

2009 Bergamo Conference Keynote Address

“Nostalgia for the Future Imagining Histories of *JCT* and the Bergamo Conferences”

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In Memory of Paul R. Klohr

“Two at a Time”

Remember the first house you can remember,
how the stairway hung from nowhere,
unconnected to the floor from which you were
bounding away and floating free from the landing
to which you were flinging yourself, the torque of your perfect legs
projecting you towards your room or the room
you shared, what if you knew now
what went through your mind, not all the time
of your childhood, but just then,
just a script
of your mind while on those stairs, each time, what thoughts
would therein be recorded beyond a steady refrain of
two-at-a-time, two-at-a-time? What will you wonder
thirty years from now when all of this has the same unconnectedness,
when the office where you work will hang
in the air of memory without hinges,
without crosswalks, what litany of concern, what
delicate structure of related thoughts
will you wish you could recall, could reassemble,
thirty years from now,
when all the cars today on Broadway

are vintage cars, and we, the populace of the present,
glow out our individual and collective ignorance
of some particular future event, the innocence of which
makes us shimmer when photographed as if, if you
could only speak to us, we could grant you some wish,
and whisper what it was to live before.

Jennifer Michael Hecht, *The Next Ancient World*

Imagining the snows of Rochester NY still falling. Gauzy curtains of white...

January 1973: Fogs of gusting swirls piling onto my scarf and hat that quickly smell of tightening wool as they gather wetness and cling to my head and neck, tamping down my hair into a rivulet of disarrayed strands. I trudge across the main crosswalk of campus, pondering the contents of my first course as a Masters student at the University of Rochester. Cloaked head bent against the sodden wind, I look up, a breath away from colliding with the apparition that suddenly parts the snow screen. Tall figure, long dark wool coat, head encased in a Cossack hat, breaks to a stop.

“Janet, hello. Bill Pinar.”

“Oh. Bill. [Great. I’ve almost plowed into my just–assigned Masters degree advisor]. Yes. Hi.”

“Where are you headed?” Bill asks.

“The Library? This storm—I’m turned around.”

“I’m headed there too. Walk with me.” And so I did.

AS I HERE NARRATE some “imagined histories of *JCT* and The Bergamo Conference, both past and future,” what might I possibly whisper to you—and to myself—about what it was to live before? What might I murmur about how and why this conference and its journal came into being—about how *JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* and what eventually became known generically as “The Bergamo Conferences”¹ began, not in any way fully articulated, but neither sprung from a vacuum devoid of any historical, theoretical and philosophical considerations. Rather, I recall their establishment as resulting from a confluence of historical events, of certain conditions within U. S. educational, social, cultural contexts and the field of curriculum, in particular, and of specific individuals, with our varied desires, dreams and fears. And what might I spin from these recollections, what delicate structure of related thoughts will I reassemble here as I imagine possible Bergamo and *JCT* futures as well?

In my versions of “imagined histories,” *JCT* and Bergamo are associated initially and most prominently with the work to reconceptualize the U.S. curriculum field during the 1970s. Simply put, that variegated work attempted to move the field from an exclusively administrative and managerial focus—that is, from designing and developing pre-determined materials in supposedly knowledge—attainment sequences—to considerations of psycho-social-cultural-political dimensions of understanding curriculum.

And yet here, in my attempts to yet again portray versions of those beginnings and beyond, I suggest that my often conflicted, ambiguous, contingent and totally invested memories of those times and events now hang from nowhere. I can’t even begin to imply “one history,” or to sort out myriad themes, issues and contentions among current and multiple “states of the curriculum

field” and their relations to *JCT* and The Bergamo Conference in past, present and possibly future configurations. My rhizomatic and now blurred together interpretations of my professional experiences, always needing further interpretation (Scott, 1999)—let alone my poststructuralist persuasions that disrupt and contest any grand narrative—point only to impossibilities of interpreting, representing, narrating any one “history” and contributions of participants of Bergamo and *JCT*. Further, my remembrances here are unhinged not only from any concept of memory as full and accurate—thus supposedly yielding “true” accountings of those histories—but also, most likely, from why and how you each gather here tonight to mark the 30th anniversary of the Bergamo Curriculum Theory and Classroom Conference.

For example, you may not share my deep interests in problematizing the mediated nature of contemporary understandings of “the past” of curriculum studies—particularly of the Bergamo Conferences and *JCT* publications over these thirty years. You may not see as necessary my insistence on pointing to tenacious and yet often tenuous links those interpreted “understandings” may have with historical facts as well as discursive constructions of historical “meanings” of the Reconceptualization, or with extensions of engagements or contentions that have emerged from those constructions since that particular period in U. S. curriculum studies.

So, here ruminating on imagined past and future “histories,” I certainly know that I cannot speak to why and how each of you is sitting here now, attending a conference with which you may or may not have any prior connections. I would guess, in fact, that there really is not much chance of holding you hostage to any romanticized versions of this Conference or its journal. Too many agendas, too many differing intentions and curriculum conceptualizations now floating free from any anchoring that Bergamo or *JCT* histories might seem to provide.

Thus, I cannot know if you view this 30th Anniversary notation merely as a sidelight during this conference that you perhaps attend as a new or yet another place in which to present or formulate your work; or to meet old and new friends; or to gather inspiration for your next curriculum research project; or to strategize about ways to direct the curriculum field in certain ways and not others. I cannot know any of your particular and current intentions or desires, if any, for the forms and work of the curriculum field. And I certainly do not wish to position myself as attempting to “teach” you to miss things you have never lost, to yearn for people or events or a particular time in the past without you having any lived experiences of those as such. No “armchair nostalgia” (Appadurai, 1996) here, for sure.

But there is a chance that you may be feeling what some characterize as nostalgia for a sort of “certainty” and clarity of purpose that supposedly characterized the work of the Reconceptualization. Even in light of accounts that repeatedly detail, from various perspectives, the multiple tensions, disagreements and oppositional stances of many involved in the Reconceptualization, some of you may be reacting to a sense of loss and rapid change that many claim are endemic to living in post-modernity—mass involuntary migration and emigration, world-wide terrorist attacks, war, social and cultural fragmentations via multiple technologies and media, for example. Todd Gitlin (1980), for one, conceptualized a new sense of time—what he termed a new velocity of experience, a new vertigo—which in part he associated with the construction and reconstruction of events by mass media and the Internet. Nostalgia may be seen in this iteration as a form of reaction against the velocity and vertigo of postmodern temporality, of semiotic overload, of the swift pace of change, a floating free from the past, unmoored and adrift. Perhaps all these could describe the current “state of the curriculum field” as well as the multiple, unanchored, constantly shifting positionings in that field? From what, then, some of you may ask, might we even bound away as we attempt to leap toward new landings?

Posing Possibilities in “Nostalgia for the Future”...

I conceptualize my version of “nostalgia for the future,” then, as one modest attempt to seek viable ways of working within the acceleration of historical time, one that resists a total valorizing as much as a total denying, forgetting and dismissing of Bergamo and *JCT*'s pasts, and that works instead toward “complicated conversations” (Pinar, 2004) with those pasts. I wish to highlight the value of awareness of historical moments in the curriculum field in counterpart to what is fleeting and transitory, understanding at the same time how I am implicated in my recitations of fragmented memories as well as in my desires “not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future” (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 921).

I thus propose a most modest form of nostalgia for the future, if you will, in ideas and memory sketches as well as possible implications of these in what I trace here tonight. A “nostalgia for the future” implies that nostalgia can be prospective as well as retrospective, as Boym (2001) has noted, in that considerations of the future force us to take responsibility for any nostalgic tales we might spin in terms of simply longing for that often idealized time or place which no longer exists—or more likely, never fully did exist.

In posing a “nostalgia for the future,” and in “imagining histories of Bergamo and *JCT*,” then, I do so in terms of a distinction between the desire to return to an earlier state or idealized past, and the desire not to fully return, but instead to recognize aspects of the past as bases for direction and commitment in the field of curriculum studies—and for raising questions about what and how *JCT* and Bergamo might uniquely continue to contribute to the field, writ large, in the future. I thus am most interested here in how to engage with “the past of *JCT* and Bergamo” as retrieval for the future, as a locus of possibility and source of aspiration, of providing a way of imagining “present impossibilities becoming possible in the future, [for]...the future opens into otherness only insofar as the past does too” (Oliver, 2001, p. 136). But I also steadfastly am determined, in these current iterations, to remain unhinged from any one final version of the beginning, present, and future of this conference and its journal.

So, these are my current interests and thoughts that drive yet another attempt in my imagining histories—even as overlain as this already is and will be by others’ as well as my own previous partial, contingent, fragmented, interpretations of aspects of the Reconceptualization and Bergamo and *JCT* “histories” (Miller, 1978; 1996; 1999; 2005a; 2005b; 2010). Nor can I in any way represent those others’ variegated versions of the beginnings of our work, together and individually and in often-oppositional stances, to reconceptualize curriculum and its academic field of studies, or of subsequent changes, contentious positionings, and fluxuating influences of *JCT* and its conference in the years following that era of curriculum reconceptualization (Morris, 2009; Pinar, 1999, 2006; Pinar & Miller, 1982; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; Schubert, 1986; Schubert, Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002).

And any ventures into imagining histories also are informed by my perspectives and interpretations now even more infiltrated by the vagaries of time as well as ever-widening scholarly spaces, interests and influences. These include my work and scholarly interests in the internationalization of curriculum studies, via my Presidency of the Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (AAACS) from 2001 through 2007, and in the expanding of intellectual venues and curriculum research methodologies and practices of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) as its Vice President for Division B-Curriculum Studies from 1997 through 1999, for example.

I venture further into the future here, then, influenced not only by my scholarly beginnings and commitments to *JCT* and its conference, but also too by these above mentioned intellectual contexts. But I focus exclusively on and reassemble here disjointed flashes of recall from my own leapings into the conceptualizations and enactments of Bergamo and *JCT*. I share some blurred, even fictionalized fragments of conversations, events, desires, hopes—and conjure some more personal details, if you will, about which I have not written before, some realizations as well as incidents that, in retrospect, I now interpret as perhaps having significance for some possible futures that I had not attributed or interpreted as such when I wrote other versions, other “histories.”

I here then string all of this together with a litany of concerns that, from my perspectives, impelled the founding of this conference and its journal. As well, drawing from those concerns and founding intentions, I also pose some questions about what might possibly—and I will argue, might necessarily in the future—distinguish Bergamo and *JCT* from other contemporary curriculum studies conferences, publications and agendas. I do so by conjuring some delicate structures of related thoughts and scramble them into imagined and imaged histories of both past and future in hopes that—even at the frayed edges of impossible memories and representations—I might gesture toward some possibilities and offer background for what may be yet to come.

Thus, while attempting to keep in view the politics as well as impossibilities of “full and complete” memory or representation (Smith & Watson, 2000), I muse: Just as nostalgia can never be reduced to a final or unitary definition, given that its meanings are culturally and historically variegated, how might I guarantee that my “partial histories” here *not* be viewed as unitary, “true,” and collective. Can I here, in “remembering” thirty years of Bergamo as well as “before Bergamo,” partially and in exploratory ways, acknowledge the existence, not only of multiple nostalgias but also then of multiple “pasts”—some productive and socially as well as theoretically useful, and others less so? Further, I wonder: might re-viewing some contingent histories of Bergamo and *JCT* perhaps bring at least some of us working within curriculum studies into a “more complex understanding of relations between time’s traces and historical reconstructions, including the possibility of irony and play in rethinking history and our various relationships to it” (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 924)? How might re-viewing slices of these “histories” provide ways, not to return there, so to speak, but rather to consider those histories as backdrop for conceptualizing concerns and desires about the present. Such perspectives, I suggest, might offer insights, directions and cautions about both the functioning and further blossoming of *JCT* and the Bergamo conference in novel and unanticipated ways.

I do recognize the restorative resonance that may be generated in some by Craig Kridel’s discussion (1999) of twenty-five years, from 1973 through 1997, of pre-Bergamo as well as Bergamo-centered curriculum theory conferences. Kridel situates his analyses of those conferences as providing grounds for the building of a “collective memory” of sorts. Such a hypothetical collective memory possibly could be construed among those of us who had attended consecutive meetings since 1973 as well as among those of us initially associated with and in that 1970s decade known as the “reconceptualization of curriculum.”

However, unhinged, as it were, even from that 1999 assessment, I here need to gesture toward pluralities, divergences, alienations and ruptures among those possible collective memories. Especially at this 30th Anniversary juncture, I point toward ways in which such memories often are tempered, twisted, shattered, repressed, idealized by shifting subjectivities and the unconscious as well as by prevailing discourses and historical contexts that not only re-frame but also contribute to constantly changing versions of those rememberings and subsequent tellings.

Thus, I am urging you as well as myself to insert irony into any commemoration of a static “past” of this conference and its journal, or into any declared goals to rebuild the “lost home” of Bergamo.

Imagining Beginnings...

I certainly have no perfect rememberings of what went through my mind, bounding away from the floor of my traditional conceptions of curriculum as content to be “covered” and even “mastered,” and momentarily floating free in this scholarly arena known as curriculum theorizing toward which I flung myself. But indeed, the Bergamo Conference Center itself and recollections of more than 30 years of curriculum theory conferences, held across a variety of university sites and conference retreats in the U. S. and once in Banff, Canada, *do* elicit in me visceral, embodied memory flashes, an—I must admit—faint longings for those Bergamo years as some version of “academic home.” In these familiar Bergamo Center rooms and hallways, I imagine shadowy glimpses of individuals, specific presentation sessions, secret and public liaisons to which, throughout the years, I was witness and, sometimes, participant. This place is steeped, for me, in ephemeral images and wispy specters of those with whom I interacted who now are gone from my life in permanent ways as well as of those with whom I still maintain strong and deep ties of friendship and commitment. This place functions as a site and an incitement of slivers of swirled memories, of both fantasized and material beginnings, of young enchantments and hopes for then unimaginable futures that began before Bergamo materialized as both metaphoric and concrete location for new workings of curriculum and accompanying advancements of the field:

I stand at the very back of the room at the spring 1973 curriculum conference held at U. of R., organized by Bill Pinar, and conceptualized with Paul Klohr, his mentor (later to also serve as mine) at The Ohio State University. This room is hot, I'm weary, in the midst of teaching in a Rochester city high school, and writing final papers for my first semester's Masters course work while, at the same time, packing for a move from a Rochester suburb into the city and an apartment on Rutgers Street. I think of Bill's course, among the others in which I'm enrolled this semester, recall some of his thinking, drawn from his dissertation on “Sanity, Madness, and the Schools,” about various versions of “madness” in students and teachers alike perpetuated by stifled versions of curriculum conceived as merely predetermined content that could be tested.

I am pulled back into the conference as Maxine Greene rises to speak. Riveted by her gravelly voice, by her weaving together of literature, philosophy, history in order not only to critique but also to imagine other ways of being and becoming within educational contexts. And I begin to grasp a glimpse of what these various “other” visions of curriculum and their necessary theorizings might entail. Greene, as well as Dwayne Huebner, James Macdonald, Paul Klohr and Donald Bateman (later also to become my mentor in English education studies at OSU, as he was for Bill) and others present academic papers in relation to the conference theme of “Heightened Consciousness, Cultural Revolution, and Curriculum Theory.” That theme does not ruffle me; it makes sense, given my beginning musings about the “madness” that was perpetuated in my schooling contexts and that I myself had performed as both student and high school English teacher for seven years. And I continue to be, on this day in spring of '73, 1960's-inflected, used to hearing, believing in, marching for some versions of these ideas in relation to the Women's movement in the U. S., Viet Nam war protests, the fights for civil rights. But slumping against a wall in the shadows of this cramped room, I don't even begin to understand all that

these scholars say, don't have time to linger or to digest their words, don't have any full idea of the significance of this event being held on campus. I am, however, intrigued, want to learn more.

In recalling some events that led eventually to this particular site as housing the annual *JCT*-sponsored curriculum theory conferences, I clearly now resist, even as I have to admit that I longed for during much of my early and mid-career, any fixed, modernist, static notion of “home” as an always-safe haven called Bergamo and *JCT* that supposedly anchored only congruent and generative intellectual support and nourishment. As I've noted, I can't in any way posit as emblematic, or yearn for and thus reify my particular memories of events, individuals, or particular historical situations and contexts that led to or are situated within this physical location and the intellectual deliberations and creations represented by this conference. But indeed, it is difficult for me not to paint “Bergamo” as a place as well as a theorized conceptualization that did provide shelter for premier versions of innovative, timely, crucial curriculum theorizing.

The Bergamo Conference certainly served, for many years, as *the* center, during the 1970s, 1980s, and at times, the early 1990s, for presentations and performances of fermenting, electrifying, even micro-paradigmatic shifts in curriculum theorizing. Bergamo therefore too was a magnet for heated intellectual debates, disagreements, clashing philosophical ideological perspectives and commitments. And on many occasions, in fact, it became a smoldering hotbed of muted as well as not-so-disguised shouting matches, of stomping feet, slamming doors, excluding circles of fellow-schmoozers, jostling careerists, and huffing adults/scholars sweeping past one another in corridors. But with/in all these noisy and often conflicted assemblages, as I still see it, *were* examples of innovative curriculum conceptualizations that impelled varied versions of curriculum reconceptualized into the hallowed positivist arenas of AERA publications and Annual Meetings, especially within Division B—Curriculum Studies as well as the various curriculum studies-oriented AERA Special Interest Groups, for example.

Revisiting Nostalgia

Ah yes. As I see it.

It's indeed difficult for me, here refashioning *JCT* and Bergamo memories, to remain unhinged from any standard dictionary definition of nostalgia—a wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to some past period or irrecoverable condition, says the Merriam–Webster version. Such a pervasive and commonplace definition is situated within understandings of nostalgia as emblematic of a medical-pathological version of nostalgia first coined in 1688 by the Swiss student Johannes Hofner in his doctoral dissertation. This future physician, referring to a severe homesickness of Swiss soldiers and mercenaries, posited nostalgia as a diagnostic label for what was then considered a disease. He described symptoms as ranging from deep longing for a return to “home”—even without all its more current psychoanalytic and postcolonial implications and complications that may include persistent yearnings for diasporic homelands left behind, for example—to melancholia and weeping, to suicide (Some drama addicts through the years might even have threatened such, scorned perhaps in their pursuit of past or desired-for Bergamo liaisons, for example. But I digress).

Over the next two centuries following Hofner's positing of nostalgia as dis-ease, nostalgia became semantically unmoored from its medical basis, and entered into both academic and popular vocabulary as a term variously referring to the sentimental or melancholic. Boym

(2001), for example, points to a version of nostalgia that incorporates a melancholic grieving for unrealized dreams of the past and visions for the future that have become obsolete. As I've noted, such mourning especially can function as a response to loss endemic in modernity and late modernity (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). An ontology of nostalgia, in this variation, identifies it with the themes of alienation and estrangement in human societies, as Turner (1987) documents. This form of ontological nostalgia perceives humans, because of their consciousness, as alienated, prone to the despair of their own consciousness. By extension, Turner, among many, links the notion of nostalgia to the philosophical traditions that informed the development of German social theory, from Marx to theorists identified with the Frankfurt school. And in contemporary societies, claims Turner, such a nostalgic crisis thus has been manifested in the intellectual critique of mass culture and popular lifestyle.

Additionally, the "homelessness" of the intellectual supposedly has been sharpened "by the awareness of belief that mass culture represents the loss of personal autonomy, spontaneity and naïve enjoyment of the everyday world" (Turner, 1987, p. 153). And as further example, critical theory and mass culture criticism are viewed as often initially relying on the dichotomy of "high" and "low" culture, thus instantiating both the elitist and the nostalgic—looking backward towards a period in history when there was a [supposed] greater integration between feeling and thought, life and art (Turner, 1987).

However, in another iteration of nostalgia, Kant linked it with a more positive spin on its attendant emotion, melancholy, in that nostalgia could indicate a heightened sensitivity to reality. According to Kant, the melancholic personality encased a sense of moral freedom, an acute awareness and sensitivity to the human condition and the dilemmas of human life (Turner, 1987).

But, in posing my "imagined Bergamo and *JCT* histories" here in relation to a notion of nostalgia that does not long for the past as ideally manifested in the present or possible futures, I am rejecting not only conceptions of nostalgia that, as Jameson (1991) suggests, involve the prioritization of positive accounts of the past, but also a Kantian version of nostalgia as sensitivity to what I *could* gesture toward, in a variation, as the "human condition as experienced within the curriculum field, writ large."

Nor do I wish to in any way to embody a notion of what cultural critic and anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1989) has deemed "imperialist nostalgia"—the sentimental discourse he identified as the mourning of the passing of a "traditional" society as a mask of innocence to hide or refuse to acknowledge one's involvement, one's complicity, with processes of domination.

Substitute the Tyler Rationale, with its technical-rational, sequential and linear conceptions of curriculum as pre-determined and static versions of knowledge, and then posit the reconceptualization of such in relation to Rosaldo's critique, and you can see why I do not wish to engage in any such imperialist nostalgic claims for "victories" gained at the expense of Tylerian versions of conceptions of curriculum design, development and evaluation; nor do I mourn that "tradition" in curriculum studies. But frankly, in this age of rampant rage for accountability, many of us involved in the Reconceptualization still would argue that truncated and standardized versions of the Tyler Rationale continue to function as a certain form of domination over teachers and students alike. And so, in an ironic way, there is no Tylerian tradition to mourn—that curriculum conceptualization and its accompanying understandings of "curriculum work," per se, remain even more entrenched than ever in dominant U. S. educational conceptions and enactments, much to the consternation of many of us involved in the original Reconceptualization. But again, I digress, even relapse a bit into the kinds of nostalgia I am attempting here to resist.

Futuring Nostalgia...

So, following literary theorist and critic Linda Hutcheon (1989; 2000) in recalling my particular versions of “the past” of *JCT* and Bergamo, I am attempting to do so with a kind of ironic double-ness that acknowledges the dangers of totally indulging in forms of nostalgia, whether “armchair,” or “imperialist” or defined as and drawn from the Greek—*nostos*, meaning to return home, and *algos*, meaning pain, longing, or *algia*, a painful condition. That double-ness entails a postmodern utilization of irony toward any urge to look backward for verification, for roots, for authenticity and, simultaneously, to evoke nostalgia’s affective power. For Hutcheon (2000), irony too is doubled: two meanings, one “said” and the other “unsaid,” come together, often with a certain critical edge. Irony, rather than a description, is what “happens”—or you make it “happen” by joining those two meanings. Similarly, Hutcheon notes, nostalgia too is not a description but rather an element of response in that it is what you feel when two or more different temporal moments come together for you and carry emotional weight. With/in the postmodern, Hutcheon argues, nostalgia gets called up, exploited and ironized. So, rather than remaining bound up within a discourse on modernity structured by nostalgia—wherein one harbors a sense of historical decline, of the absence or loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty, of the loss of individual freedom or of domination—one needs to recognize and to work against any version of nostalgia that longs for a lost “authenticity” that can solidify as a paralyzing structure of historical reflection (Frow, 1991, p. 135).

Thus, while I speak here of reasons why I believe that at least a familiarity with some sort of contingent “history” of this conference and its journal as well as of the intellectual work generated under their auspices are crucial, I also hope to introduce irony into any of my reasons that might be functioning as heritage-fixated or that supposedly recover “truths” that inhere in *JCT* and Bergamo’s “traditions.” Rejecting, then, what Svetlana Boym (2001) conceptualizes as “restorative nostalgia”—which seeks a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home—and instead attempting some of the self-aware “reflective nostalgia” that she posits as recognizing the impossibilities of “homecomings,” I work here to construct contingent and partial histories that juxtapose temporal rememberings as well as inconclusive and fragmentary kinds of “truths” as one way of adding irony to any restorative nostalgic urges toward lamented loss of tradition and continuity. I believe such ironic self-awareness must at least inform ways in which re-energized efforts to again establish Bergamo as one premier site of innovative and crucial curriculum theorizing are imagined, undertaken and extended.

Building Histories...

I acquired from Paul Klohr, as I began my doctoral studies at The Ohio State University in 1974, even more understandings about the genesis of that ’74 Rochester conference I briefly visited as a Masters student. Paul positioned that Rochester conference in relation to the 1967 curriculum conference that he helped to organize at Ohio State entitled “Curriculum Theory Frontiers,” and that focused on the theme, “the curriculum theorist at work.” The ’67 conference was honoring the twentieth anniversary of the first U. S. curriculum theory conference held in 1947 at the University of Chicago, entitled “Toward Improved Curriculum Theory.” That ’47 conference included presentations from Ralph Tyler, Virgil Herrick, Hollis Caswell, and B.

Othanel Smith. I cannot imagine that those participants—especially Ralph Tyler—could imagine the tenor of the '67 conference, let alone all that followed from that particular meeting.

The '67 conference participants, including Paul Klohr, James Macdonald, and Dwayne Huebner, gestured toward dissatisfactions with the narrow overlay of educational administrative functions that shaped the field's beginnings in the U. S. in the 1920s—those functions most often attributed as being established by school superintendent Jesse Newlon in Denver in response to the district's call for “managing” curriculum in their large public school system that was contending with rapid expansion. That charge thus far had dominated the field's focus on curriculum planning, development, and evaluation, to the exclusion of any attempts to strengthen the field's theoretical bases.

Curriculum scholars such as Herbert Kliebard, along with Macdonald, Huebner, Klohr and Philip Jackson, among others, expressed concerns that the field was ahistorical, atheoretical. To provide framing for possible theorizing, Macdonald, in his often cited 1971 publication, “Curriculum Theory,” noted distinctions among three distinct “camps” in terms of possible conceptions, forms and foci of curriculum theorizing. Macdonald's heuristic provided a framing that Bill Pinar soon thereafter built upon in his 1975 edited collection, *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists*, where he distinguished among traditionalists, conceptual-empiricists and reconceptualists.

I think it's important to note here that Bill Pinar re-titled the 2000 re-issue by Educator's International Press of his '75 edited collection to *Curriculum Studies: The Reconceptualization*. This re-titling, in part, signals Pinar's acknowledgement of tensions created by his initial 1975 identification of individuals as opposed to overarching and emerging conceptions of curriculum reconceptualized. Pinar originally identified as “postcritical” those who situated their theorizing within particular theoretical/ideological orientations in relation to the broader “reconceptualist” delineation. A postcritical emphasis on literary, historical, philosophic and psychoanalytic modes of inquiry were interpreted by some—mostly the neo-Marxists—as separate from and of greater importance than reconceptual political and methodological critiques of the traditionalists and the conceptual-empiricists.

These tensions, splits, and opposing perspectives on appropriate foci for any reconceptualization of curriculum characterized not only the movement itself, but also subsequent iterations of the Bergamo conferences over the years as well as in more general arenas such as AERA and the Professors of Curriculum, in both its AERA and ASCD contexts. And within contemporary curriculum contexts and debates, I certainly observe such tensions and splits in current manifestations of varying and proliferating curriculum conferences across the spectrum of curriculum studies, writ large.

But in retrospect, I think it's important again to note that Dwayne Huebner, by 1975, had proclaimed the curriculum field dead due to its “excessive diversity of purpose and attendant lack of focus and unity” (Pinar, 1999, p. 484). At the same time, Huebner had been working, as had Jim Macdonald and Paul Klohr especially, to contribute to curriculum's theoretical bases in ways that aligned with the humanities rather than with the social sciences, and especially rather than with educational psychology.

So, given Pinar's doctoral studies with Klohr and the intellectual heritage that shaped Klohr's take on the curriculum field, including his studies with Harold Albery, I could begin to more fully appreciate, as I studied with Klohr, how and why Bill and Paul worked toward bringing together that particular group of scholars in spring of 1973.

With fellow doctoral students Craig Kridel, Bob Bullough, Paul Shaker, and Leigh Chiarello, along with Paul Klohr and eventually with others, I traveled to the conferences that followed from 1973, ones sponsored by individuals who also were energized by what seemed to be concrete possibilities for moving the field in new directions. These included the Xavier University conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1974; and the subsequent and sequential conference at the University of Virginia; at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; at Kent State University in Ohio again; at Rochester Institute of Technology; and at Georgia State. Concurrently, I continued talking with Bill, most often in long-distance conversations between Columbus and Rochester that had to occur only after 9:00pm when the phone rates went down.

Maybe Fall, 1976 or so: I stand, stretch as I stop the gentle sway of my porch swing. I open the screen door, enter the long one room of my second-floor walk-up in Alhambra Court, located on High Street, just north of Ramseyer and Arps Halls, my academic homes for my doctoral studies with Paul Klohr and Don Bateman. I opened my mail while swinging on the porch and have received a lease renewal for my continuing rental there. I'm elated that my rent will not be raised from its current \$70 per month. Working as a TA and student-teacher supervisor in English Education at OSU pays hardly at all, but I am addicted to the luxury of full-time related work and study that it affords me as I complete my dissertation on curriculum theorizing implications of Maxine Greene's scholarship. Right now, I plop down into my creaky rocker, waiting for my nightly phone call from Bill, and ponder how to slant my theorizing of her work within her considerations of what she calls in some new writing, "women's predicaments" in relation to teaching, studying, learning. Given what I rather quickly felt as the male-oriented and dominated nature of both the origins and current iterations of curriculum work and arenas of study, I start to re-read a new writing that Maxine has just sent to me, where she reviews, through historical, literary and philosophical lenses, the "work" of women in education.

The phone jangles, I jump. I answer, it's Bill, never late in phoning at our appointed time, and we discuss the day's events for us both. And Bill then pauses: "would you consider being the Managing Editor of the journal that I've been talking with you about for a while?" We ramble and conjure a bit further about what such a position might entail, about ways that we could work together as Editor and Managing Editor. I take a deep breath, say: "Yes. Of course." I hang up the phone. Think: What have I done?

I had no way of knowing that I would work in that position of *JCT* Managing Editor, officially for twenty years, unofficially for almost twenty-three, or as Bergamo Director or Co-Director for many of those years. I certainly had no understanding of the nature and amount of work that such a position would entail for me, for Bill, for others involved in the production, maintenance and sustenance of the journal and conference. I certainly could not have predicted the influence of both *JCT* and Bergamo, not only on my life in general but also, eventually, on the curriculum field in the United States, and more currently, on the world-wide field.

Phone calls were the ways that Bill and I primarily worked together throughout those initial years, first to establish the Journal and its Board of Editors, with me tapping out on my Smith Corona manual typewriter letters of invitation to scholars such as Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner (who both turned us down, who both had presented scholarly papers at the "early" conferences but who did not wish to align themselves with the actual journal and conference or with the movement identified already as "the reconceptualization"). But we did receive acceptances from other established scholars for this endeavor that quickly provided "official" support and context, not only for scholarship that distinguished "reconceptual" work from that published in

the then-available forums sponsored by AERA and ASCD, but also for the annual conferences that had been happening since 1973.

Winter, 1979: *I wait for the phone to ring; it's 10pm Eastern Standard time, 7pm Pacific time, where Bill is phoning from Berkeley. I have tried to contact various chartered bus services in the Washington, D. C. area for two whole days now, and am frustrated and confused by the array of prices quoted to me. I am trying to arrange transport for our conference participants to the Airlie House, site of our very first official JCT-sponsored curriculum theory conference for this coming October. The closest airport to Airlie is Dulles International, and the prices for charter bus rentals are exorbitant for us to consider, given that this is our very first year of journal publication and resources are quite limited.*

I answer the phone after one ring: Bill: "You for sure have the Airlie House reserved, yes?" Janet: "Oh yes, got that. We have to share the conference spaces and rooms with another group—they didn't mention who or what they were." Bill: "Great. We'll keep working on these damn bus connections." Janet: "Sure. At least we have our conference space—no problems there."

Little did we know that we would be sharing Airlie House conference space with the C.I.A. I won't describe again (Miller, 2005) our ensuing difficulties with our conference "companions," but it was one of several precipitating historical as well as material conditions that prompted our eventual move to The Bergamo Conference Center.

During the initial years of the conference and journal, Bill and I hand-lettered conference participant name-tags, and assembled each year's conference program by spreading out submitted proposal titles, often on my apartment living room floor or across Bill's office desk and tables. We were alternately sly and serious, playful and confused as we slowly pieced together the big puzzle pieces into the sessions we thought would provide either amenable or interestingly contentious pairings.

Even with the difficulties in communication, journal production and conference organization then, when our only resources were the telephone and snail-mailed, typed or handwritten letters as means of contacting one another as well as any interested possible conference participants or journal contributors, we indeed still were the only "alternative" game in town. AERA, during the 1970s for example, certainly did not accept for its Annual Meetings any proposals that hinted of autobiographical, phenomenological, hermeneutic, psychoanalytic or critical ways of knowing, of researching, of theorizing curriculum, for example. For many new scholars in the field, such as myself, Bergamo and *JCT* were the only available and supportive arenas in which we could engage in exploratory examinations of such perspectives and ways of working.

I thus agree with others who have noted that one huge accomplishment of this particular journal and conference over time were the major roles they played in influencing forms and modes of "acceptable," not to mention crucially needed, curriculum theorizing and research, not only within the curriculum field, per se, but also within larger educational research arenas in general, especially that of AERA. As part of what some consider the "Bergamo legacy," such works as first conceptualized and enacted at Bergamo and in *JCT* continue to appear with regularity, in expanded performance modes and elaborated theoretical and philosophical considerations, even in the face of current and left-over Bush administration insistence on positivist versions of research as the "gold standard," and of curriculum conceptions as adhering to designs and intentions of the Tyler Rationale.

However, internally so to speak, in their formative years, Bergamo and *JCT* quickly became sites where proponents of phenomenological and neo-Marxist versions of critical theory battled

for ways in which to continue to reconceive curriculum and its studies. Soon, however, proliferating philosophical and theoretical perspectives enabled understandings of the various intersections of gendered, raced, classed and other discursive domains as a means of further complicating our collective and individual endeavors in “understanding” curriculum.

Nostalgia With/In the Future...

Currently, we obviously again find ourselves in yet another iteration of the conditions that characterized the field’s technical-rational origins in the U.S. In this relentless age of *No Child Left Behind*, with its insistence on high stakes testing, measurable outcomes and standardized versions of curriculum and pedagogy, we working in the curriculum field are under siege again, this time to not only resist losing the gains that we have made in terms of theorizing curriculum—from whatever theoretical orientations and ideological commitments—but also to vision anew how we might expand and continue to legitimize conceptions of curriculum devised from philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism, theology as well as from feminist, queer, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, poststructuralist, “place” and critical perspectives, to name a few of what I have termed a riotous array of theoretical, ideological and methodological orientations that sprung initially, most directly and dramatically, I contend, from this conference and its journal.

But as many of us who have been involved in the founding and developing of Bergamo and *JCT* have noted, each of us who continues to or who more newly works in the contemporary field cannot and should not act in the manner of those particular late 1960s and early 1970s U.S. conditions and contexts in enacting current versions and in imaging future curriculum studies histories, both nationally and transnationally. Rather, I briefly return to Fredrick Jameson here and to his take on the concept of historicity: an allowing of a “perception of the present as history; that is, a relationship to the present which defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy, which is at length characterized as a historical perspective” (1991, p. 284).

I pause, then, in the spirit of allowing a “perception of the [near] present as history” in order to point to what I regard as a necessary relationship to the immediate present that permits that defamiliarization. I thus name here some of the scholars who consistently and persistently attended and presented their ideas, theories, passions in Bergamo—and *JCT*—identified contexts, especially in the early and mid-years of the conference and journal. I do so, not to in any way privilege those named, but first, to gesture toward some early as well as subsequent volatile, generative, or divisive juxtapositionings and/or alliances with which I am most familiar. I also point here toward some inter- and cross-generational compositions of various curriculum conceptions supported by these polite walls as well as by earlier academic fortresses that housed the pre-Bergamo conferences. I suggest these following as having contributed to both the initial and middle-range years of curriculum theorizings that have become identified with this conference and its journal, and I do so, finally, not only in support of Jameson’s (1991) call for defamiliarization that allows us distance from immediacy, but also as one means too of supporting Pinar’s (2008) contention that:

The “object” that...we do not have to chase but, in fact, can hold in our hands is the scholarship of those who have gone before us; the work of our predecessors. It is this scholarship that informs our own, including our obsession with what we cannot accomplish. What we curriculum scholars have in common is not the present; it is the past...That past

is no abstraction. Nor is it comprised of body parts; our predecessors are not “shoulders on which we are standing,” prosthetic props to our own narcissistic achievement. Our predecessors render our very presence possible; they provide the medium through which we articulate our educational experience and midwife experiences to come. Even when we do not quote them directly, they are imprinted in what we think, even what we imagine we have thought on our own, in what is wedded (we are sure) only to the present, that which is presumably unprecedented, yes original. But when we quote our predecessors we hear their words in ours. (p. 6)

Pinar is urging us, as curricularists, to study our intellectual history in order to advance our field. He refers of course not only to particular scholars/practitioners who founded and formed the earliest iterations of the U. S. curriculum field, such as Bobbitt, Charters, Caswell, Smith, Tyler, Schwab, for example, but also to expanded conceptions of those philosophers and theorists, such as Dewey, Arendt, Heidegger, Gadamer, Freud, Jung, Nietzsche, Habermas, Sartre, de Bouvier, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Kristeva, Derrida, Cixous, Butler, DuBois, and others whose work undergirded subsequent iterations of reconceptually inflected curricular conceptions.

I here contend that the following more contemporary scholars and their work must also be considered and studied, within and without the frames that Bergamo and *JCT* have provided during the past thirty-plus years of curriculum theorizing: James Macdonald, , Maxine Greene, Paul Klohr, Dwayne Huebner, Ted Aoki, Philip Jackson, Esther Zaret, Elliot Eisner, Bill Pinar, Bernice Wolfson, Madeleine Grumet, Michael Apple, Bill Doll, Jo Anne Pagano, Ron Padgham, Patti Lather, Henry Giroux, Peter Taubman, Liz Ellsworth, Peter McLaren, Bill Schubert, Tony Whitson, Deborah Britzman, Nel Noddings, Jesse Goodman, Terry Carson, Jim Sears, Craig Kridel, Jacques Daignault, Bill Ayers, Dennis Sumara, Alex Molnar, Paula Salvio, Landon Beyer, Paul Shaker, Patrick Slattery, Alan Block, Brent Davis, Jim Henderson, Mimi Orner, Leigh Chiarelott, Petra Munro, Magda Lewis, Leslie Bloom, Bill Reynolds, Mary Doll, Ann Berlak, Marla Morris. And so many more. Not all of these scholars identified themselves as directly associated with the early and mid-decades Bergamo conferences that housed or supported or extended and expanded ideas from the initial reconceptualization of curriculum studies. In fact, some of them outright rejected the stated intentions and varied approaches to such work.

But these and so many others were participants, at one time or another, in Bergamo and pre-Bergamo conferences and journal activities, and constituted a milieu of intellectual vibrancy that I maintain still should at least background current and fresh attempts to move the curriculum field in directions and forms that can challenge, critique and change current impositions of stifled, standardized, measurable forms of teaching, learning and conceptions of curriculum, for example.

Engaging with interpretations of the past of *JCT* and the Bergamo conference here, then, I hope to involve you in seeing past and present as related, and thus refusing to yield to the temptation to collapse them into each other. I hope to suggest in part that historical engagement is about far more here than reminding you of or writing a particular, albeit totally partial, academic “history.” It is a way of engaging with the past through which the present and possible futures can be seen in interrelated contexts and with diverse forms of social as well as subjective—and therefore contingent and fluid—rememberings. Such historical engagement, at the same time, then, is open to scrutiny, contestation and change but ultimately dependent on an ironic perception of the present as history; that is, a relationship to the present that defamiliarizes it and allows

us that distance from immediacy that sometimes blurs, confuses, conflates, condenses that to which we should be attending.

In a way, perhaps I indeed still am influenced by one interpretation of the Greek connotation of nostalgia: that is, as it evokes a range of bodily experiences to negotiate the past and as such allows the past a transactional role in the present and possible futures. At the same time, nostalgia can never be reduced to a final or unitary definition, because its meanings and modalities are culturally and historically variegated. Nostalgia is a contradictory phenomenon, then, being driven in part by utopian impulses—perhaps the desire for re-enchantment—as well as possible melancholic responses to disenchantment. What I am suggesting is that nostalgia also may be conceptualized here at Bergamo, at least for myself, as perhaps a sense of loss—particularly of individuals associated with the past—that coexists with a realization of the past in the present and possibly the future. I want to suggest and to emphasize present as well as forward-looking uses of the past, of the past as a set of resources for both the present and the future of curriculum theorizing as an integral part of curriculum studies, worldwide.

Can nostalgia for and with/in the future in relation to this conference and its journal be seen then *not* as a search or a longing for ontological security supposedly lodged in the past, but rather as a means of taking one's bearings for the journeys ahead in the uncertainties of the present and the future? Are there ways that I might posit "nostalgia" for any version of "the past" as embedded in and constitutive of the future, just as I recognize that the subjective and the social are embedded in and constitutive of one another? I look to such conceptualizations as perhaps enabling, for me, further developments of a notion of a curriculum collectivity without assumed or longed-for sameness—what I call a curriculum community without consensus (Miller, 2009b), for example. I have attempted to frame such possibilities by speaking of the field itself as always in-the-making (Miller, 2009a), as necessarily "worldly" (Miller, 2005b) and of ourselves—even as varied, complicated, and oppositional as our perspectives might be—as constantly implicated in those makings, as *never* able to assume that the work is completed, the field totally and completely re-envisioned, or ourselves forever changed.

But will you wonder, thirty years from now, about these questions and your/our work with and for conceptions and studies of curriculum that might enable leapings of a sort? All of this, thirty years from now, will have the same unconnectedness that you perhaps feel now to my rememberings here and to my descriptions of curriculum conferences in 1947 and 1967, for example. What might you wish to whisper of what it was to live and work in curriculum studies, in the United States as well as in perhaps international and transnational manifestations of such in 2009 and beyond? What delicate structure of related thoughts might you wish you could recall, what minute aspect of your reactions to this 30th anniversary of the Bergamo Conference might you hope to conjure, thirty years from now? What will *you* wish to whisper of what it was to live before?

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NOTES

1. Following Kridel's lead (1996), I refer to the "Bergamo Conference" rather than to its initially more official title of the "JCT Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice" or its various geographic locations over the years. As Kridel notes, the title "Bergamo" now represents "... all avant-garde curriculum theory conferences that have been held in the autumn since 1974. The term offers as much (and as little) clarity as such titles as 'Baroque' and 'Renaissance' offer their respective eras, and using a common term is easier than trying to distinguish Arlie, Bergamo, DuBose [Four Winds] or Banff Conferences" (1996, p. 41).

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