorative effects of informed behavior on individuals.³⁵ But what of all her other aims? Where are our exemplary models of well-educated, politically activated, Average Jo(s)i'e citizens? Poor Li'L is gone, but certainly not forgotten. Anthropologists involved in studies of comparative cultural practices around funerary traditions have shown that the distrust of death as an end in itself is common, and

has led to customs of disposing of bodies in ways that make them uninhabitable by the wandering and wanton spirits of the deceased. They have connected rituals of cremation and interment with other rituals, such as the covering of household mirrors or the use of singing and chanting to guide the spirit away from desiring to re-inhabit their physical form. Such correspondences need not posit any form of proof, but they should put into a different light the corporeality and materialism of contemporary education and the institutional evaluation of worthwhile knowledge.

Ever the positivist, Freud did not believe in the afterlife, dismissing it as an illusion or delusion, or relegating it to the irrational work of Thanatos, the death instinct. He spent most of his time with Li'L's aunt, Unconscious Learning (Dominatrix Subliminal), and rejected One for ALL out of hand. The creation of spirits and the promise of the afterlife were little more than the result of doubling or nothing. As "insurance against the destruction of the ego" and extinction, said Freud, the mortal creates a double, a spirit, of her or his self. "Supposedly educated people have ceased to believe officially that the dead can become visible as spirits," Freud reasoned, and toned down beliefs in the afterlife with mere piety. Indeed, Dominatrix Subliminal gently disciplined him to follow Perry Natal, Jr.'s future career of after-education rather than education in the hereafter. As intellectual historian Deborah Britzman notes, Freud busied himself cleaning up (on) the failures of Granddaddy Pomp. Freud and Dominatrix Subliminal turned after-education into the "unheimlich," or uncanny monster Lifelong Unlearning (Lou). Suffice to say that Li'L egotistically hated but subconsciously loved the monster.³⁶

From the scant information gathered on the subject, it would appear that the most leisurely class of all *are* the dead. They are, for all human purposes, past usefulness, and thus the most excluded group under (post)modern, western definitions of utility. Here, in this seemingly paradoxical market, we can truly test Li'L's praxis of personal and professional development. For if it is a mode of preparation, what has a life of learning led to if such learning is to be instantly wasted upon exit? Surely some part is sheltered in consciousness or wisdom, which transcend physical existence, and death is a good way to assure of this final deposit. The education of the dead is a spurious concept only if one allows that there is a predetermined, mandatory return on educational investments, and if one holds steadfast to a capitalistic investment model.

In taking Afterlifelong Learning (One for ALL) seriously, we would by no means be soliciting for the likes of Marilyn Manson or taking advance orders for everlasting holy books. Nor would we be smug in an expectation of death or setting precedent. We are simply reiterating Li'L's story and have not had near death or out of body experiences (OOBE) or claim any special psychic powers (yet). And we are by no means endorsing various lifeline programs and specific afterlife technologies such as Hemi-Sync®, in which Newmanon Tech, The Posthuman Hermit, PCP, and Good ol' Borg have interests. We appreciate the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as much

as the *Afterlife Knowledge Guidebook*. It is only recently, and basically only in the modern west, that the education, examination, and standardization of spiritual matters stopped being a predominant concern among the living 'masters'. Today, with our increased levels of formal education, we remain like school-aged children who likewise regard the adult world with deserved suspicion and gradual subjugation. If we are to remain like children throughout our lives, and never achieve a condition of proper emotional, psychological or spiritual maturity, then is it Death that will set the standards and dictate what it is we must continue to learn?

In this day and age, a man can reproduce well after death and embryo research on frozen eggs is making this a reliable option for women as well. Lawyers are methodically figuring out the rights of inheritance for the offspring of posthumous conception and postmortem reproduction. A primary factor in legal decisions on rights is the decedent's intention to reproduce from the grave or urn. Depositing eggs or sperm is typically taken to be an indication of intent. Having resolved the perpetration of a scam at the reading of Li'L's will, Perry NataL, Jr. is now looking into donor identity and inheritance rights for AL'L for One. Educators are similarly tackling the sticky issue of after-lifelong learning rights. For example, would a contract or will underlining the wishes of the decedent to advance through the afterlife compel the living to spiritual teaching(s)? Is our sentence to a life of Li'L binding or can we escape her fate?³⁷

Hopefully we will be more ready for death when it arrives than was poor Li'L. But what if our education has failed us, and individually, we did not acquire the requisite knowledge to have a good death? Now, we hear the advocates of Li'L calling on her spirit, much as the social scientists call on and curse the specter of Marx. It is important, if we are to raise the dead like Elijah from the pit of Sheol, that we listen to what One for AL'L has to say, and pay heed especially to things that may make little sense in our business of the worldly day. Li'L's spirit may deliver some surprising revelations, and we are loathe to calls for more religious dogmatism or moral prescriptions about the evils of sin. Yet cynicism, agnosticism, or secularism, Li'L may again tell us, are of little use after death. The turning of the wheel and the way we respond to or in the afterlife involve a significance that outlasts the quarterly returns of Ed's investments. Notoriously, political leaders, such as Blair and Bush, "talk about 50 percent of 18 year olds going on into higher education... [and] a whole new type of student body."³⁸ Whether or not the demands of a new student body create a run on limited curriculum, or whether curriculum proliferates for the new student body to the point of exhaustion or lifeless corpse remains to be seen. Li'L's life and death move us to ask if curriculum is eutrophic and at the moment of death in a drone of information or merely inadequate in size, time, volume, and quality. This is precisely the problem under consideration by the Automata Data Corporation.³⁹ Pressing the issue, Britzman wonders "how strange to confront curriculum and all that it holds as a burial place, a crypt?" It may not be so weird to go (to lengths) to pyre high(er and deeper) if we speculate, that just maybe, curriculum killed Li'L.⁴⁰ Let us think of Li'L

as a sign of our times: both signifier of the limits and corporeality of curriculum and signified immateriality of pleasure and fear that plagues the somewhat meaningless, pointless life and death of Li'L.

Now Dearly Beloved, among us, we believe that after-Li'L, After-Lifelong Learning is the promise that awaits us. We (barely) trust in Perry NataL Jr., but implore all to plan for the inevitable at the other end of the rainbow. You may practice as Li'L preached, and go through the motions of (spiritual) literacy, of pulling yourself up by the bootstraps, but woe to those who think this is adequate for the Afterlifelong Learning that awaits. Your journey merely begins with the mortal words of Li'L, yet these will not sustain your passage. You are beseeched with the question: After Lifelong Learning, then what? Prepare, Dearly Beloved, for what a long, strange trip it will be...

Notes

¹ Norman Evans, *Making Sense of Lifelong Learning: Respecting the Needs of All* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003).

² For example, Roger Boshier, "Edgar Faure after 25 years: Down but not out" in *International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning*, ed. John Holford, Peter Jarvis, and Colin Griffin (London: Kogan Page, 1998), 3-20; Marcie Boucouvalas, "International Adult Education: Past, Present, and into the Future," *Adult Learning* 13 no. 4 (2002): 23-26; John Field, "Lifelong Education," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 20, nos. 1-2 (2001): 3-15; Mary Hamilton, "A History of Adult Basic Education," in *A History of Modern British Adult Education*, ed. Roger Fieldhouse (Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: Leicester, 1996), 142-65; Tom Nesbit, "Mapping Adult Education," *Educational Theory* 49 no. 2 (1999): 265-79; Edward G. Rozycki, "Policy and Contradiction: The Case of Lifelong Education," *Educational Theory* 37 no. 4 (1987): 433-43; idem, "Hope as Educational Theory: Rejoinder to Wain," *Educational Theory* 39 no. 2 (1989): 162-65; Kenneth Wain, "The Case of Lifelong Learning: A Reply to Rozycki," *Educational Theory* 39 no. 2 (1989): 151-62.

³ Faction is "the fictionalization of fact, the operational admixture of the documentary and the imaginative. But the term itself, 'faction,' highlights as well another context, a literary-critical one, and the disciplinary contest between the historical and the literary.... 'Faction,' then, in this other context, all too often culminates in the determining question, 'which side are you on?'—and so returns to the political the differences that it makes." Barbara Harlow, "Critical Factions and Fiction," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 30 no. 2 (1997): 259-261, on 259. Faction is referred to as creative nonfiction, literary nonfiction, narrative nonfiction and literary journalism, and includes pulp fiction and science fiction among its genres. See also Katherine Hall, "Writing Fiction on Two Levels," *The Writer* 113 no. 7 (2000): 11; Paul Many, "Literary Journalism: Newspapers' Last, Best Hope," *Connecticut Review* 18 no. 1 (1996): 59-69.

⁴ Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16.

⁵ On the sentence of Li'L, see Cliff Falk, "Sentencing Learners to Life," *Ctheory* 22 (1977): <http://www.ctheory.net/printer.aspx?id=113>; Erica McWilliam, "Against Professional

Development,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 34, no. 2 (2002): 289-300.

⁶ Edgar Faure, Felipe Herrera, Abdul-Razzak Kaddoura, Henri Lopes, Arthur V. Petrovsky, Majid Rahnema & Frederick C. Ward, *Learning to Be* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972). The genius, or mistake, of *Learning to Be* was that Faure et al. never filled in the blank, enabling anyone to finish the sentence. Learning to be greedy was as likely a candidate as learning to be fair.

⁷ Boshier, “Edgar Faure;” Field, “Lifelong Education;” Joachim H. Knoll, “International Adult Education as Education Policy: Lifelong Learning and Europeanization,” *Adult Education and Development* 62, no. 1 (2004): 85-95, on 86.

⁸ Knoll, “International Adult Education,” 86.

⁹ Tom Schuller, “Visual imagery: Lifecourse Structure and Lifelong Learning,” *Studies in the Education of Adults* 36, no. 1 (2004): 72-85, on 73.

¹⁰ Kenneth Wain, “Lifelong Learning: Small Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?,” in *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, eds. David N. Aspin, Judith D. Chapman, Michael J. Hatton, and Yukiko Sawano (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 183-198.

¹¹ McWilliam, “Against Professional Development.”

¹² David N. Aspin et al., eds., *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

¹³ Aspin, *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, xxix; Norman Evans, *Making Sense of Lifelong Learning*; John Field, *Lifelong Learning and the New Educational Order* (Trent: Trentham Books, 2003).

¹⁴ Richard G. Bagnall, “Ethical Implications of Contemporary Trends in Work and Adult Vocational Learning,” in *Adult Learning and the Future of Work*, ed. Michael Singh (Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1999), 69-85; Colin Ball, *Learning Pays: The Role of Post-Compulsory Education and Training* (London: Royal Society of Arts, 1991); Field, “Lifelong Education,” 8-12; Malcolm Tight, “Education Education Education: Lifelong Learning in the Kennedy, Dearing and Fryer Reports,” *Oxford Review of Education* 24 no. 4 (1998): 473-85; David Watson and Richard K. S. Taylor, *Lifelong Learning and the University: A Post-Dearing Agenda* (London and Bristol: Falmer Press, 1998).

¹⁵ The life of Tech can be followed in Pat O’Riley and Peter Cole’s Coyote and Raven dialogues. Patricia A. O’Riley, *Technology, Culture, and Socioeconomics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 121-143; Peter Cole and Patricia O’Riley, “Coyote and Raven Talk About the Business of Education or How Did Wall Street Bay Street And Sesame Street Get Into the Pockets of Publicly Funded Universities or Vice Versa?,” *Workplace: A Journal of Academic Labor* 7 no. 1 (2005): 15-28.

¹⁶ Monica Sambataro, “Just-in Time Learning,” *Computerworld* (April 3, 2000): <http://www.computerworld.com/news/2000/story/o,11280,44312,00.html>

¹⁷ Roger Boshier, Mary Wilson, and Adnan Qayyum, “Lifelong Education and the World Wide Web: American Hegemony of Diverse Utopia?” *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 18, no. 4 (1999): 275-285; Neil Selwyn, and Stephen Gorard, “Exploring the New Imperatives of Technology-based Lifelong Learning,” *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 8, no. 1 (2003): 73-92; Nicholas C. Burbules and Thomas A. Callister, *Watch IT: The Risks and Promises of Information Technologies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 37.

¹⁸ *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1 Oct. 1999.

¹⁹ Abrar Hasan, “A Monitoring Framework and Trends in Participation,” in *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, ed. David N. Aspin, Judith D. Chapman, Michael J. Hatton,

and Yukiko Sawano (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 379-402, on 396.

²⁰ Victoria Purcell-Gates, *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

²² Trimark Investment Management, Inc. *Lifelong Learning Plan* (Toronto: Trimark, 1999).

²³ Sarah Toyne, "Tricksters Target Government Scheme," *BBC Online*, 10 October 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1591297.stm>

²⁴ BBC, 'Ferrari Nick' Training Warning. *BBC Online*, 6 February 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1805543.stm>

²⁵ Evans, *Making Sense of Lifelong Learning*, 38.

²⁶ John Willinsky, "Just Say Know: Schooling the Knowledge Society," *Educational Theory* 55 no. 1 (2005): 96-111.

²⁷ For example, "In 1999, Lynn decided to return to college. She withdrew \$5,000 under the LLP in 1999, \$13,000 in 2000 and \$7,000 in 2001. In the year 2000, since her withdrawal exceeded the annual limit of \$10,000, she had to include \$3,000 in her income for that year. In 2001, her withdrawal made her cumulative withdrawals (\$5,000 + \$10,000 + \$7,000 = \$22,000) exceed the participation limit of \$20,000, so she must include \$2,000 in her income for that year." Trimark, *Lifelong Learning Plan*, 1.

²⁸ Thorsten Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 89.

²⁹ Hasan, *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, 397.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 401.

³¹ International Labour Organization, *Lifelong Learning in the Twenty-first Century: The Changing Roles of Educational Personnel* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2000), 38-40.

³² Stephen Petrina, "The Politics of Curriculum and Instructional Design/Theory/Form: Critical Problems, Projects, Units, and Modules," *Interchange* 35, no. 1 (2004): 81-126; Simon W. Weil, "Access: Towards Education or Miseducation? Adults Imagine the Future," in *Culture and Processes of Adult Learning: A Reader*, ed. Mary Thorpe, Richard Edwards, and Ann Hanson (London: Routledge in association with The Open University, 1993), 159-177.

³³ Kenneth Abrahamsson, "Towards New Lifelong Learning Contracts in Sweden," in *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, ed. David N. Aspin, Judith D. Chapman, Michael J. Hatton, and Yukiko Sawano (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 339-366, on 340.

³⁴ Hasan, *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, 401.

³⁵ Judith D. Chapman and David N. Aspin, *The School, the Community and Lifelong Learning* (London: Cassell, 1997).

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The Future of an Illusion," trans. James Strachey and Alan Tyson, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 21*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1927/1968); Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" trans. Alix Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 17*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1919/1968), 235, 242; Deborah P. Britzman, *After-Education: Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Psychoanalytic Histories of Learning* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003);

Trevor Pateman, "Lifelong Unlearning," in *The Ship of Thought. Essays on Psychoanalysis and Learning*, ed. D. Barford (London: Karnac Books, 2002), 212-223.

³⁷ Jamie Roswell, "Stayin' Alive: Postmortem Reproduction and Inheritance Rights," *Family Court Review* 41, no. e3 (2003): 400-415.

³⁸ David Mills and Robert Gibb, "Center and Periphery: An Interview with Paul Willis," *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2001): 388-414, on 402.

³⁹ The trouble is that Tech, JIT, Good ol' Borg and The Transplant Kid are now the major shareholders of the ADC. John Willinsky, *Technologies of Knowing: A Proposal for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ Yet, if curriculum was dead, how could it have killed Li'L? In 1969, when Schwab declared that "curriculum is moribund," no one anticipated that Li'L would try and revive it and, insodoing, die. In those days, it was wishful to think the immanent death of curriculum would mean a rebirth of Li'L. "Now the end is near," Huebner declared in 1976. "Let us acknowledge its demise, gather at the wake, celebrate joyously...the curriculum field... for all practical purposes is not just moribund, it is dead." Somehow in 1995, Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman extracted a malfunctioning organ from an already dead body ("Curriculum Development: Born: 1918. Died: 1969"), and hoped this procedure of reconceptualization would revitalize or preserve what was left. Hence, Britzman explores mourning and melancholia and puzzles over the im/probable death of curriculum. Deborah Britzman, "The Death of Curriculum?," in *Curriculum Visions*, eds. William E. Doll and Noel Gough (New York: Falmer, 2002), 92-101, on 92; Dwayne Huebner, "The Moribund Curriculum Field: Its Wake and Our Work," *Curriculum Inquiry* 6, no. 2 (1976), 153-167, on 154, 165; William F. Pinar, William M. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery and Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding Curriculum* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 6; Joseph J. Schwab, "The Practical: A Language for Curriculum," *School Review* 78, no. 1 (1969): 1-23, on 1.

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