

Editor's Note

RETA UGENA WHITLOCK
Kennesaw State University

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—remembering.

(Janet Miller, Keynote Address, 30th Anniversary of Bergamo and *JCT*)

AS I WRITE this first introduction to *Literacies* since becoming section editor, only a few short months have passed since the 30th anniversary of the Bergamo Conference and founding of *JCT*. I begin the job—more than a little daunted at the thought of taking the reins from Mary Doll—as *JCT* heads into its next 30 years. Thus, I am reminded of Janet Miller's (2009) keynote address, "Nostalgia for the Future: Imagining Histories of *JCT* and the Bergamo Conferences," in which she considered "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." Miller's words resonate with me as section editor of this *particular* section, for if "literacy" or "literacies" are only considered in terms of past conceptualizations, then they are void of possibilities and imaginings, relegated instead to reading strategies and test performance. The future, then, moves no further than a rather bleak, standardized present.

Fitting that Miller "suggest and...emphasize present as well as forward-looking uses of the past," in a keynote that offers a useable, generative past for curriculum theory situated in the present and always, whether we always mean to or not, with an eye toward the future. An article of hers is the first I ever read in *JCT*. I was a doc student meeting on a Saturday for a working lunch with my dissertation advisor, Bill Pinar, who that day suggested I read poststructural feminist autobiographical curriculum theorist Janet L. Miller. "I've brought something for you," he said in that soft way he has, "but you'll promise to treat it gently? It is very precious." He handed me a loosely bound copy of *JCT* from 1981. Twenty-three years had taken its toll; the words even seemed to have begun to fade right off the pages, which were themselves yellow, worn, and frayed. "The Sound of Silence Breaking" pages showed the most use. They had been turned and re-turned; he had made illegible notes in the margins. And as I read Miller, I was also reading Pinar reading Miller. I was engaging with the text that was engaging with the text that was pivotal to reconceptualizing curriculum theory; it was engagement "as a locus of possibility"

Not a bad introduction to the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*. And one I remember now as I begin my work with *Literacies*.

I began teaching in 1987, before accountability and standardization, before we were aware we were leaving children behind, and before the heightened emphasis on “literacy” as we see it today. Literacy meant a kid could read and write—and I was all in favor of it. One did not want children to grow up to be illiterate adults, like the title character played by Johnny Cash in *The Pride of Jesse Hallum* (Nelson, 1981). Then came the 1990s, and everybody began to measure reading. It became apparent that there were more potential Jesse Hallums around than we had imagined. Literacy as a concept began to be considered, theorized, *as* a concept, through lenses like poststructuralism, and its meanings and boundaries broadened. It was re-formed, according to Mellor and Patterson (2004), to account for the subject.

This re-formation included shifts in emphases away from the individual reader's personal response to texts toward the idea of subject positioning through textual practices, a re-view of the concept of interpretation, a focus on the concept of multiple readings, a deconstruction of the opposition between high culture and popular culture and an embracing of the concepts of text, textuality and intertextuality. (p. 2–3)

The submission guidelines for the *Literacies* section rightly, I believe, resist defining literacy in terms that would only be familiar to those of us whose jobs are primarily as teacher educators or English teachers or, well, reading/literacy teachers. Rather, *JCT* allows spaces for “re-formations” of literacy that include not only linguistic knowledge and application—conventional conceptualizations of literacy we think of as being taught in classrooms—but also *literacies of the self* and *multiple literacies*, where literacy might be conceived of in terms of varied subject positionings and as a political act. For literacy, as Patrick Shannon (2001) tells us, is “Political, Too.” While it is very good for students to learn to read and write and be able to communicate; what if they, we, might also develop awareness of various contexts that surround us, make meanings from our selves with(in) those contexts, and learn to commune(icate) within our diverse and multiple communities. This is why *Literacies* is plural: to allow space for making unstable its increasingly fixed nature by suggesting its possibilities. To undermine the one-thing-ness it increasingly becomes as it is standardized and assessed. To allow for imaginings.

It is my hope that this section will continue to unpack literacies in their many iterations and from within the many contexts that have bearing upon it. The two articles in this issue exemplify the various ways we make meaning and then meaningfully engage in a world as self-with-others. In “Living Inquiry: Me, My Self, and Other,” Karen Meyer considers engagement with(in) the world as she discusses *Living Inquiry*, a course she developed, “for inquiry into our ‘worldliness’ that encompasses both how we *see* the world, given our prejudiced eyes, and phenomena we experience in daily life.” In research that compellingly integrates narrative, field notes, and reflection, Meyer identifies four themes that grounded the *Living Inquiry* curriculum for her and her students: *place, language, time, and self/other*. Noting that we as humans “lack a human culture that reveres difference,” she contemplates encounters between “self and self and oneself and other” through her and her students’ observations of “what it means to be self-as-human in the world at large.”

Engaging as self-in-the-world is also a theme in P.J. Nelsen’s “The World Traveling Self: Play as Context and Tool of Critical Literacy.” Nelsen challenges reading and literacy pedagogies that restrict and reject play and playfulness in favor of “serious” instructional practices.

Further, he posits play as a powerful tool of critical literacy by contextualizing it in Maria Lugones' (2003) anti-oppressive conceptualization of student as "world"-traveler while keeping it squarely located in schools and curriculum—and leaving spaces for possibilities. Nelsen notes the "community-joining experience" of reading, and writes,

...one of the aims of critical literacy is to make those rules [for sustaining participation] and practices visible and to help students engage with them in creative ways. It is here that we find an important parallel between reading and play; it has a rich potential for critical exploration.

Both Meyer and Nelsen capture something of what we hope to accomplish in the *Literacies* section, and fit within Miller's future-imaginings of the field "as always in-the-making," as necessarily "worldly" (Keynote, 2009).

And finally, as incoming section editor, I would like to say a word about my predecessor, Mary Aswell Doll. Mary served as *Literacies* section editor from 2000–2007. I discovered Mary's writing in graduate school, where my fellow doc student Brian Casemore and I poured through *Like Letters in Running Water: A Mythopoetics of Curriculum* (2000), wishing that we could craft our own thoughts into words as beautiful as hers. At the same time, we found her curriculum theorizing profound and the way she beckoned us along the journey entirely beguiling. Mary Doll's impact on *JCT* and *Literacies* is no less profound. It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility—and yes, sense of this journal's past-present-future impact on curriculum theory and curriculum studies—that I assume my duties and become part of the editorial team of *JCT*.

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