Coda: Novelizing the Novelized Image of Science in Education

In this book, we elaborate—drawing on Bakhtin's work—the concepts of epicization and novelization to understand two different kinds of cultural processes at work in the imagination of science in education. Epicization describes the tendency toward a unitary language and culture in the teaching of science. This observable tendency manifests underlying forces that work toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization. These forces, in turn, develop a vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization, mitigating the cultural diversity inherent to development of the natural sciences for which students are supposed to be prepared in science education. By closely studying the tendencies toward a unitary language of science in the representation practices of science education featured in this book, we learn how cultural centralization operates in the discipline's mundane practices. This allows us to counter unification processes by taking cultural diversity as a norm rather than the exception. Indeed, an emphasis on the latter is the reason that many studies on cultural diversity, along with decreased reflexivity, unwittingly mitigate the very ends that are to be accomplished (Gough 2007).

Our proposal of rethinking of science curricula in terms of the novelization of representation practices of science has both methodological and educational implications of interest to the global community of science education research, practice, and policy. One implication of our study is the need to make thematic the focus on the common and mundane in science curricula—blind spots in the theoretical frameworks of current science education. This allows researchers to avoid the pitfall of stereotyping and naturalizing underrepresented groups through research and, hence, eventually mitigating the very ends that are to be achieved by compounding existing problems arising from common sense understandings. What is more, a closer look at how cultural diversity plays into the common and mundane at the core of science education takes the latter as the norm in this core rather than the exception at its margin. But in such a closer look, we may have to abandon cherished theoretical frameworks, because their blind spots "may remain in the

vision of science educators who are particularly attentive to the cultural contexts of science and science education" (p. 53). Both improvements allow for a better understanding of valuing and keeping cultural diversity in science education.

Another implication follows from rupturing the focus on the decoding side (i.e., on understanding) of science education research concerned with cultural diversity. Accordingly, understanding how the valuing and keeping cultural diversity in science education is mitigated by the exclusion of particular groups of students requires a gaze that goes beyond how these students decode representations in science curricula. One may then find how representations are encoded in science curricula such that they do not allow the novelization of science. There is a body of research on this aspect of encoding in science curricula, focusing, for instance, on the role of graphing in science curricula and how it introduces conceptual blind spots into students' thinking (e.g., Roth 2001). Attending to this and comparable bodies of literature may yield substantial methodological gains in understanding the valuing and keeping of cultural diversity.

In an increasingly globalized world that proliferates the encounter between different cultures and languages, science curricula must allow students to become competent contributors to democratic novelizing processes. In our more recent research on "authentic" science education, we developed such curricula. We suggest here that novelization of representation practices of science does not lie with the level of agreement between school science and the natural sciences. Indeed, more relevant are the levels of control, authority, mastery, and authorship that students are enabled to exercise in such science curricula—as exhibited in the previously described environmental curriculum (Roth and Lee 2004). These levels are uncommon and imply curricula that unfold dialogically and therefore in unexpected ways, which poses a challenge to traditional approaches that think science education in terms of "scope and sequence."

Reflexively, unifying processes are at work in science education as a field because the peer review process tends to decrease cultural diversity (e.g., by truncating certain forms of research process and agencies) toward a heavily Anglo-Saxon way of looking at, describing, and theorizing the world of learning science in and out of schools (e.g., Barton 2002). Thus, constructivism is Eurocentric and therefore constitutes a vision of science education that makes our field blind to certain problems arising from globalization, such as implementing the same curricula across (multi-) cultural settings.

We conclude this book with a word of caution. If novelization were to be the name of a form of science education that we aim at and eventually achieve, a new canonical form, then we would have done nothing other than institute the epicization of novelization. This is precisely the warning Carter (2008) has for those who attempt to absolutize traditional ecological knowledge rather than seeing it as one form (strata) of language useful in tackling the "wicked problems" in science education (Carter 2011). As its dialectical (dialogical) inversion, the novelization that is part of the epicization of a new form of science education would be a contradiction in our argument. In fact, Bakhtin recognizes that the novel "fights for its own hegemony in literature" and "wherever it triumphs, the other older genres

go into decline" (p. 4). But hegemony means unitary language, the opposite of novelization. Novelization, to be true to its name, must remain forever uncompleted, a never achievable novelization-to-come. In this strategic move, novelization names a never-ending process. We do so, for "whenever there is a telos or teleology comes to orient, order, and make possible a historicity, it annuls that historicity by the same token and neutralizes the unforeseeable and incalculable irruption, the singular and exceptional alterity of what comes" (Derrida2005, p. 128). This is but another way of expressing dialogic imagination—the title of Bakhtin's (1981) book—which is inherently open ended, continually developing because in exchange with difference. In the same way as Nancy's (1993) concept of the mêlée, novelization must remain a gesture of culture: "of confrontation transformation, deviation, development, recomposition, combination, cobbling together" (p. 13).

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A Aboriginal, 55, 58, 139, 155, 177, 178, 184, 185, 191, 196, 198 peoples, xviii, 186 students, xviii, 181 Activity, 8, 10, 29, 31, 36, 41, 47, 51, 64, 84, 86–90, 106, 113, 114, 116–119, 130, 136, 137, 143, 146, 154, 158, 167, 174, 175, 177, 178, 180, 181, 183, 184, 189, 191, 201, 203, 204, 211, 214–216, 220–224 collective, 10, 85, 86, 88, 89 educational, xxvi, 88 hyper 8, 9, 14, 17, 10, 20, 32, 25, 61, 62	CHAT. See Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) Chronotope, xxiv, xxiii, 134, 148, 150–154, 156, 157, 159–162 Conceptions, xvii, 58, 59, 73, 82, 83, 94, 100, 101, 108, 109, 148 Constructivism, xv, xvi, xvii, 76, 81, 82, 84, 99, 103, 106, 112, 205, 226 Conventional, 41 Cultural border crossing, xviii, 70 Cultural centralization, xx, xxv, xxvii, 225 Cultural diversity, xxv, xxvi, xxvii, 155, 186, 225, 226
human, 8, 9, 14, 17, 19, 20, 23, 25, 61, 62, 64, 65, 74, 84–86, 90, 106, 109, 111, 112, 115, 116, 121, 123, 134, 136, 166, 175, 185 Artifact, xv, xiv, xvii, 5, 9–12, 14, 19, 20, 22, 47, 61–67, 70, 76, 77, 108, 115, 119, 130, 153, 159, 210, 216, 219	Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), 8, 13, 18, 61, 106, 129, 173, 183, 185, 206, 217 Culture, xviii, 57–60, 70, 77, 125, 127, 133, 142, 147, 157, 160, 179, 182, 184–188, 191, 193, 195, 198, 207, 217, 220, 225–227 epistemic, 69, 78, 113 EuroAmerican, 155
B Bakhtin, M.M., xx, xxv, xix, xxii, xxvi, xviii,	First Nations, 138, 188, 189 fluidity of, 155 human, 186 Maori, 147 proto, 220 Western, 53, 152 WSÁNEĆ, 144 Yupiaq, 60 Curriculum, xv, xxi, xiv, xxvii, 4, 7, 59, 70,
C Cartesian graphs, 11, 35 plane, xxiv plots, 28	80–82, 87, 94, 99, 104, 105, 108, 109, 113, 141, 155, 165, 167, 168, 171–174, 181, 182, 196, 215, 220, 226 development, 206 genomics, 89

Curriculum (<i>cont.</i>) materials, xiv, 4 reform, 86–89 science, xxi, xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xviii, 3, 4, 7, 22, 55, 58, 74, 78, 83, 86, 88, 102, 111, 112, 114, 173, 174, 181, 199, 206, 225, 226 STS, 102	Einstein, A., 2, 53, 147, 148 paradigm, 148, 150 Encoding, xvi, 226 Epic, xv, xx, xxv, xix, xiv, xxii, xviii, xxviii, 2, 7, 8, 14, 23, 30, 43, 48, 49, 51, 53, 55, 73, 76, 79, 86, 87, 93, 109, 111, 129–131, 133, 134, 173, 186, 199, 202, 204, 206, 222 of science, xiv, 29
Darwin, xxii, 10, 11, 15–20, 22, 23 Decoding, xxv, xvi, xvii, 226 Derrida, J., xviii, 29, 30, 38, 56, 84, 101, 227 Descartes, xxiv, 59 Dialog, xxv, xxvii, 37, 56, 69, 71, 99, 111, 130,	Epicization, xv, xx, xiv, xxi, xxv, xxvi, xxii, xiii, xxiii, xxiii, xxiii, 2, 3, 5, 7, 22–25, 54, 55, 78, 86, 90, 92, 111, 112, 129, 130, 134, 164, 225, 226 Ethnography, 25, 31, 42, 45, 51, 76, 116, 119, 134, 139, 151, 187, 188, 210
144, 150, 153, 156, 158, 159, 161, 162 openended, 149, 162 Dialogical, xix, xxiv, xiii, 37, 47, 50, 56, 99, 150, 152, 161, 162, 226 relation, 47, 50, 161, 162 transaction, 161, 162 Discourse, xvi, xxv, xix, xxiv, xxvi, xxvii, xviii, 25, 44, 53, 54, 56, 69, 77, 78, 84, 92–95, 104, 105, 109, 133, 148, 149, 154, 161, 162, 167, 173, 180, 202, 214,	F Fabricius, H., xv First Nations, 62, 144, 151, 154, 157, 158, 160, 161, 177, 180, 186, 199 community, 137, 154, 156, 157, 159, 183, 187–190 Fullness of life, 201–224
222 biophysical, xxiv	
dominant, xxvi established, xxvii hybridized, 102 ideological, xxiv, 134 natural, 98 novelizing, xxvi, xxviii, 92, 108, 164, 178, 179, 223	G Galen, xv Galileo, G., xxiv, 2 Genre in-the-making, xxv, xxvii literary, xxv, xix, xxvi, xxvii, 56 speech, 84, 105 Graphing, xxiv, xxii, 27–29, 32, 36, 50, 103,
dominant, xxvi established, xxvii hybridized, 102 ideological, xxiv, 134 natural, 98 novelizing, xxvi, xxviii, 92, 108, 164, 178, 179, 223 public, 94 of science, xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xviii, 25, 54, 56, 92–95, 109, 133, 162 of science education, xxvi, xxvii, 25, 54, 56, 92–95, 109, 133, 162 of science education research, 25	Galen, xv Galileo, G., xxiv, 2 Genre in-the-making, xxv, xxvii literary, xxv, xix, xxvi, xxvii, 56 speech, 84, 105
dominant, xxvi established, xxvii hybridized, 102 ideological, xxiv, 134 natural, 98 novelizing, xxvi, xxviii, 92, 108, 164, 178, 179, 223 public, 94 of science, xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xviii, 25, 54, 56, 92–95, 109, 133, 162 of science education, xxvi, xxvii, 25, 54, 56, 92–95, 109, 133, 162	Galen, xv Galileo, G., xxiv, 2 Genre in-the-making, xxv, xxvii literary, xxv, xix, xxvi, xxvii, 56 speech, 84, 105 Graphing, xxiv, xxii, 27–29, 32, 36, 50, 103, 226 Graphs, xxv, xxii, xxiii, 3, 6, 27–37, 39–42, 44, 45, 47–51, 62, 96

I	N
Identity, 8, 10, 13, 23, 59–61, 70, 145, 147, 149, 151, 162, 185, 186, 188, 190, 191, 194–196, 198, 200 cultural, 59, 161, 181, 185–189, 191, 192, 194–200 of scientists, 13 scientists' narrative, 23 static, 147	Narrative, xix, xxv, xxiv, xiii, 2, 8, 13, 14, 23–25, 27, 47, 51, 53, 61–64, 70, 82, 123, 129, 133, 134, 143, 145, 148–151, 153, 158, 159, 161, 162, 181, 222 Nature of Science (NoS), xiv Needham, J., 5, 6, 13, 14, 21 Newton, I., 2, 147 NoS. See Nature of Science (NoS)
Image(s) of science, xv, xxi, xiv, xvii, xvviii, 7, 24, 27, 53, 111–116, 118, 119, 122, 123, 128–131, 164, 173, 174, 199 epic, xiv, xviii epicized, xxviii, 2, 36, 53, 164, 200, 223 epic nature of, xiv novelized, xxviii, 54, 55, 92, 164, 198–200 stereotypic, 4 students, xiv, xxviii, 3, 92, 111–114, 116, 119–123, 128–131	Novelization, xv, xiv, xxv, xiii, xxvii, xxviii, 25, 37, 53, 73–75, 86, 87, 89, 90, 93, 94, 101, 108, 109, 111, 112, 129, 131, 165, 166, 173, 177, 179, 186–188, 191, 192, 197, 198, 201, 204, 205, 209, 215, 216, 219, 225–227 of science, xxv, xxvii, 27, 29, 226 in science education, 73, 177, 205 of science education discourse, 108 of scientific discourse, xxvii
Images of scientists, xiii Imagination, xv, xiv, xxv, xiii, xxviii, 24, 25, 55, 92, 111, 112, 164, 179, 201, 204, 225 dialogic, 227 of science, xiv, xiii, xxviii, 25, 55, 111, 166, 179, 201, 204, 225	P Pasteur, L., 5, 6, 9–13, 18, 19, 21, 22, 65, 67 Place chronotopic notion of, 153
	S
L Laboratory, xiv, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 19, 20, 46, 50, 60, 65, 66, 69, 87–90, 112, 116–119, 121, 122, 124, 130, 131, 158–160, 170, 178, 183, 184, 192, 193, 197–200, 209, 210, 215	Science language of, xvii, 93, 225 ready-made, xvii, 19, 23, 76 social studies of, xiv, xvii, 6, 7, 19, 24, 69, 70, 174 Western, xviii, 58, 60, 71, 155 Western Modern, 55, 56, 155
Language aboriginal, 155 everyday, xxv, xix, 150 Salish, 188 scientific, xxv, 50, 178, 199, 200 unitary, xx, xxv, xix, xxii, xxvi, xviii, xxvii, xxiii, 7, 22, 93, 225, 227 Linguistic norms, xxv, xix, xviii	Science education, xx, xix, xiv, xxv, xxvi, xxii, xvii, xiii, xviii, xxiii, xxvii, xxvii, xxvii, 3, 4, 24, 53–58, 60, 73–75, 80, 82, 86–88, 90, 92–94, 99–101, 103, 106, 109, 111, 112, 116, 130, 131, 133, 139, 141, 142, 153–155, 160–162, 164, 165, 174, 178–182, 186, 198, 200–202, 205–207, 211, 215, 218, 219, 221, 225, 226
Linguistic tools, xvii	aims of, xxvii, 55, 80, 82, 92, 93, 99, 101
M Mead, M., xiv <i>Mêlée</i> , 60, 179, 187, 188, 191, 194–198, 227 Mendel, G., 10, 11, 15, 18–23, xxii Métraux, R., xiv, xiii	discourse of (<i>see</i> Discourse) language of, xxvi, xxvii linguistic characteristics of, xxvi novelizing, 73, 86, 133, 134, 162, 164, 167, 202, 205, 206, 223, 224 practice of, xiv, 23 representation practices in, xvi, xiv

Science-technology-society (STS), xiv, 101 Scientific literacy cultural, 104 functional, 103, 104 in the wild, 93–95, 98–100, 102–109, 208 Scientific method, 4, 7, 21, 76, 103, 193, 195 Scientists stereotypic images of, 3, 4, 7 students' images of, 3, 4 Semiotic analysis, xviii, 8, 12, 13, 37	main, xx, xxiii, 5, 6, 12, 13 multimodal, 8, 23, 32, 35 Textbook(s), xxv, xxi, xxiv, xxii, xxiii, 4, 5, 12, 13, 20, 24, 27, 30 biology, xxv, 23 ecology, 30 science, xv, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxviii, 2–8, 11, 12, 14, 18, 22–25, 27, 76, 201
Semiotics, 29, 32, 33	V
Semiotics, 29, 32, 33 Signified, 8, 28, 29, 32–34, 37, 39, 41, 45, 48, 49 Signifier, 28–30, 32–35, 37–41, 45, 47–51, 147 SNITCEL, 138–141, 143, 144, 146, 148, 149, 151–159, 161, 162, 178, 179, 189, 190, 193 Spallanzani, L., 5, 6, 13, 14, 21 Structuring, 8, 23, 33–35, 212 STS. See Science-technology-society (STS)	Voice, xix, xxv, xiii, 53, 56, 60, 69, 84, 98, 101, 105, 106, 139, 143–149, 154, 155, 158, 161, 162, 167, 173, 177, 190, 199, 202 academic, 190 critical, 187 First Nations, 190 indigenous, 153, 156 multiple, 51 multitude of, 144–146, 149 scientific, 162, 165 Western, 157
_	
Technician, 28, 31, 42–44, 51, 117–119, 121, 124, 126–129, 167, 183, 192, 193, 198, 200, 213, 215, 222 Text, xx, xxv, xxi, xix, xxiv, xviii, 5, 8, 10–14, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 32, 41, 42, 48, 60–62, 64, 76, 84, 106, 107, 129, 148 caption, xv, 12, 13	W Watson, J., 11, 22, 23, 25, 41 WMS. See Science WSÁNEĆ, 62–64, 67, 71, 138, 139, 144, 145, 148, 149, 151, 152, 156–158 First Nation, 138, 156