Entangling Relationalities and Differing Differences

Forty Years of Bergamo and *JCT* Curriculum Theorizings and Practices

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Insofar as we retain the capacity for attachment, the energy of desire that draws us toward the world and makes us want to live within it, we're always returning.

Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*

Whenever a story appears unified or whole, something must have been suppressed in order to sustain the appearance of unity.

Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments*

Inheritance and indebtedness are not only the substance of any particular *autobiographical story*, but these also go to the core of the ontology (or rather ethico-epistem-ontology) of agential realism: phenomena do not occur at some particular moment in time; phenomena are specific ongoing reconfigurings of spacetimemattering,...of co-existing multiplicities of *entangled relations* of past-present-future-here-there that...[generate] continual reopening and unsettling of what might yet be, of what was, and what comes to be.

Karen Barad, *Intra-Active Entanglements*

Iam both honored and truly delighted to join in celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, officially sponsored since 1979 by *JCT: The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*[1]

Having served from 1978 through 1998 as both the Managing Editor of *JCT* (founded in 1978) and as Director or Co-Director of the *Journal*'s sponsored annual Conference (founded in 1979), I take great joy in knowing that these both, since their foundings, have continued to prosper via myriad and substantial contributions to the field of curriculum studies, writ large. For multiple

decades, numbers of classroom teachers, curriculum supervisors and directors as well as curriculum studies academics have participated in what has been generally referred to as "the Bergamo Conferences." Concomitantly, myriad *JCT* publication submissions also have generated cutting-edge scholarship. All of these contributions have vigorously expanded *and* transmogrified varied points and modes of inquiry initiated by early versions of reconceptual thought.[2]

However, throughout four decades of work aimed toward contributing in multiple ways to both the U.S. and worldwide curriculum studies fields, I have been unable to offer any unitary, fully agreed upon, or glorified version of the "history" of *JCT* and its sponsorship of the "Bergamo" Conferences. Indeed, any and all of my varying and partial attempts to narrate "histories" of *JCT* and Bergamo are inflected and influenced by many others' recountings of this conference and its journal as well as by more current reviews of extensions of such work.[3]

Did all who participated in those early reconceptualizing years—as well as all that transpired during the initial and subsequent years of efforts toward reconceptualizing curriculum studies—address and intensely engage with all possible issues within the field, including those of exclusions, notable absences? Absolutely not. Strenuous disagreements, divergent ideological perspectives, disparate theoretical framings *as well as* gaps and silences in both participation and theorizings abounded.

I believe that it is vital to acknowledge the specific temporalities and contexts of those early efforts as well as omissions precipitated by a U.S. curriculum studies field both founded and predominantly occupied by white males until mid-20th century or so. I thus offer this 40th Anniversary Keynote as means to not only acknowledge but also continue to work toward inclusive, diverse, and multifarious proliferations of important curriculum theorizing and practices. Simultaneously, I also point to reconceptual work that *did* splinter some particular boundaries as well as forge potentialities for expansive participations in all manner of heretofore unthought curriculum conceptions and theorizings.

For, from my vested and fractional perspectives, reconceptual thought—although *not* directly addressing many of the issues and situated perspectives that occupy our attention today— *did* generate a number of re-imaginings and re-configurings. These addressed not only what heretofore had functioned primarily as technical-rational conceptions of "curriculum," but also what, for too long, had been its primarily closed, insulated, organizational configurations and workings. Indeed, prior to the Reconceptualization, "curriculum" as both conception and material entity (the textbook, the syllabus, teacher "guides") was pre-determined and operationalized by a select few who deemed what was to be considered and taught as "the" knowledge of most worth. Such iterations of "curriculum" quickly became literally closed, closed down, irrefutable. These sealed versions of curriculum and its field of study also were evident in terms of those who were deemed "appropriate" (mostly white men lodged in technical-rational modes of inquiry) to participate in the field and its conferences (including AERA's Division B, which in its formative years in the 1960s, was called "Curriculum Objectives"), or to hold faculty or administrative "curriculum" positions in schools, district offices, colleges, and universities.

Further, getting any scholarship published that employed modes of inquiry primarily associated with the humanities: literary criticism, philosophical perspectives emanating from critical theory, or phenomenology, or psychoanalytic theories, for example; or that incorporated all manner of performance; or that employed modes of ethnographically oriented research; or that addressed constructions as well as questions of subjectivity via autobiographical inquiries; or that—gasp!—employed theories generated by differing feminisms, for brief examples—*all* were

absent from the curriculum field and its studies from the time of its origins in the U.S. during the very earliest decades of the 20th century until the preluding years of the Reconceptualization.

Re-turnings

In this Keynote, I want to re-turn to "Bergamo" as both place and a series of ideas as well as one means of re-affirming my desires and capacities for attachment. I wish to honor this 40th Anniversary celebration by embracing these re-turnings as intra-acting, as a "multiplicity of processes" that refuse any single, fixed "story" of "Bergamo and *JCT*" and all that these particular names-concepts-places imply.

Therefore, I do *not* return in the sense of "reflecting on or going back to a past that *was*." Rather, I engage in re-turning as processes of turning over and over again my 40-plus years of association with this Conference and *Journal*—reiteratively intra-acting, as feminist theoretical physicist and humanities scholar Karen Barad (2014) would say,

> in the making of new temporalities…that *trouble* the very notion of dicho-tomy—cutting into two—as a singular act of absolute differentiation, fracturing this from that, now from then…. As such, there is no moving beyond, no leaving the 'old,' behind. There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then. There is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new. (p. 168)

My re-turnings too are similar to what feminist cultural geographer Sarah Whatmore (2006) describes as re-"turning seemingly familiar matters over and over, like the pebbles on a beach" (p. 601). Whatmore reminds me that oceanic flows and rhythms spew matter in multi-dimensional trajectories. Pebbles tumble, reshuffle, collide, polish—never settling into certainties of form or substance.

So, for me: Eva Hoffman's (1990) energies of desire that draw us toward the world, Sarah Whatmore's (2006) undulating pebbles, and Jane Flax's (1990) non-linear, non-unitary "stories" entangle with Karen Barad's (2014) images of reiterative re-turnings—that is, as those similar to how the earthworm aerates the soil. It is Barad who especially posits *aerating "scenes"* that clearly reject any presumptions of a linear process of "going back" as the only way to "re-turn." Instead, for Barad (2014), "re-turning" assumes no absolute separations of past from present; no moving beyond and leaving "the old" behind; no "reflecting on or going back to a past that was" (p. 168). For Barad, then, there is no "'turning away from' or 'moving beyond,'…[no] sense of getting on with it and leaving the past behind" (Barad, 2012, p. 12). Instead— "co-existing multiplicities of entangled relations of past-present-future-here-there that constitute…worldly phenomena" (Barad, 2010, p. 264).

In this 40th Anniversary year, I hence again have eagerly, apprehensively, embracingly, haltingly, journeyed to the Bergamo Center, "home" site for the Conference since 1983. I've re-turned, despite knowing that I'd again be encountering ghosts at every turn, glimpsing ephemeral wisps of "scenes"—of particular encounters, disparate stances, enthralling ideas, overwrought stand-offs, multiple connectings. I re-turn, via this Keynote, "going back" not to "a history" of Bergamo and *JCT*—but rather, only to a spectral past, with its never-at-rest scenes.

For indeed, curriculum conceptions, constructions, and theorizings—and the persons *and* lively as well as inert matter that generate such—never stand still or alone. I, therefore, take

curriculum, its varying definitions and theories, its worldwide field of study, its participants—which include students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and academics—and its "histories" *as tangles of relations* that generate "continual reopening[s] and unsettling[s] of what might yet be, of what was, and what comes to be" (Barad, 2014, p. 264). Such tanglings evidence both a "nonlinear, durational logic of differing…in constant transformation" (van der Tuin, 2015, p. xix) and the cutting-together-apart of past-present-future-here-there that shatter the very concept of an always steady, linear temporality. Such a temporality presumes an automatic progression that typically reinforces dominant assumptions of what counts as "development," as "improvement," as "better than," as "the new." Karen Barad (2012) has vigorously critiqued such automatic acceptance of "progress narratives" as supposedly requiring "supercessionary break[s] with the old" because of purportedly having "no debts and no past, a clean break of ideas" (p. 13).

On this 40th Anniversary occasion, I thus will continue to speak of "the multiple histories" of what has become known colloquially as "*JCT* and its Bergamo Conference." I interpret these histories as tangles of relations that prevent any "leaving behind," or turning away from, matters of inheritance and indebtedness in any configurings and reconfigurings of present, past, and futures of the curriculum field. Simultaneously, these entanglings also enable "ongoing openness of [any] narrative to future re-tellings,… [an openness that gestures toward] an inheriting [of] the future as well as the past" (Barad, 2012, p. 11). This kind of openness to future re-tellings of any narrative includes, of course, the ones named "Bergamo" and *JCT* and their myriad incantations, critiques, disagreements, resistances, rejections, performances, coalescences, bifurcations—all of these very unsettlings and reopenings intra-acting and proliferating fresh theorizings.

Again and again and again, Barad indeed urges us to conceptualize particular aerating and re-turning "scenes"—"re-tellings"—in order that we might re-vision these as scenes that never rest, as scenes/phenomena that simultaneously diffract various temporalities and tangles of relations that generate "continual reopening[s] and unsettling[s] of what might yet be, of what was, and what comes to be" (Barad, 2010, p. 264). Consider these "scenes" as ghostly, intra-acting re-turnings, whereby, I work to push against any assumed genesis of "meanings" and "happenings" of Bergamo and *JCT*. I do so in order to explore other ways of thinking that may enable the consideration of both matter and discourse in their intra-active inseparability—those *entangled relations* of past-present-future-here-there—and their undividable enacting practices.

So—in the manner of Barad, I conjure two such "scenes," fleeting re-turning glimpses of my particular versions of "what might yet (have) been:"

Scene 1

TimeSpace Coordinates/Phenomena: <u>Spring, 1973, University of Rochester, NY</u>—by way of Ralph Tyler's 1949 book, *Basic Principles of Curriculum & Instruction*, derived from his University of Chicago course syllabus—diffracted via the 1960s and early 1970s U.S. Women's, Black Panthers, and Civil Rights Movements; the protests against the Viet Nam war; the fall of Saigon *and* of Nixon; flower children; Janis Joplin's version of Big Mama Thornton's "Ball and Chain;" consciousness-raising groups; intra-cutting the first curriculum theory conference in the U.S., entitled "Toward Improved Curriculum Theory," chaired by Virgil Herrick and Ralph Tyler, and held at University of Chicago in 1947; and diffracted via James Macdonald's 1971 publication, "Curriculum Theory."

I hug a back wall, staking out a spot just inches from the conference ballroom doors, ready to bolt if I'm finally done in by the next presenter's ideas. In this afternoon conference session, James Macdonald and Dwayne Huebner have presented their conference papers, but as a fairly beginning Master's student, I'm still fuzzy about what might comprise what Macdonald argued for as a "transcendental developmental ideology of education." And all I can connect to Huebner's desire for remaking curricular language are my own wishes for re-forming some of the behavioral oriented language that had been infiltrating my seven years of teaching English to high school juniors and seniors. I've listened to the parade of speakers thus far, and as far as I can tell, they generally agree only on one issue: the urgent need to expand not only the limited conception of "curriculum" as "the content, the course syllabus," but also the still dominant managerial and generally prescriptive nature of the curriculum field and its work. Most supplemented this one agreement with the contention that such hoped-for expansive work must include philosophical analyses and theorizing as integral components of this effort toward reconceptualizing the curriculum field and its work.

In support of this one agreed upon desire, various presenters have taken up issues of meaning, language, temporality, and the self, thus arguing for political, cultural, and personal analyses of these as aspects of curriculum. I've listened as some argued that such analyses could serve as compelling reexaminations of relationships among the school, curriculum, and society. But I've heard others posit a dichotomous choice—either the political or the personal was the orientation with which to engage in such reexaminations. I was happy to hear "the school" and its inhabitants as included in all of this…but I was unsure of the rest. Weren't there ways to engage in concurrent studies of "the self" who experiences and understands curriculum from "personal" perspectives and experiences as well as from historically, socio-culturally, and politically situated perspectives? From my high school English-teacher perspective, everything involved in educating pretty much seemed always both political and personal.

I slump against the wall, weary from my attempts to understand. I slide a half-step toward the door as Maxine Greene approaches the room's center. I've read a sliver of her work during the first semester of my Master's work here, as suggested by my advisor, William Pinar. Gripping the podium, dressed in her New York black, Greene sways slightly as she speaks, her gaze most often fixed on the ceiling, seemingly as means of divining her existential phenomenological stances on her paper's topic, "Cognition, Consciousness, and Curriculum." Perplexed, provoked, intrigued—I momentarily abandon my urge to exit this conference, entitled "Heightened Consciousness, Cultural Revolution, and Curriculum Theory" by its organizer Bill Pinar. I stay in spite of my still-engulfing bewilderment.

Scene 2

Past-present-future-here-there TimeSpace Coordinates/Phenomena: Autumn, 1979, Airlie Conference Center, Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C.—intra-cut with Frederick Taylor's scientific management; Paul Klohr's chairing of a conference entitled "Curriculum Theory Frontiers" at The Ohio State University, marking the 20th anniversary of the 1947 Chicago conference; diffracted through Franklin Bobbitt's 1918 book on behavioral objectives; via the 1965 Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development's commission meeting on curriculum theory, and the Tanners' (1979) scorchings of any and all parts of the Reconceptualization.

I'm fixating on the glory of some Virginia countryside tree branches that gently wave into new kaleidoscopes of color with every slight breeze. As conference-goers slowly gather in this small ballroom, I'm hoping that the refracted glow of autumn leaves framing these windows will calm my escalating fidgeting. This assembling marks our first official <u>JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing</u>-sponsored conference—Bill Pinar, as Editor, and I, as Managing Editor of this fledging journal, established just the previous year, with Paul Klohr. Paul has served first as Bill's and then, later, my mentor and Dissertation Chairs for our doctoral work at The Ohio State University, and we three believe that our new publishing venue and its actual sponsorship of an annual meeting could provide consistent contexts for the growing and varied work focused on the reconceptualizing of curriculum conceptions, studies, and practices in the U.S.

In the "introduction" to the <u>Journal</u>, Bill had articulated <u>JCT</u>'s two-fold purpose: 1) to provide an open forum for all those engaged in all aspects of curriculum writ large to explore various cultural, political, and psychological dimensions of the field; and 2) to acknowledge the variety of perspectives that characterize these various dimensions by printing criticism of such work.

But we aren't sure about any of this, including the viability of keeping both a conference and an academic journal alive and growing.

I take refuge behind the large main ballroom podium at the Airlie Conference Center; this is the site that Bill had found in our search for a suitable conference location and for which I had to secure Greyhound buses to cart people from the Dulles Airport outside Washington, D.C. to this professional conference context. I glance side-ways at crimson and yellow leaves as antidote to my squirmy paper shuffling. I need to officially convene our conference and also to announce the various rooms assigned for each of the concurrent sessions during this first day of our conference. We had no resources to print out the conference program, and so, for each morning and afternoon conference segment, I will have to announce presenters' room assignments—that is, until we can locate some chart paper, magic markers, and tape so that we can jot down and then post the speakers' schedule and room designations on this room's walls.

I drum my fingers against the podium's sides. The leaves are not helping. I've attended, since 1973, all the yearly conferences devoted to reconceptualizing a U.S. curriculum field, which included those located at Xavier University in Cincinnati in 1974; the University of Virginia in 1975; in 1976 at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; 1977 at Kent State University; and in 1978, we held 2 conferences, one at Georgia State University and another at Rochester Institute of Technology.

I loosen my grip on my notes as I realize that I do recognize a substantial portion of those now meandering into the room. I assume that most wouldn't be here unless they were at least intrigued by, if not committed to, both elaborating and greatly complicating the reconceptualization. But I also already knew that some of the very efforts toward reconceptualization already were really contentious, filled with tensions generated by the artificially delineating binary of "the political and the personal" and by some who posited these as "separate" from one another, arguing for their chosen perspective as "the most needed" for reconceptualizing to continue.

But I can't think about this now. Responding to a quieting of rippling conversations, I remember that we're not at ALL sure about any of this—I fixate for a second on a crimson tree branch, take a breath, and begin my welcome and explanatory remarks.

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Re-iterating: these modest smatters of aerating "scenes" are cuttingtogetheraparts of spacetimematterings in Baradian terms. Barad conceptualizes "scenes" of such reconfigurings as those that never rest, scenes/phenomena that simultaneously diffract various temporalities. Barad theorizes these as "hauntalogical multiplicities," as ghostly disruptions of continuity—as *relations of inheritance* intra-cut with questions of dis/continuities and indeterminacies. These hauntological multiplicities generate "continual reopening[s] and unsettling[s] of what might yet be, of what was, and what comes to be" (Barad, 2010, p. 264). And these reopenings and unsettlings are constantly generating what Barad (2010), in her workings to establish an ethical dimension to her theorizing, extrapolates as "irreducible relations of responsibility" (p. 265) to those relations of inheritance and indebtedness:

> To address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the noncontemporaneity of the present, to put oneself at risk, to risk oneself (which is never one or self), to open oneself up to indeterminacy in moving towards what is to-come. (Barad, 2010, p. 264)

I constantly have to work to put my selves at risk, to be responsible, to open myself up to indeterminacies and the oftentimes contradictory perspectives these generate. For example, shavings from one of my aerating scenes *do* situate a linearity as undergirding the "Bergamo Conference 40th Anniversary celebration"—at least in terms of geographic contingences as well as within the confines of temporal conceptions of time that especially characterize predominantly Western narratives. This is the time with which many humans—but certainly not all—are most familiar: time expressed grammatically in the form of tenses—past, present, future—that assume "continuity and unidirectionality of causality from past to present" (Scott, 2011, p. 42).

And yet, such assumptions are extremely difficult to side-step, especially as we here celebrate via a chronological notion of a 40th Anniversary! So—in what follows here, I'll immediately and ironically fall into some brief linear interpretations of various "histories" while simultaneously working to interrupt the linearity, the singularity. Throughout, I'll attempt to practice the ethics of what Barad (2007) suggests: <u>that is, accounting for our parts of the entangled webs that we all weave.</u>

Accountings

My "Scene # 2" identifies that 1979 Airlie Center conference to which I've referred as the one that marks the inauguration of *JCT* as providing consistent sponsorship of those curriculum theory conferences that had heretofore been hosted by particular conference attenders' universities. *This* is the actual Conference that our 40th Anniversary celebration commemorates.

That initial *JCT*-sponsored 1979 curriculum theorizing conference served as a sort of official declaration of reconceptual thought as not just "emerging," but rather as an enlarging movement within the U.S. curriculum studies field. Meeting our signed contractual agreement with The Airlie Conference Center, we returned there in the autumns of 1980 through 1982. However,

even in our first year there, we quickly agreed to launch a search for a new site, not only because of what, for quite a few, were ideological conflicts posed by meeting alongside a large contingent of the CIA, but more profoundly, because of Airlie's history as a plantation that had housed myriad slave quarters, some of which had been turned into conference-goers' rooms.

Thus, the first time our conference actually was held *at* the Bergamo Conference Center was in 1983. This Bergamo Center had been suggested to Bill by Joseph Watrus, a faculty member here at The University of Dayton and an organizer, for years, of our Saturday evening programs populated by various local as well as University-affiliated orchestral, choir, and dance performers.

But even in some years following the first Bergamo Center-held conference in 1983, there were interruptions to our continuous Fall conference Bergamo location, in part because of necessary construction efforts on the Bergamo site. Thus, from 1995 through 1998, we met for two years at the DuBose Conference Center in Monteagle, Tennessee, and then another two years at Four Winds Conference Center, just outside Bloomington, Indiana. In 1994, we held the conference in Banff, Canada, in supportive recognition of the growing number of Canadian curriculum scholars who were attending our conference and sustaining *JCT* as well.

A note, then, about the pervasive identifier "Bergamo:" one reason for this naming condensation as well as now wide-spread recognition of this conference as the "Bergamo" was provided by Craig Kridel, who, as inaugurating Editor of a then-section of *JCT* called "Hermeneutical Portraits," noted:

> After considerable discussion on the matter of an appropriate "working title" for the *JCT* Conference on Curriculum Theorizing and Classroom Practice, I have decided to use the term "Bergamo" to represent 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 the Airlie, Bergamo, DuBose, Four Winds, or Banff conferences. (Kridel, 1996, p. 4)

For almost 50 temporally configured years, then, I have "lived" in close relation with the multifarious scholarship and organizational proliferations generated by those of us initially associated with the U.S. curriculum field's efforts toward reconceptualization. And many curricularists, both aligned—or not—with reconceptualizing efforts, have spawned myriad and vital permutations, critiques, extensions, and creations of curriculum conceptions, theorizings, and enactments. The "Bergamo Conference," in fact, supported new creations of some relatively recent organizations. For example, the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS), its U.S. affiliate, the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (AAACS), as well as numerous other affiliates around the globe were founded in the early 2000s as focused responses to the forces of global contingencies and urgencies that demand worldwide but not uniform fields of curriculum studies. As the elected inaugural President of AAACS, I attempted to elaborate my situated perspectives on "the necessary worldliness of curriculum studies" (Miller, 2005a). Overarchingly, the primary goal for all of these internationalizing endeavors remains, as Bill Pinar (2013) described, "ethical engagement with alterity, accenting the concept of 'understanding' [curriculum] with history, activism, and the forefronting of difference" (p. 12).

But here, I of course do not have the "time," so to speak, to track all that has transpired during these many pasts-futures-presents of "Bergamo-related" curriculum theorizing—nor could

I *ever* possibly do so. Re-membering Barad: "Since there is no origin in this story, and no fixed narrative as such," (Barad, 2012, p. 11), my detailings here are not any perfect-memory-telling of a past that is present. Rather, because of my lack of subjective unity and clarity, I want to position my "re-turnings" as primarily serving to highlight my inheritance and indebtedness, not only to the intra-acting future-past-present-here-theres of curriculum studies and its variegated "histories," but also to persons with whom I've studied, organized, and worked alongside for decades.

As well, my contingent and multiply partial "Bergamo stories" stress co-existing multiplicities of *entangled relations* of the U.S. and worldwide curriculum field, and in particular, of the Bergamo Conference and *JCT* and all of its myriad participants and contributors. These of course entwine with "histories" of education in the United States, histories of co-existing multiplicities of *entangled relations* of past-present-future-here-there.

Past-Present-Future-Here-There Entanglings

Indeed, efforts toward reconceptualizing included work to expand, extend, and complexify a U.S. curriculum field that, from its beginnings in the early decades of the 20th century, had prioritized procedurally oriented practices. Many thus endeavored to broaden those chief assumptions about curriculum, the field, and its work as primarily those of designating, designing, and developing of subject matter content that teachers then would implement within their K-12 classroom contexts. Within those prevailing assumptions, the "curriculum"—the course of study, the syllabus—was conceptualized as requiring determinations of learning objectives, of appropriate learning experiences, and of assessments of students' learnings of such.

By the mid-1960s, a portion of curriculum scholars *were* questioning what they perceived as limiting aspects of a firmly entrenched view of the U.S. curriculum studies field that chiefly concentrated on the determining and organizing of subject matter as well as the evaluation of students' learnings of such. Adding to these general concerns, further influential phenomena inspiring reconceptual thought included 1960s wide-spread social and cultural upheavals. Calls abounded for actions to end the war, for guaranteeing all persons' equal rights as well as respect for multiple iterations of difference, and for concerted attention to all students' situated perspectives, needs, and educational aspirations.

Further, critiques in the 1960s and 70s were generated by those who bemoaned the a-historical and a-theoretical nature of the U.S. curriculum field, leading to declarations of the field as moribund (Huebner, 1976; Schwab, 1970). Such stances emphasized, in particular, concerns that the a-historical and a-theoretical character of traditional curriculum development disabled teachers, in particular, from understanding the histories of their present circumstances (Kliebard, 1986).

Thus inspired—although never fully abandoning those long-held assumptions and conceptions that held sway as the primary work of and within the curriculum studies field—those engaged in varied modes and emphases of reconceptual thought worked to generate an interdisciplinary academic field that could embrace expanded views of curriculum as both of and beyond schooling, per se. By the mid-1980s and beyond, reconceptual thought and its importance to the field were acknowledged by many, but certainly not all, as generating influential inter- and cross-textual studies that especially incorporate historically and philosophically informed perspectives and analyses (Schubert, 1986; Short, 1991).

The 1973 University of Rochester Curriculum Conference participants, as well as those who contributed to the curriculum theorizing conferences through the remainder of the 1970s and beyond, indeed did offer philosophically and historically framed analyses. For example, existential phenomenological, critical theory-oriented, and psychoanalytic perspectives were posited as possible modes of expanding and extending curriculum theorizing as vital work within the curriculum field and its studies. There was particular attention to expose the always circulating workings of power as well as to theorize other spaces of self/knowledge that shattered a singular reflection of "the same." Thus, although both the 1947 and 1967 curriculum theory conferences had variously addressed social needs orientations, reconceptually oriented conference presenters specifically attended to theorizing in ways that James Macdonald (1971) suggested—that is, theorizing that intertwined the social, the cultural, the historical, and the personal.

Within this version—this temporally, chronologically ordered "story/history" of curriculum reconceptualizing efforts—it was during the early 1970s that I entered into a U.S. curriculum field that, from its inception, obviously had been and was white male-dominated. But, early in my doctoral studies, I was inspired by women who had worked and yet were not widely recognized in the curriculum field, including Alice Miel, Laura Zerbes, and Hilda Taba. I thus very quickly began my studies of various feminisms and their differing theoretical orientations, especially too encouraged by then-contemporary women curriculum theorists, including Louise Berman, Esther Zaret, and Bernice Wolfson, as well as by philosopher of education, Maxine Greene. Maxine did participate in several of the curriculum theorizing conferences prior to that held at the Airlie Conference Center; she was hugely influential in formative versions of reconceptualizing efforts but always refused to be cited as "part of" the Reconceptualization.

Both during and beyond those early 1970s and 1980s reconceptual years, I worked alongside many others in generating varying iterations of feminist curriculum inquiries, which quickly were becoming influential strands of reconceptual thought. Much of this voluminous scholarship focused on the work of reclamation and critique. These efforts included attention to women's inequalities in educational access; to theorizing ideologies of domesticity and their relations to the feminization of teaching; to histories of women contributing in myriad ways to educative projects; and to power circulations and discourses that framed and constructed pervasive assumptions about conceptions of "gender" as well as of "curriculum."[4]

Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, curriculum theorizing in relation to curriculum as gendered text continued to encompass as well as greatly expand via critical, queer, and poststructurally inflected critiques that grappled with the category, "Woman." But in these most recent years, all identity categories have been significantly complexified via entanglings of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality, indigeneity, sexual orientation, and effects of colonialisms and imperialisms, including forced migration, unemployment, homelessness, occupation, and conquest. The category "Woman," for example, now is postulated as wildly differentiated, nonunitary, a Braidotti-inflected (2019) situated, embodied, and simultaneously nomadic posthuman, a multiple entity, functioning in nets of intra-connectedness, a socially and culturally differentiated subject—what Judith Butler (1992) describes as an "undesignatable field of differences," wherein the very terms "woman" and "human," for brief examples, become "sites of permanent openness and resignifiability" (p. 160).

By extension: in terms of "identity categories" and "namings" in general, it's obviously been impossible to posit any single or unitary version of "reconceptual thought"—neither throughout early varieties, nor in any and all extensions, elaborations, modifications, reverberations, and critiques generated since those 1970s' initial efforts. Instead, reconceptual

thought, per se, initially and into and beyond the early 2000s, typically signaled multi-discursively, socially, culturally, materially situated academic efforts to understand curriculum as "texts" that may be read from a variety of diverse and perspectives—rather than from one disembodied and transcendent "conquering gaze from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988, p. 581).

These "curriculum texts" included not only gender, but also historical, political, racial, autobiographical, biographical, aesthetic, theological, institutional, and international-inflected texts as well as analyses and interpretations informed by phenomenological, critical theory, and poststructural perspectives and discourses, for example (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman 1995). Tendrils springing from these thus continue to curl through current and often vastly expanded "texts" that further are complicated by intertextual, transdisciplinary, and hybridized foci as well as philosophical arenas of inquiry.

Thus, in more recent years, unique and widely expansive, discursive, *and* material intra-actings of these also involve curriculum scholars' sustained attentions. Curriculum theorizing now includes intense examinations of historical and current influences on our thinking and being in relation to all lively as well as inert matter and to future possibilities for extensions of our curriculum theorizing conceptualizations and practices. Contemporary iterations of such include curriculum theorizing informed by critiques, interrogations, and concerted actions to challenge and change historical legacies in education as a colonizing and dehumanizing project, for example. These include interrogations of complicities in hegemonic systems as well as assumed epistemic and ontological privileges.

Concomitantly, then, curriculum scholars work from perspectives situated via critical race theories, indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and theories of change, black curriculum orientations, eco-curricular studies, "new" materialisms, affect theories, the posthuman, non-human, in-human, a-human, multiplicities of feminisms, including critical race feminism, and transgendered, pansexual, queer, nonbinary, transsexual, and genderqueer studies, for very brief and limited examples.

Simultaneously, contemporary curriculum studies participants continue to complicate the conversations that constitute the field, both in the U.S. and now worldwide. These conversations of course must address current issues affecting the daily lives and practices of all students, teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and curriculum specialists, especially given the continuing emphasis on audit culture practices that support codified, replicated, tested, and measured versions of educational accountability (Taubman, 2009). Curriculum studies' participants continue to engage in and with intensive examinations of these current neo-liberal versions of what and who "counts" in education.

All of these vital interjections, extensions, critical assessments, and intra-actings continue to inspire me. But more importantly, these current iterations of curriculum theorizing *are* advancing the field of curriculum studies. This vibrant and always morphing field furthers works to enliven, inform, challenge, and expand conceptions and enactments of curriculum and its studies as complicated conversations (Pinar, 2012) that are multiply situated, felt, and referenced in order to take into consideration influences of history, of philosophically informed perspectives, and of past, future, present potentialities for all.

Ethical Entanglings

These theorizings, I believe, in particular point to ethics of relationalities that emphasize responsibilities to entanglings that can encourage the broadening and deepening of our curriculum theorizings and interrogations, especially in relation to all events, contexts, and acts that suppress, oppress, or impose both normative and literal violences against any and all deemed "Other." Such openness to "co-existing multiplicities of *entangled relations* of past-present-future-here-there that…generate continual reopening[s] and unsettling[s] of what might yet be, of what was, and what comes to be" (Barad, 2010, p. 264) can expansively conduct vital examinations across worldwide geo-political contexts and situations, of ecological, economic, diasporic, refugee, and myriad other social and cultural iterations of difference, conflict, and crises, including the dangerous lure of social forms that promise totalities of any sort.

Indeed, I see the curriculum studies field as now necessarily engaged in examinations of volatile, unpredictable, and relentless upheavals and challenges to embodied conditions and contexts. Simultaneously, we must contend with indeterminacies accompanying a lively, agential, and more-than-human network of relationality (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018), incessantly reconfiguring the field's entanglements as "complicated and complicating conversations" in the constant becomings of a worldwide but never analogous curriculum field.

In such a field, curriculum pulses as complex embodied intra-actions among myriad fluctuations and particularities, simultaneously contracting, loosening, ripping, interlacing, flickering into new semblances, evaporating, and re-forming. For me, these intensities intra-act with my long-time commitments to and involvements of working with a concept of "curriculum communities without consensus" (Miller, forthcoming, a) that constantly spin thought and body, abstract and concrete, local and global, individual and collective, national and international, self and other, human and non-human, community and exile as "hauntalogical multiplicities"—those ghostly disruptions of continuity—as relations of inheritance intra-cut with questions of dis/continuities and indeterminacies. *These* are the co-existing multiplicities and indeterminacies that demand, as Barad (2010) reminds us, "irreducible relations of responsibility" (p. 265).

So, this Keynote: my contingent, viscerally impelled, non-linear, non-transparent, non-unitarily autobiographically inflected "scenes" of past-future-present-there-here swirlings and re-turnings have offered obviously imperfect, disjointed, multiple, and perhaps disrupting versions of this Conference and *Journal* and its 40th Anniversary celebrating. NO originary "meanings" or fixed boundaries here.

Rather, I gesture toward Bergamo and *JCT*'s dis/continuities *and* multiplicities of relationalities and what I hope have been and will continue to be those attendant "irreducible relations of responsibility," especially to open-ended affirmations of difference. What I want to assert—with no certainties, of course—are my wishes for ongoing re-imaginings and re-configurings of Bergamo and *JCT* that entangle past-future-present transforming versions of both inheritance *and* responsibility to curriculum theorizings and practices *as* relational thinkings and beings with alterity.

Indeed, this Keynote Lecture is dedicated to those who, throughout 40-plus years, have initiated, sustained, vitally enhanced, complexified, diversified, and enlivened *JCT* and the "Bergamo" Conference.

Thanks to All. Such a wonderful 40th Anniversary gift this is, has been, will be!

Notes

1. I offer many thanks to Tom Poetter, Editor of *JCT* and President of the Foundation of Curriculum Theory, and Associate Editors, Denise Taliaferro Baszile and Brian Schultz, for the invitation to serve as a Keynote presenter during the 40th Anniversary Bergamo Conference gathering. As well, I wish to recognize and thank Belinda Flick, Kelly Waldrop, and Cynthia Sanders for their support in bringing this Keynote to presentation fruition.
2. See Miller, J. L. (forthcoming, c). Reconceptual thought. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Education.*
3. See, for example: Miller, 2005a; "Prelude" and Chapters 1, 9, 13, and 16 in Miller, 2005b; Miller, 2010; and Miller, forthcoming a, b, and c; Pinar, 1974, 1975, 1988, 1999, 2004, 2007, 2012, and 2013. For surveys of recent expansions of reconceptual thought, see Malewski, 2010; Morris, 2016; Schubert, Lopez Schubert, Thomas, and Carroll, 2002.
4. For "early" iterations of feminist curriculum theorizing, see, for abbreviated example: Ellsworth, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Lather, 1991; Miller, 1979, 1983, 1990; Munro (Hendry), 1994; and Pagano, 1990.

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Topographies of Disruption
Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogies Beyond the Binary

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Whose Closet Is It, Anyway?
Pedagogies of Silence in the 21ˢ Century Classroom

The gay closet is not a feature only of the lives of gay people. But for many gay people it is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit, however fortunate in the support of their immediate communities, in whose lives the closet is not still a shaping presence.

<div align="right">

Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990, p. 68)

</div>

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse…than an element that functions alongside the things said…. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

<div align="right">

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1978, p. 27)

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"BULLARD, I GOT A QUESTION FOR YOU."
The flattening of my married name, long split from its title, pelted me from behind like it did a thousand times a day in the 7th grade classroom where I spent my days (and many evenings). *Bullard.* The only of their female teachers they addressed without a title, as they did with their male teachers—Hartman, Selznick. I'd always written my name with *Ms.* in front, dodging their questions of "Why no Mrs.?" and "Aren't you married?" with the answer that I simply didn't like the sound of "Mrs." I should have known then, shouldn't I? I was never at home as a *"Mrs."*

"What's up?" I turned my face to Grace Plott[1] while I continued to pick up the papers that had missed the bin, erase the board, dab at the coffee stain on my shirt sleeve, keep an eye on the kid who'd slumped into class and closed his eyes at his desk—the between-class teacher dance. You may know it well.

"So some of us been wonderin," Grace began, the Tennessee country in her voice and a smirk playing at her lips, which I knew meant nothing good could follow. At five feet, nine inches tall, 13-year-old Grace stood nearly at eye level with me, and as I turned to look at her directly, she shoved her wildly gesticulating hands into the front pocket of the same oversized hoodie she wore every day. Grace was the sort of girl who got embarrassed in makeup, who hated wearing her hair down as her mother demanded she do for church and performances at school. One time, a friend of hers had snuck a picture of Grace, in makeup and a boxy dress with her hair neatly combed, at a school event and put it on Snapchat. Grace found her the next day at school before the first bell had even rung, easily wrested her phone out of her hands, and crunched it under her sneaker on the linoleum floor. I was glad to be on Grace's good side; she shut out other teachers and intimidated her peers, but even when I got onto her, there remained a lightness and trust in our relationship. She played a tough front and had begged me not to tell anyone she cried when I confronted her privately for cheating. But now, as students leaked into the classroom, she was uncharacteristically awkward. She smiled at her friends who stood perched at the door, watching.

"As much as I'm enjoying whatever this is, Plott, I've got to…" I began.

"Bullard, are you, like, *gay* or somethin'?" she spat, her face reddening from her neck up to the hairline of her disheveled ponytail. Her nerves spilled out in too-breathy laughter, and I joined her, turning away toward my desk so she didn't see the mirrored flush in my own cheeks. The increasingly familiar rush of cold spread across my limbs as I pantomimed fetching papers from my desk, taking a sip of now-freezing coffee. *Quick, Liz.*

"What is it, the pants?" I asked, carefully playing our roles with one another—snarky student, snarky teacher. She laughed, glancing nervously back at her friends at the door who had assigned her this quest.

"Well I mean, like, yeah, why don't you ever wear a dress or nothin'?" She coughed through laughter while she watched me with serious eyes.

"I could ask you the same thing, Plott. You wear the same hoodie every day, and you don't hear me critiquing *your* fashion choices."

"*Ohhh!*" the girls at the door betrayed their friend with their own laughter now as Plott rolled her eyes, the bell rang, and I finally looked at her again, levelly: "You're late."

———

I spoke about the between-class teacher dance, the paper collecting, the classroom reset, the haphazard attempt to assert control over the chaos—but what about this one? What about this dance, on this Tuesday, between Grace and me? Grace and I were playing a game that I now see all over the blueprint of my four years at this school—looking at one another slant, a queerness in between us, a question that's not allowed. A question that seems to ask: *Do you see what's here? In the in between of what I'm saying? In between the question I'm asking and the answer you're allowed to give?* The game was there with every student who shuffled their way to my desk, asking for a book recommendation, looking anywhere but at me, knowing what I would include in the stack. The game was there every time I said, "This book is about a girl who's figuring out who she is and how she feels about people," as the church girl in the back of the room sat up almost

imperceptibly taller to catch the title. The game was there in the grade level meeting when our principal told us a boy, who I knew to have been hiding a relationship with another boy at school, had been pulled out of school and sent to "a center for faith-building and recovery" that his parents felt he needed for "behavioral issues." We all knew the words we weren't saying and what we were saying by not saying them.

The absence of language did not mean, of course, the absence of queer discourse(s), queer existence(s), queer creative acts, and even literacies of queerness, surviving, and, occasionally, flourishing in the margins of this thing we call "school." bell hooks (1989) told us that the margin is

> the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance…a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (p. 149-50)

Where are the margins within our school buildings where possibility glimmers out at us, if looked at slant? Where are the queer moments in school where a marginalized but (*and?*) nevertheless potent radical possibility disrupts the "givens" of school life? Can classrooms be marginal spaces? How might we teach queer(ly) in order to intentionally utilize the marginal as the "site of radical possibility" that hooks describes?

When Grace Plott challenged me that day on a dare from her friends, she saw her teacher— an adult, one hopefully with answers, in control, and in command. And perhaps I'd felt that way a moment prior to her question, maybe sometime during my lesson on comma usage that morning, but as I revisit this memory, I see myself as a still astonishingly young person, raised a girl, raised Catholic in the Bible Belt South, who, for the first time, was seeing all the invisible lines that had directed her life beginning to materialize in the air around her. Grace had begun to sense the restricting lines, too, much younger than I had, and it was along these lines that we knew instinctively to dance, never letting ourselves fully question what lay outside them, never wondering why we followed them, never actually answering the silent "What if?" in both of our eyes. But what if the classroom became the site of *what if*? What happens when we linger on the *what if*? What happens—to school, to language—when we begin to make visible the grid lines of ideology within which we all inevitably rest? What does it mean to notice pedagogies of silence— those hardened, inflexible, repeated routes—so that something else might begin to rupture forth instead?

"What If?" as Rupture
Pedagogies of Disruption

> To give a problem a name can change not only how we register an event but whether we register an event…. When we give problems names, we can become a problem for those who do not want to talk about a problem even though they know there is a problem. You can cause a problem by not letting things recede.
>
> Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (2017, p. 34)

Confrontation was never my strong suit. I'll blame it on the Catholicism or the being raised girl or the carefully measured and narrow acceptable forms of "Southern professional woman" or

any other social machination that taught me being a good girl meant keeping my mouth shut. As a little girl, I felt indebtedness to God, and as a 27 year old teacher, I felt indebtedness to a social order that I was only beginning to understand as being very like that thing I was taught to call "God" as a child in Bible school. Like generations of women before me, I'd learned all the other ways to say "No" without actually saying it, so as to preserve the happiness of others. And as a young teacher in my mid-twenties, I began to learn all the ways to resist without declaring much of anything at all but by asking questions instead, by *holding* a moment—by not letting things recede. And in the recess of memory comes another that, importantly, won't recede.

Andrew Hackworth sat across from me, his giggles echoing in the clinical, sparse room occupied by the school's Gifted coordinator who apparently found wall décor to be a disruption (pause for irony) to learning. Andrew had just finished telling me a story from his lunch table conversation that day, wherein Patel, an otherwise shy, quiet, and brilliant fellow 7th grader, had schooled the popular girl (remember Grace Plott?) who'd come over to insult his "gross-smelling Chinese lunch" (Patel is Indian). There were bright pink splotches high in Andrew's cheeks as he told the story, his shoulders loose and shaking as we laughed and as I hurriedly ate the remnants of my own cold lunch. As he told me the story, Andrew's nail-bitten hands danced in large gestures, and the staple yellow and grey flannel he wore flowed behind his large movements. "I don't know what she was thinking, coming up to you boys' table in the first place," I said, shaking my head. "She should've known she was out of her league." Andrew's eyes were sparkling as the doorknob to the classroom turned and everything changed.

The Gifted coordinator entered the room, mid-conversation, with a man I'd never met, who I assumed to be Andrew's father. As I stood to shake Mr. Hackworth's hand, Andrew seemed to move in the opposite direction from me; his shoulders caved as he curled in upon himself, growing immediately smaller. He wedged his hands tightly between his knees and glued his eyes to the floor, where they would remain for the following 20 painful minutes.

"Mrs. Bullard, this is Dirk Hackworth—Dirk, Mrs. Bullard is our 7th grade English teacher." Mr. Hackworth's hand was rough and calloused in mine, and I was immediately reminded of my then-husband's grandfather, a gruff man from Iowa who called me "little lady."

"Nice to meet you, ma'am." Mr. Hackworth's eyes, crinkled with deep creases at the corners, were brilliantly blue, and his sun-weathered face split into a wide smile that I couldn't help but return.

"And you, Mr. Hackworth," I began, as Andrew's father made his way over to him, putting his wide hands squarely on Andrew's diminished shoulders.

"Abigail sure does love your class," he said, slapping Andrew's shoulder. "Can't get her to put the books down."

"Who?"

It was out of my mouth before I'd thought, and in the time that single word hung in the air, my eyes darted from Andrew's shining brow and white hands to Mr. Hackworth and the now flattening line of his mouth, to Mrs. Raymond, the Gifted teacher, and back again. Here was a child with close-cropped short hair he'd cut himself ("forgive the hack job, Bullard, I'm obviously not meant for beauty school," he'd said bashfully one day on his way into class), a low, husky voice, baggy cargo pants, and dragons artfully drawn in the corners of his class notes.

"Andrew? Andrew is—he's a great student." I thought I saw Andrew's eyes close just as Mr. Hackworth's flickered, the blue in them dimming as he said tersely, "Don't call her that. Some stupid act she's puttin' on for attention. No need to indulge her, Miss."

I looked at Mrs. Raymond, whose eyes were locked onto Andrew's IEP document, the gold cross around her neck refracting light onto the table around which we sat. I looked at Andrew, or this ghost of Andrew, the boy I knew to be bubbly, bright, intensely curious, and playful. The boy who, upon my calling for an "Abigail Hackworth" on the first day of school, politely corrected me as a few students shifted awkwardly in their seats, looking away, as Mrs. Raymond now looked away, waiting for the moment to pass. Looking away: a pedagogy of silence.

"I'm sorry, I—" I looked again at Andrew, waiting for him to transform back into the boy I knew, but Andrew remained completely still, crushed in on himself, his eyes unreadable. He was far away. He was playing a part he knew well.

"I know him as Andrew, that's all. I've gotten used to calling him Andrew."

Mr. Hackworth cleared his throat and turned to Mrs. Raymond, asking her logistical questions about the upcoming state tests, at which point she happily, finally, came back to life, chirping about percentiles and preparations, her petite, pink-cardiganed frame seemingly grateful for the opportunity to hustle over paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. I wasn't addressed or looked at again, and as Mrs. Raymond and Mr. Hackworth closed their two-person meeting, I pulled a book out of my bag and slid it across the table to Andrew, tapping the cover. His eyes flicked toward it slightly, and I said, looking steadily at him: "New dragon book. Thought of you." He smiled almost imperceptibly as the bell rang, keeping us both in line and on schedule, bringing this conversation (and the possibility of so many others) to a close.

Sara Ahmed (2017) wrote,

> if a world can be what we learn not to notice, noticing becomes a form of political labor. What do we learn not to notice?… If we have been taught to turn away, we have to learn to turn toward…even if this turning can at times feel like we are making life more difficult for ourselves. (p. 32)

Though Mr. Hackworth chose to turn away from me for the remainder of that IEP meeting (its own sort of discomfort for a teacher who prided herself on cultivating positive relationships with students' families), his disapproval at my choice to refrain from calling Andrew "Abigail" did not end there. Mr. Hackworth left that IEP meeting after a much more terse and cursory handshake and marched directly down to the principal's office, where he filed a complaint about my inappropriate and unprofessional intervention at "calling his daughter *Andrew*," a mistake for which he made clear I should be reprimanded immediately. I had barely begun my third period class before the office secretary's scratchy voice came across the intercom, ordering me to the principal's office, my students *oohing* and playfully asking me which kid's head I'd stuffed in a toilet.

This chain of command, from Mr. Hackworth to my principal to the office secretary's voice audible to my entire third block class (who would, of course, tell my other students in the next passing time between class blocks), is one that exists in many schools, and it served to reinstate the school's hegemony and approved power structure that I had, however unknowingly, *troubled* in that moment in the Gifted room. The moment had been fleeting—a turning toward Andrew where I might have quickly apologized and turned away a few years prior—but it represented a form of pedagogical disruption that was immediately noticed and reprimanded in an attempt to *straighten* behavior (Ahmed, 2006), both Andrew's and mine, back to what was considered "appropriate" and "professional."

I sat in my principal's overcrowded office, my eyes lodged somewhere just above her shoulder on a binder labelled "protocols" while she stared down the end of her long, shiny, hot-pink painted index finger nail at me. "This isn't your place, Liz," she said to me, her pitch high and warning, the charms on her bracelet trembling as she spoke. "This was not the appropriate place to push your political agenda." I nodded, assented, considered the meaning of "protocols" and wondered if anyone cared what the "protocol" was for ensuring the survival of a child like Andrew.

How do these words—"appropriate," "professional," "protocols"—become the convenient disguises for "straightening devices" in schools? In her 2006 book, *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed investigates the etymology of the word "direction" in her examination of what it means to be orientated—in life or, more particularly, in a certain space, like school:

> A direction is thus produced over time; a direction is what we are asked to follow. The etymology of "direct" relates to "being straight."... To go directly is to follow a line without a detour, without mediation. Within the concept of direction is a concept of "straightness." To follow a line might be a way of becoming straight, by not deviating at any point. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 16)

Implicit in the notion of direction is a need for continuity, smoothness, repetition—a path at once well-worn and undisturbed. To threaten the "professionalism" or "appropriateness" of a teacher is a mode by which systems of education might smooth, or straighten, out the problematic and disruptive nature of anything that questions, however minutely, the aims of that system—and the social norms it so effectively and regularly reproduces. Political, oppressive systems of society, public education included, function and rely upon the unmediated and unexamined (ideally unconscious) following of given lines by its participants. Later in the same passage, Ahmed (2006) wrote,

> Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of repetition. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 16)

The "given" lines—of school, of society, of family—depend largely on the followers of those lines not being conscious of the fact that they're following any directed line at all. Much in this way, employee code of conduct manuals, distributed to terrified and impressionable young new teachers at the start of each school year, work to ensure that terms like "professional responsibilities," "appropriate behavior," and "standard measures" ring out with an unquestionable and irrefutable moral authority, single in definition, and acting as impermeable walls to the "given" paths of sanctioned pedagogies. But what might it mean to pause in the well-worn path of "given" schooling and teaching—to hover in a moment, looking up at the steep and formidable rise of these walls on either side of one's teaching life, and refuse to continue forward? In what way might a politics of refusal mark the beginning of a queer(ed) pedagogy—to notice, name, question, and refuse the given lines provided by words like "professional" and "appropriate"?

The trip to the principal's office to talk about Andrew was far from my first. But something *turned* that day; in the days following my meeting with Andrew, his father, and the stern finger of my principal, other visits to the office came leaking back to me, cast in new light. There had been

so many moments wherein, as a young teacher, I'd hurriedly changed my behavior and curriculum so as not to suffer the stain of being labelled "unprofessional" or "inappropriate," the worst words I could imagine being called as an educator new to the game. I remembered an attempt in my first year to screen *Dead Poet's Society* at the end of our poetry unit, and my principal told me it was entirely inappropriate filmic material for my students—that they didn't need to be "getting any ideas" about the "dramatic" measures taken by students in the film in the name of poetry, creative expression, and the critical necessity of art (she delivered this message to me as the principal of a fine arts-focused public school). I remembered my instructional coach pulling me out of class in the autumn of my third year (again, in front of my students so they could see the punishment that befalls wayward behavior, even to their teachers) to ask why in the world I was teaching a mini-unit on Ferguson and the shooting of Michael Brown. When I responded by telling her that it was a critical news literacy unit that met any number of Tennessee State ELA standards, she waved it off, saying that the school had plenty of nonfiction materials that were far more "appropriate" and "in line" with the parameters of English class, a space that, in her mind, ought to maintain that proper (and mythical) *apolitical* state.

The following spring, my 7th graders were excitedly preparing for the performance of our recently completed class text: Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The room was buzzing with thoughts of glitter for the fairies and real foliage for the enchanted forest when I assigned the reading of Robin Goodfellow, or Puck, to children of all genders in class, noting that Puck was historically seen and played as a sort of genderfluid character in the history of the play's critical readings, performances, and cinematic depictions. This choice resulted in another mid-class intercom call and another well-publicized visit to the principal's desk, where she shared her concerns that I was encouraging gender "confusion" by straying from the established path of roles for "boys" and "girls." Hearing these words, I tilted my head, furrowed my brow, and opened my mouth, at which point she hurriedly rushed to her more general concern at why we were reading Shakespeare in the first place, seeing as how the state test was the following week and my primary "professional" responsibility was to be preparing my students for that, not "playing dress up" and reading material that "they can't understand anyway." A concern at my "encouragement" of non-normative gender play was quickly folded into a larger, much more sinister (and legitimately punishable) offense of my having shirked my "professional responsibilities" to my students. In this way, straying from gender norms was linked to my effectiveness as a teacher, an offense that might very well have resulted (and often does, for many teachers) in district-sanctioned, policy-protected punishment, ranging from a strike on one's record to a Personal Improvement Plan, a withholding of advancement, a delay or threat to one's tenure, or termination of employment altogether.

Sara Ahmed (2012, 2017) wrote about the "brick walls" of institutional life—the ones very like those path barriers I described earlier as keeping one "straight," "in line," and "on course." Brick walls, as she contended in her writing on diversity work (Ahmed, 2012, 2017), remind us of "our place," much as my principal reminded me of mine that day in her office. While these "brick walls" are often metaphorical, encoded into perhaps seemingly progressive policies and initiatives, they are also physical walls—the more porous walls of a classroom, say, or the decidedly less porous ones of an administrator's office, where coded threats make their clandestine cuts on the skin of students and young teachers alike, behind closed doors, unbeknownst to the world outside.

"All around you," Ahmed (2017) wrote,

> there is a partial sighting of walls…and those who know it is wrong even when they try to persuade themselves otherwise, even when they try to minimize a mountain of abuse, can feel all the more wrong, can feel the full force of it, when the wall finally does come into view: she is not okay; I am not okay; this is not okay. (Ahmed, 2017, p. 141)

As I sat in my principal's office following the meeting with Andrew's father, the walls were beginning to come into focus for me, and things were becomingly increasingly and resoundingly *not okay*. Whereas before my struggles with those irascible notions of "appropriate" had seemed merely personal to me, or particular to my relationship with an individual literacy coach or administrator, I was beginning to sense a trend to these disciplinary proceedings—a well-worn path, perhaps. Who, I began to wonder, is being protected within these walls of institutional life—within the walls of a public secondary school? And who is being wounded? How might the sighting of these institutional walls be, in the first place, a *queer* critical practice and the beginning of a queer(ed) politic and pedagogy?

What I began to wonder in my final year of teaching at this school, as I found myself covered in a fine dust of the disrupted path I'd only just begun to kick at, was something I wish I'd begun to question earlier. What if each instance of "professional" and "appropriate" being used, in particular to keep teachers "in line," became an opportunity for disruption? In what ways did these words stand in as signifiers, not as markers of teachers' ethical quality and commitments to their students' learning, but as measures of invisible, silent pedagogies of school administrations and district offices writ large? What were words like "appropriate" and "professional" doing to ensure the perpetuation of the status quo and erasure of queerness, acting as what Ahmed (2006) called "straightening devices," those administrative and institutional "moves" made to silence important racial, class-based, gendered, and sexuality-based "deviations" from the normative (read: white supremacist, classist, and hetero-/cis-normative) "givens" of school? How might we begin to envision pedagogies of disruption that serve as *noticings* of these perhaps previously "invisible" straightening devices? And what happens when we act upon these noticings? To notice, after all, is to both highlight gaps in the system of school and create gaps; what might it mean, then, to productively mind *and* mine these gaps?

Min(d)ing the Gap
Queer(ed) Pedagogies as Marginal Possibilities

> The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalising rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.
> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*
> (2009, p. 1)

In his introduction to, *Queer Theory in Education,* the first publication of its kind to make an explicit attempt to examine the theoretical cross-sections of queer theory and curricular theory,

editor William Pinar (1998/2009) wrote about the interdisciplinary product/project of queer pedagogy: "we work toward a future that is not visible, not even a lavender glimmer on the horizon…perhaps for now it is enough to assert difference, to theorize queer curriculum and pedagogy, and to watch the horizon" (p. 43-44). Critiquing regimented ways of knowing and doing, by way of investigating lives in the margins, and making visible the grid lines of oppression that position certain lives as marginal in the first place marks the project of much of poststructuralist critical pedagogy in its many forms: feminist pedagogy, anti-racist pedagogy (borne from Critical Race Theory), what Freire (1968) calls the "pedagogy of the oppressed" among them. Critical pedagogy, itself resting more broadly at the intersection of critical theory and pedagogical theory, seeks to disrupt hegemonic modes of schooling that reproduce social norms predicated on the continuation of oppression. What might queer pedagogy make possible within this larger political and pedagogical project? In what ways might queer pedagogy serve as a framework by which we (re)see what has been routinized into supposed invisibility—institutional and intellectual walls and the lives of the students they invisibilize? How might queer pedagogy work as both a noticing and radicalizing of the margins?

Like the other arms of critical pedagogy, queer pedagogy makes up the interdisciplinary aims of two perhaps seemingly disparate fields: queer theory and pedagogical/curricular theory. Pinar's (1998/2009) anthology, now over two decades old, remains crucially relevant in the questions its authors, pioneers in the field of queer pedagogy, ask. In the intervening two decades since this anthology's publishing, several of the collection's contributing theorists, foundational to the field of queer pedagogy, have gone on to ask new questions about queer pedagogy as our understanding of "queerness" itself has continued to shift, change, and evolve. Appropriately for the two elastic, dynamic terms that make up its title, queer pedagogy is a field that resists easy definition or categorization, and theorists who find themselves at the center of this intellectual domain puzzle over the paradox of doing and writing about queer pedagogical work when "queer" itself is a critical practice that, by its very nature, eludes schematization. Pinar (1998/2009) recalls hooks (1989) in his writing that queer pedagogy might produce an "open mesh of possibilities," but what is queer pedagogy actually *doing*? And who is doing it?

Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell (1993), in their piece, "Queer Pedagogy: Praxis Makes Im/Perfect," defined queer pedagogy as "a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of 'normalcy' in schooled subjects" (p. 285). Bryson and Castell, both queer-identifying teacher educators, insisted on the importance of named difference, and on the associated importance of openly queer-identifying theorists addressing their sexual positionalities within their research. Susanne Luhmann (1995/1998), extended Bryson and Castell's pseudo-definition by noting that queer pedagogy possesses destabilizing power in its ability to force both teachers and students to critically examine the grounds on which their identities have been constructed. Anticipating much of what has come to populate the conversation around queerness and pedagogy—assimilationist conversations about queer "inclusivity" in curricula—Luhmann (1995/1998) wrote of the larger epistemological project that queer pedagogy demands. "If subversiveness is not a new form of knowledge," she wrote, "but lies in the capacity to raise questions about the detours of coming to know and making sense, then what does this mean for a pedagogy that imagines itself as queer?" (Luhmann, 1995/1998, p. 147). Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis (1999), in their article, "Interrupting Heteronormativity: Toward a Queer Curriculum Theory," likened the work of queer pedagogy to that of anti-racist pedagogy in its capacity to visibilize oppressive regimes and structures that have accrued the mythical unnamed status of hegemony; the critical pedagogical move, Sumara and

Davis argued, is to *interrupt*. This practice of disruption seems central to the work of queer pedagogy, but what does it look like beyond isolated disruptive moments like, for example, the one between my student Andrew, his father, and me in the Gifted classroom that day? And, both within and outside of the English class, what might it mean to (re)imagine literacy curricula and its practices as being implicitly disruptive—and to habitually commit to and teach into this invariably *queer* aspect of literacy pedagogy? Contemporary queer literacy pedagogues (Lin, 2017; Miller, 2015; Walsh, 2007) have written of queer literacy *frameworks* that might disrupt hetero- and cis-normativity in schools, and in hopes of continuing and extending their work, I wonder: What (if any) are specific practices that undergird a queer literacy curriculum theory?

In the final publication of his career, *Cruising Utopia*, queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz (2009) gestured toward what would become not only a trademark component of his work, but of queer politics more largely: that of utopia or those imagined new worlds to which he pointed in the epigraph to this section. Earlier in this paper, I recalled the words of bell hooks (1989) on the marginal (and the classroom) as being the site of radical possibility—a space in which we might collectively imagine *new worlds*. It seems obvious to me that young people are quite ready to engage in this work of an/other world-making, whether through drawing dragons on the corners of their notes or mobilizing through social media with students who, a generation prior, might have remained strangers to them. This capacity for world-making—for imagining both within and against the dominant norms of schooling and society—is where I believe the work of queer literacy pedagogy(ies) begins. In his earlier text, now central to studies of queer theory and performance, Muñoz (1999) wrote in *Disidentifications* of how it is that marginalized and minoritized performers of color interact and forge resistant subjectivity/-ties within dominant ideologies and regimes of representation. Muñoz posited that, rather than simply accepting or outrightly denying the dominant culture, queer and marginalized thinkers and performers often practice a process of "disidentification" wherein they queerly repurpose dominant modes of representation to offer both a slant reading of society's lockstep norms as well as a glimmering glimpse of queerer future possibilities (Muñoz, 1999). Disidentification, then, is neither an abject surrender of queer personhood, a fantastical escape from the realities of our world, nor a bland assimilation, but rather a powerful assertion of one's queer subjectivity that requires a deep and critical reading of, and engagement with, normative modes of representation, including "approved" forms of literacy and literate representation. It's a practice that, appropriately, sits at the nexus of Muñoz's academic positioning as a queer theorist/queer performance studies scholar and the work of queer pedagogy.

Deborah Britzman (1995), one of the first to employ and explore the label of queer pedagogy, in her article, "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight!," wondered at the limits of both pedagogy and queer identification. In studying the ways in which the AIDS crisis bears important implications for pedagogy, Britzman (1995) wrote:

> Pedagogical thought must begin to acknowledge that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge one already possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one's ignorance or when the knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others. These dynamics, quite familiar in contexts where multiculturalism is constituted as a special interest, are not resistance to knowledge. Rather, they are knowledge as a form of resistance. (p. 220)

Throughout her article, Britzman determinedly maintained that queer pedagogy does not and cannot offer any prescriptive rules—that it cannot even hope to be implemented with the expressed goal of ending homophobia and transphobia. Rather, its aims should be to perpetually exercise "knowledge as a form of resistance." In much of the mainstream conversation in education today around LGBTQ+ students in school, the focus tends to fall into the construction of queer students and lives as the "special interest" group that Britzman described—the proliferation of unit plans, guides for inclusion of queer literature, and professional development to "support" the needs of queer-identifying students. This endeavor, though admirable and important in its overall aims to improve school safety and experience for students (and teachers) who identify as LGBTQ+, often risks running the course of the assimilation politics that have marked much of the mainstream LGB rights' movement; that is, by holding "inclusion" as the guiding focus for work with queer students (and by assuming that this "queer-inclusive" work is the same thing as the critical intellectual project of queer pedagogy at large), there is the potent risk for the reification of binaried difference and allowing "inclusion" to simply serve as a mask for "assimilation" in a way that is non-threatening to the heteronormative, racist, cisnormative schooling structures at large. Instead, we might consider what it means to, as Suzanne Luhmann (1995/1998) following Foucault wrote, "risk one's self" in undertaking queer pedagogy. "Can queer teaching," Luhmann (1995/1998) asked, "rather than assuming and affirming identities, take on the problem of how identifications are made and refused in the process of learning?" (p. 153). This practice, of constantly interrogating the ways in which identities are constructed—how some are normalized and legitimized and others are subjugated—is the very art of disidentification that Muñoz describes.

Students in our public schools are practicing disidentification(s) whether we give them permission to or not; it's there in the Black student, reading Dostoevsky in class, who rewrites the characters into the fabric of his life, with recognizably Black characters and Black literacies flowing. It's there in the fan fiction writing that reimagines romantic possibilities between Draco and Harry, Darcy and Bingley, Nick and Gatsby. It's there in the feminist critical readings of Hester Prynne, Jane Eyre, and Lady Macbeth. In the face of what can feel to some a rigid literary canon, our students very often forge space "between the lines" of the text and of the text's presentation in school, offering back the same rhetorical tools in a different package; they take what is recognizable to others and rupture space for their own identification(s) with/in an otherwise foreign, perhaps inaccessible, text. This practice of the disidentificatory literary act requires a critical reading of the texts and worlds around them—worlds wherein students might lack any discernible sense of representation—in order to then rupture and mine possibilities for their own localized experiences to be represented. They are endlessly creative, creating, and desperately grasping for queer(ed) futures—for future(s) of their own. What a queer(ed) literacy pedagogy might more thoroughly and visibly endorse, I believe, is this/these practice(s) of disidentification; what might it mean for English teachers to explicitly, visibly, and audibly embody a resistance to "given" lines of reading, literacy, literary study, and school itself—to, as Britzman writes, practice "knowledge as resistance"?

To enter into the ELA classroom today is to enter into an essentially straight(ened) space; everything from the posters on the walls to the texts on a standard high school English syllabus endorses a specific brand of literacy, and any deviations from this are typically noted in the tones of careful sanctions (i.e., slight literary departures from "the real stuff" being briefly made in the name of "African-American History Month," "Women's History Month," post-state testing time, etc.). In her spatial theorizing of normative space, or these "givens" by which I've contended we operate in school, Ahmed (2006) wrote, "spaces and bodies become straight as an effect of

repetition. That is, the repetition of actions, which tends toward some objects, shapes the 'surface' of spaces. Spaces become straight, which allow straight bodies to extend into them" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 92). To queer literacy is, then, to literally and figuratively rupture these spaces of whiteness, classism, racism, and hetero-/cisnormativity in order to disrupt the unquestioned repetitions of school. Though queerness itself eludes any instinct toward categorization, there are, I believe, some formative principles of what a queer literacy pedagogy might do, be, or seek to imagine in the *un-straightened* classroom space—principles that I hope generatively expand upon those offered by aforementioned queer pedagogues, and specifically queer literacy pedagogues, before me. To grapple with these principles is to more intentionally construct spaces that disrupt the given lines and straightening devices of "school" and to not only encourage, but explicitly model and teach, disidentificatory practices as modes of powerful self-actualization, self-ownership, literary and creative expression, and radical social change.

Extending Queer Literacy Frameworks
What Might Be the Aims of Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagog(ies)?

A Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogy is Intersectional

A queer(ed) literacy pedagogy recognizes that, as Audre Lorde (1984) wrote, "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (p. 138). We know that queer students of color and trans/gender nonconforming youth represent the most targeted groups in schools (and outside of them) and are the most underrepresented in their school curricula (Tuttle, 2017); we know this, even if we haven't read the data or the latest survey, because we've seen them. Maybe you, like I, have watched anger build inside the Black lesbian child who fears home and who fears school—whose experience isn't reflected by either her white queer-identifying peers nor her Black heteronormative family, who can't explain to her teachers *why s*he acts out, who can't control a shred of the narrative that's been typecast to her body as a *troublemaker* since the day she started schooling. Maybe, like me, you had no clue what to do with this girl's rage that felt so big it both filled the room and silenced both of us—me in my useless White guilt and her in the layers of seemingly insurmountable pain separating her from others; it was easier for teachers and fellow students to call her "one of those kids" than to seek out the multiple ways in which her Black, queer body was being actively, daily denigrated and dehumanized. Just as oppressions can be and are multiple, so should our pedagogies encourage multiplicity—in form, in representation, in identifications. In our construction of our syllabi, we should seek to privilege no one form/type of literacy, text, or author over another, but should instead quilt a queer literacy framework by which *all* our students might see angles of themselves reflected—in which there is curricular room for both powerful *disidentification* and affirming *identification*.

A Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogy is Future-Oriented

Muñoz (2009) wrote, "queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future" (p. 1). Through studying the disidentificatory practices of elders,

scholars, activists, writers, and artists before them, students might begin to see their work in the world as both a continuation of a storied legacy (of people who actually look, live, and love in similar ways that they do) and an imaginative world-making—a sculpting of queer(er), freer future lives for themselves and for others. So many of our students learn early to see their future in tunnel vision: that is, to only see the future that has been so readily scripted for them, if to see it at all. For education to be a healing, liberatory practice, we must be not only willing but adamant to reimagine futurity with our students, particularly those for whom fate seems predetermined in the form of a school to prison pipeline or an unwanted, lockstep following in the footsteps of one's father and grandfather. We must be willing to engage, at all times, in the (re)construction of *possibility*. In situating ourselves as future-oriented educators and mentors in the lives of our students, we commit to constantly interrogating the status quo, both in and out of the classroom, and asking ourselves and our students: Whose voices are still not being heard? Who is not being represented? What might representation look like? How might things be different than what we've been taught to expect? In short: What *might* be?

A Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogy is Embodied

A queer(ed) literacy pedagogy does not require as one of its stipulations that students check their bodies at the door, but rather acknowledges the powerfully embodied life that each of us might hope to live. A queer pedagogue teaches with/in and from the body, refusing the academy's imperative to pretend as though our value lies strictly and solely in the cerebral, advocating instead for the legitimacy of bodily knowledge. Just as we offer mentor texts for literacy learning, so must we offer the text of ourselves and our language to not only tolerate but actively encourage gender play, physical presence, and attentiveness to the physical being. Our students have been trained to view school as a place where the body does not exist—where teachers are robotic, disembodied, desexualized deliverers of content and they, the often unwilling, unmoving receptacles. I'll never forget the surprise on my students' faces when, after a long day of sitting as a proctor during state testing, I began to stretch while I taught. I should have been more alarmed that *they* were so alarmed—to witness a teacher's physicality is a rare sight for our students. What does that teach them? That the body is a site of shame, that to explore, care for, and exist openly in one's body is embarrassing and subordinate to the "real work" of school. A queer pedagogue resists this norm by inviting the body *in*: the body as canvas, the body as text, the body as expressive site and vehicle of healing—expressive of one's oppression(s), pain, joy, and love. A queer literacy pedagogy celebrates the fluid and expressive literacies of the body, privileging no one bodily manifestation over the other, naming, celebrating, and forging solidarity across the bodily differences that create invariably different life experiences among us. A queer pedagogue embraces gender play, creativity, fluidity, and disidentification, both in his/her/their own presentation and in the presentation of his/her/their students.

A Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogy is Expansive

A queer(ed) literacy pedagogy continuously seeks to (re)imagine language beyond the tired binaries of our past: boy vs. girl, good student vs. bad student, "at risk" vs. "advanced," literate vs. illiterate. Instead, the queer literacy pedagogue models linguistic innovation and truth-seeking in

a determination to push beyond the dangerously shallow, restrictive language of school. This determination manifests in a cautious unwillingness to categorize or jump to labelling as a way of sorting students (without knowing them more thoroughly); it manifests in a deep commitment to understanding human experience and expression as existing on a nuanced, expansive, and ever-shifting spectrum. It also means to remain constantly observant and reflexive of one's language use; as a new teacher, I was handed the language of schooling and teaching, language I knew well from my own student days: "good reader," "good student," "bad kid," "those kids." I took the mantle, and I wore it, carrying on the legacy of white supremacy and the myriad other oppressions that these labels veiled.

I remember sitting down with a mentor teacher, a few days before I began my first year of teaching and would meet my first group of students, to receive a "run down" on the rising 7th grade students that he had taught the year prior in their 6th grade. As we arrived at one of the names on the list, he said to me, "Oh, this one's a flat-liner." When I asked what he meant by that, he said, "You know, like when the heart monitor goes flat on someone—there's nothing going on in there with this kid. He just doesn't care. Don't expect much out of him." The teacher—a man I knew to be otherwise kind, caring, and attentive, proceeded to point out a number of other "flat-liners" on my rosters, many of them Black and Latinx children who had arrived at our magnet school with no general support or resources for transitioning into a very different school environment. He, a white man, pointed out "flat-liners," and I, a white person, took notes. I was new and young— what did I know? This must be the way of school. And sure enough, the first time one of my new "flat-liners" (a *child*) didn't turn in the first reading log of the year, my assessment was verified and complete: don't expect anything from him. I was complicit in this violent language of schooling and in the invisibility perpetuation of the violence of whiteness—the man who had used the term was not a monster, and neither was I; we had simply inherited the monstrous language of school, of white supremacy, and it was in our lack of disruption of this language that two good people and committed teachers perpetuated something horrible. *These* are the daily stories and choices that constitute the continuation of racism, oppression, and violence in our schools, much more so than the outrageous headlines about Betsy DeVos that fill our news feeds and make us feel comfortably separate from the toxicity of schooling. To disavow dehumanizing labels and stereotyping in educator talk is to realign and recommit oneself to the multitude of students whose lush, fluid identities are left not only wanting but wounded by the language of normative education. It's to realize that the "flat-liners" are only seen as "flat" through the angled and pernicious eyes of schooling and the predominantly white folks who administer it—that they, like their well-regarded peers, have beating hearts, too. I later discovered that the "flat-liner" who didn't turn in his reading log was the eldest child of a family of five children who were living in houselessness, moving from place to place each night to seek safety and shelter for themselves. My 12-year-old student was the primary caretaker in his family of younger siblings and his mother; his heart beat for those he kept alive each day.

A Queer(ed) Literacy Pedagogy Can Be a Silent One, Too

Like the dangerous silent pedagogies to which I referred in the beginning of this paper, queer(ed) literacy pedagogies can be, perhaps paradoxically, powerfully silent, too; they're communicated in the layout and design of one's classroom, in the dress, style, and presentation of one's body, and woven into the text selections of one's syllabus and classroom library. They're

visible in gestures: maintaining eye contact, sitting or shifting to decenter one's physical authority in the room, opening one's arms and hands to the room and the ideas in it. We teach our students what's important less by the lessons we teach than in the way in which we live our lives. For years, I taught my students the importance of remaining in the closet by inhabiting it myself. I taught shame and apology by living it. When I am hiding, I teach my students that they must hide. What might I have taught them by openly resisting the binaries and constructs in which *I* felt trapped? If I had allowed my own gender expansiveness to come through in the clothing I wanted to wear, the stories I wanted to tell about my own valid life and loves, but felt I shouldn't—the kinds of stories that my straight colleagues often told without hesitation—the ones that bring life and warmth and humanity to the room? We teach our students what's allowed by what we say, but perhaps even more powerfully by what we don't.

I often wish that I could go back in time to that sterile Gifted classroom, to the boy born in the female's body, with eyes the color of longing, and tell him that there is space for people like him and me—that life is not even a little bit as black and white as people (my younger self included) make it out to be—that in between "boy" and "girl" and "good" and "bad" is a beautifully expansive horizon—an expanse wherein I believe most of us reside. I wish I'd had the right words, the true ones, ready for Grace Plott and for Andrew and for my principal and for the children who wrote me furtive, unsigned notes about their loneliness or their mom never coming home or their dreams they'd already long ago learned to defer. But then, it was only in my own disidentifying—in my own slow recognition that the available modes weren't sufficient—that I came to understand the importance of all the work that's to be done ahead and of how longing is very often a powerful form of hope (and pedagogy). Ahmed (2006) wrote, "queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world 'slantwise' allow other objects to come into view" (p. 107). My students looked at me slant, and in that sliver of a space, the light got in, bringing mysel(ves), my students, and the possibilities of our future(s) into view, lighting our way together into a queer(er), brighter future.

Notes

1. *All names included herein, other than the author's, are pseudonyms.*

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Engaging Texts Today or How to Read a Curriculum Poem

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In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing
About the dark times.

Bertolt Brecht, motto to "Svendborg Poems," 1939

I AM HEARTENED TO JOIN THE EDITORIAL TEAM of *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* in this time of great uncertainty and promise for the field and, indeed, education writ large. I imagine our time is not unlike those confronting the original team of the *Journal* led by William Pinar. *JCT*, as it is now called, was created in what Pinar (1999) called "a period of breakdown," and "crisis" of the field and the times.

We have entered another such time in which it seems necessary to review and renew significance of our work in the post-truth, post-reality world. The foundation of Western knowledge initiated by European colonialism is duly shaken. The stakes over the generation of knowledge and curriculum that matters in our lives have never been higher, even while the activities of knowledge—free enquiry, study, reading, researching and pedagogy—are significantly weakened by the devaluing of the humanities in public and higher education in democratic nations.

As such we are put upon to get ahead of the times to dream up an education that can sustain the recent onslaught to the life of the mind and higher education. The culture/knowledge wars, and its soldiers, identarian politics viciously resurge as this regressive movement seems bound and determined to turn us on each other in this moment of global political upheaval. Onto-epistemological wars are not new and are endemic to academic scholarship—gate-keeping after all is to secure an enclosure for one's kind. But what is new is that these powerful intellectual and textual rhetorics are mistakenly cited, seized by strong men who acquire the full force of their populist rancor to sew division and resentment in the real world. If colleagues are right to point out the ways in which the field is Eurocentric and upholding whiteness and, as such, parochial, we also cannot let politics come between our search for regenerating knowledges in all forms that

teach us as they repair, renew, and reconcile an unspeakable past with each other. As James Baldwin (1962) reminded us, "To accept one's past—one's history—is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it."

Reconceptualization then, as Pinar (1979) wrote in Issue 1(1) of the *Journal*, "begins in fundamental critique of [our] field." In such a reconceptualization, traditions of thought serve as resources for revolt rather than orthodoxies securing assent. Most importantly I think, at least for my editorial vision of the section, "Engaging Texts," is Pinar's (1979) understanding of curriculum as a "dialectic relation among knowers, knowing, and the known." It is this dialectic that allows us to speak to and speak back to our readings of (m)others, tradition, the ancestors, and an old world while making way for a new (Arendt, 1958/1988). Curriculum, Madeline Grumet (1989) writes, is lived out on the body. As taken from its root, as *currere*, curriculum runs the course of a life (Pinar, 1975) but also, I might add, following Thomas King (2003) and Hannah Arendt (1958/1988), the lands we walk and the worlds we make.

Curriculum theorizing is radically reforming in the way it was first reconceived by the first editorial team in those early days 40 years ago. Still and today, the field has always responded to the times because as Madeline Grumet (1999) insisted, the curriculum field is "firmly anchored in the world." "Curriculum," she continued, "is a child of culture, and the relation is as complex and reciprocal as are any that bonds the generations." Culture is evasive, as Gayatri Spivak (1999) noted, always "on the move." We are chasing culture even as it is making us who we are and might be.

Curriculum scholars wager on the power of thinking and its attendant activities of reverie, study, contemplation, and deliberation. We engage in attentive study to question, learn, understand, and reword the world. We read the world in a word, to speak to and act in it, as Paolo Freire (1985) urged us to do. Curriculum theorizing provides a third space between identity/knowledge and culture/politics. Study seems like a weak force in the times in which we live. It has proven to be so forceful in the strongest social movements of acting in and redressing human injustice.

In 2016, a most unread, bigoted, brutal, and narrow-minded man became president of the United States. It is no surprise, perhaps, that violence, fascisms, populism, and non-reading/thinking collude with each other. Women across the globe set to the streets *en masse* with signs resounding, but not in the same way, the civil rights and Feminist movements of the 60s. While participating in the marches, my mixed-race daughters asked, "What do the signs mean?" I pointed them to primary texts accounting for each and every fraught wave of feminist thought. The signs reverberated a curriculum of women and women-identified persons. Millions circulated in a sea of protest, wrought out of a history of civil rights won by the courage and resolve of people marching and dying on streets. Similarly, living syllabi emerged out of the Idle No More and Black Lives Matters movement as Nathan Snaza (2019) noted in his recent article, "Curriculum Against the State." These voices of studious dissent rallied against the forces that continue to subjugate Black and Indigenous peoples to a brutal colonial and enslaved past unthinkably resurged in the history of the present.

Without engaging texts put forth by Feminist, Indigenous, and Black intellectual traditions of thought, social movements appear to come from nowhere. But these movements are scholarly traditions, modes of thinking together, as Stefan Harney and Fred Moten (2013) insisted. They gift us with the language so desperately needed to articulate cruel and inhumane rhetoric, policies, acts.

In a time of sound bites and social media, language is emptied out and weaponized. The diminished language of Us and Them wielded so carelessly by mostly fascist men and a few

women, shows that not only is literacy, truth, and education in crisis, but so is the social imaginary. It is why, in this demeaning time where language is reduced to rubble, that studying, engaging, recreating texts that sustained us in times past can be called upon as primers for the present. Plato's (360 B.C.E/2003) *Republic*, Plenty Coup's (1930/2003) *Dreams of the Chickadee*, Jacob's (1861/2001) *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Arendt's (1958/1988) *The Human Condition*, Jordan's (2016) "A Poem about my Rights"—these old, worn, enduring curriculum texts can guide a way that we recall was worth the sweat, blood, and tears of those who came, studied, spoke, wrote, and acted before us. "Better people than you were powerless," the poet Carolyn Forche (1982, 2019) put it: they died so we must act, live with the thought of their memory in mind (Simon, 2004).

In these times we are witnessing, not only are academics and teachers turning back to texts of generations past, but so are reporters, politicians, lawyers, and artists. Lost for words to describe what we are witnessing, we consult revolutionary thinkers like James Baldwin, Jericho Brown, Hannah Arendt, Toni Morrison, Carolyn Forché, Gayatri Spivak, and new ones like Cristina Sharpe, Ilya Kaminsky, Iman Perry, Claudia Rankine, Rebecca Solnit, and Layli Long Soldier. These brave minds all, in their own way, attempt to read the tautologies and fascisms heralded by supremacies, misogyny, in other words, nationalisms, as Arjun Appadurai (2006) noted in *Fear of Small Numbers: The Geography of Hate*.

The discourses of fundamentalisms, orthodoxies, supremacies that rabid nationalisms and group think generate will and can lead to our collective death and destruction. And so we see, words are as powerful as weapons when armed with vitriolic rivalries and launched like cluster bombs at those who are without a shield and platform with which to defend their lives. As Jacques Derrida (1985) noted in "Racism's Last Stand," hatred has to have a word; race begins in and with a word placed against an other. To combat hatred and violence also requires strong, unyielding, well-read, and carefully spoken and placed words. As such, symbolic things require our attention more than ever in this world of unregulated socially symbolic media explosively combusting uncontained hateful opinions into acceptable public and political discourse.

It is our study of affective forms of knowledge making the world that distinguishes us curriculum scholars. Curriculum textual theorists are trained in a special kind of closely felt reading we perform on texts to engage how it is they pedagogically seduce us, lead us on our thinking, insinuate in our skin, make us believe we are not normal or real if not like the characters depicted on the page. In his revisiting of Arthur Mee's *Children Encyclopedia*, the Nobel prize winner J. M. Coetzee (2018) demonstrated the power and possibility inherent in re-reading, re-viewing, re-membering, and re-constructing the texts that are critical to a child's formation. He showed that curriculum not only runs the course of a life but forms while it carries it. We cannot afford to engage children in texts without first studying their meanings critically, he gently and insistently argued, without mediating them pedagogically, without considering what enigmatic messages they give not only by way of words, but to a soft, insinuating, profound force of pedagogy that grips us without knowing: feeling.

The first curriculum text I (Mishra Tarc, 2015) engaged is one expressed by a mother's grief. More so than joy, beauty, resistance, and even love, it is grief with the world that each person haltingly labors to communicate to the world. Scholars mistake grief for anger, and although anger is one of grief's most spectacular productions, I, like Morrison (1987), have little time "to watch it." Curriculum breaks our silence, Janet Miller (2005) reminded us. It unsettles the illusory peace. It gives us the language, the ideas, the precedents, the resources to prepare ourselves to wage what

Derrida (1998) has called, "hand to hand combat" with those forces that would seek to do us in. It gives us the symbolic means to carry our unrest and speak our grief with the world, with others.

Grief precedes all emotion—it is the grounds for a hard-fought existence forcibly coming out of another into ourselves. We are born stricken with loss, knowing that something is not quite right where we are found. We come into the world without membership in a pre-formed society, subject to conditions these strange grown up beings place on our tiny bodies. We come into or out of ourselves again in school, as children. Our infantile grief with the world is confirmed when we learn that the best of ourselves can be turned against ourselves. We are made to occupy sexual and social identities, positions, and cultural morays that resemble little of the way we feel and want to be inside.

I began studying the workings of grief on existences as a small child given to console a homesick mother. This study steers me to my curricular objects—children left behind by parents, separated at borders, stranded at sea. I lift up children's stories that no one hears and return them in words that labor to bring significance to all children feel and experience of the world. My mission for literacy is not to teach children to be successful in a capitalist society that rabidly consumes its young; it is to teach them to closely read to generate knowledge of their selves, the world, and others (Mishra Tarc, 2020). My investigations of how language forms a life, as Christopher Bollas (2011) finds, informs my aesthetic and capacities for reading, which is through a wet fog of wanting to know, clamoring to understand. Grief fashions the tales I tell to repair irreparable things, to paint them with something that can stick together fragments of a life caught in between worlds and needing a way to reconcile the difference.

I learned to read the valences of sorrow in between the lines of my mom's heart bifurcated language text. When I write, I do so brokenly, doubled down, and sometimes in search of a story in pieces, in pursuit of "the parts left" out as Thomas Ogden (2014) suggested of all stories. I have long-abandoned the demand for coherence or the so-called rigor required of an academic theoretician. I refuse to play a language game of the best technicians, mimics, and cheats common to so much academic writing. But I can write this way if necessary because I know communication in the other's language is for survival the way Adrienne Rich put it in response to the protests of her dear friend Audre Lorde's caution about the master's tool never taking down the master's house. But to search for the words is already an agony, as Derrida (1998) noted on the occasion of speaking to a second language colleague (with his mother's dementia in mind). I have only one language, and it is not mine.

Words have never moved me as much as what they hold silently inside: the contents of the speaker, writer, teller (Klein, 1928). It is the unknowable affect of the text, Sandro Barros (2018) finds, moving us to hear others. Those who read work that endures, not for a soundbite, but for a lifetime, have felt this too. I do not know how some words get to us, get in, but when they do there is no end to what might be found and learned anew there.

And it is for this wordless, stirring, overwhelming affect that feels everything and "says nothing," Jean Francois Lyotard (1995) insisted, we owe an existential debt. Everything that moves us to read, speak, and write affects us (Springgay, 2011). Let us leave the work of scholars who write without feeling, divorced from the words they write, unable to summon the grounds of their infancy and childhood that allowed them to speak and then write in the first place. Let us be like children only choosing objects that appeal to and move us because, as Melanie Klein (1952) found in her work with young children, they are significant, important, pressing, help us to dream, speak, imagine, revolt. I feel sorry for the scholars who believe their words to the point that they

materialize them in their real world, wage war with others over them. I have learned that, even in the best writing, words fail to get across what we and they can mean over and over and over again.

"I grew out of books," the fictional John in Coetzee's (1974), *Duskland,* proclaims (Mishra Tarc, 2020). As have I. I imagine I have more in common with fictional people I read in a book than real ones. As such, the curriculum theorizing position that seems most comfortable for me is that of a reader. In reading we do not have to communicate our understandings immediately to others. We can hold the other's words in our minds for a long time, stewing over them, mulling them over, ruminating over what they mean with so much pleasure it feels painful. Deep inside the other's minds, we can play with their words, so enigmatically put, resounding the things we cannot express to others, expressed to us. Engaging texts means paying close attention to how words form our existence, such that the intertextual voice with which we speak to others resembles the one we feel stirring within. How I learn to speak anew with Toni Morrison's (2000) words, see from John Berger's (1980) inner vision, stand up with the appeal to children's existence in a sustainable world made by Greta Thunberg (2019), sing the courage of Mary Brown (in Pinder, 1991), an Indigenous elder fighting a land claims trial with a song.

The profound and lasting affect of significant curriculum texts is pedagogical. You read Morrison's (1970) *Bluest Eye*, and you find that eye staring back into your own, for days, and months, and even years later. You drink in like water her dying for thirst phrases in *Beloved* like, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freedom was another" or "everywhere, children are the scorned people of the earth" or "you your best thing, you are" (Morrison, 2000), and her luminous vocabulary takes over the lexicon, initiates a counter-culture, becomes part of a new way of inhabiting yourself and being with others. From this quality of being altered by curriculum, we speak, see, hear, relearn our minds, again in a community of others with nothing and everything in common, and we are not the same.

The world as it is today is the most broken I've witnessed in my lifetime. Some days I feel as I imagine my parents must have, black and brown immigrants with a new baby, lost in the U.S., in the height of the violence of the Civil Rights Movement, overwhelmed and helpless, afraid to death for their children. These days, I do confess, it is hard to think, let alone create, in the midst of such compulsively, brutally repeating colonial history, racism, violence, and hatred. And as so many have done before me in times of utmost incomprehensibility, I've reached not for a person, but a book to guide my way.

It is unsurprising to me that others did the same under the hardest of times. Hannah Arendt read Proust while being detained in Gurs (in Stonebridge, 2019). Wole Soyinka (1969) wrote poetry while jailed as a political prisoner. The last English words my father spoke to us were "tyger tyger" from Blake's (1794) poem *My Tyger,* a work he recited throughout his life by heart, wrought from his British colonial childhood. When our lives are failing, when the world fails us, when every human person fails us, it is these texts, these sacred words summoning us from inside to keep going: I love you my child, you are my life (Coetzee, 1990); the weight of the world is love (Ginsberg 2006); at some point in your life the world's beauty becomes enough (Morrison, 1981). These first curriculum lessons we learn from our mothers, our teachers, our authors in childhood, in school. This most secret, untold knowledge of our most significant (m)others keep us going, remind us of our humanity; in these life sustaining words of the other, we hear a voice summoning our way through the glimmer of silence. The "silence that is something of the sky in us," as Ilya Kaminsky (2019) reconceived in his stunning revision of what it means to hear and engage human texts attesting to our humanity in a world in ruins, a world we can remake anew, if we have the will and way, in a *Deaf Republic*.

So even in the worst of times, we engage texts to engage our ruins to engage our lives to engage each other. More than any other activity, engaging texts help us retrieve the plot of the broken pieces of our human story. "We tell ourselves stories in order to live," Joan Didion (1979) writes. And as Adriana Cararvero (1997, 2015) finds: We write narratives after destruction to pick up the pieces of our ruined lives, to repair ourselves, to begin once more. We need words to remind us who we are, to refind and reclaim our stolen stories, to repair our collective grief with our societal loss, in the words of Paulo Salvio (2017). Or, in another time and way, James Baldwin (1963) said, "You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read." We need these songs, Greg Dimitradis (2009) insists, this curriculum of freedom, "to mitigate the vulnerability…experienced" in our lives. And so, through words, we say our peace in hopes of freeing ourselves, replacing ourselves, as Brian Casemore (2007) put it, time and time again—a mind, a relation, a life, a world, without giving in to inconsolable devastation.

Toni Morrison (2015) wrote that it is when we are at our most lost for words and each other that,

> artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge—even wisdom. Like art.

As Morrison's indominable indignant summons shows, the pedagogical potential of engaging texts speaks to the what Julia Kristeva (2014) termed "new forms revolt" of a person, "keeping the psyche alive." This revolutionary curriculum text, cowritten with and by our other, compels us to say something about a grave injustice, a dark time, an unfair world. The curriculum of the other, Nicholas Ng Fook (2010) finds, passes through the person, the artist, the scholar, the reader, the child, and back to the world. The other's knowledge gives us a chance, a promise, a plea for another version of the story we tell each other to change the narrative, stay afloat, to survive. What if we told another narrative of human being than the one we wrought? Cameron McCarthy (2002) asked poignantly in the days after 9-11. What might we be, then? The question, what if, materializes through the chance that, with a curriculum of the present, we might inventively repair, renew broken societal ties and scenes with each other. So we keep reading, studying, dialoguing together, to think, create, and write an untold story, risk ourselves, participate in our collective curricular rising. This generative, reparative, forgiving, pedagogical action, wrought from an aesthetic of grief, mourns our unthinkable existence, while navigating the sea storm of this ruined world we share (Britzman, 1998). Curriculum is then a demand and plea for the living, in our struggle for memory, for every violently lost gentle and loving soul, in their memory, which came before us and continue to make our way.

In her re-reading of the 2009 apology President Obama made to Native Americans for the decimation of a peoples and their ways of life, Layli Long Soldier (2017) produced the stunning text, *Whereas.* Her re-reading of the official apology, she wrote, is "directed to the apology's delivery, as well as the language, crafting and arrangement of the written document." In the long form poem, Long Soldier rereads what is terribly unsaid, in her symbolic combat of the violence constitutional language commits to apology. She excavates deep within what the document does

not say to resurface the language of the voices of the dead crying out for redress. She visits the architecture of public apologies through intimate reviews of colonial pasts in the lives they have devastated. And through the exchange of words, she fashions a text that more directly addresses the brutal violence locked in post-colonial histories the government seeks to foreclose in its use of "Whereas."

In *Whereas*, what I consider a curriculum text, Long Soldier re-enacts powerful reclamation of self, of motherhood, of childhood, of the existence of a people in a multiplicity of acts of self-determination. In the introduction, she writes,

> I am a citizen of the United States and an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, meaning I am a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation—and in this dual citizenship, I must work, I must eat, I must art, I must mother, I must friend, I must listen, I must observe, constantly I must live.

To engage texts, then, requires a working through of the land's histories, a refinding of lost knowledge scattered in plains, a putting together the broken pieces of our mother's language, our wind, it moves us from within. With whatever it is, Paula Gunn Allen (1989) wrote "moves" us. *Taku skan skan* forms a fundamental redress of the conditions of colonial life that make us other than human, the way Long Soldier so poignantly does and learns to do. From her daughter's learning of Lakota, she learns how in childhood it is possible, it is indeed necessary, to learn to make new selves, apart from our parents, to witness our children find their way, in the world they too "constantly must live."

The first reconceptualization of curriculum came in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Every significant revision to thought comes in a global time of political upheaval, as Paul Tarc (2013) noted. We are now entering another such time of great turmoil resonant of the Second World War with its attendant rise of strong-men and their toxic fascisms. Now it is not only the curriculum field and public education that find themselves sorely tested, but truth and knowledge of reality itself. We watch helpless as human history is eroded by a global amnesia reminiscent of the one that plagues the elders searching for their disappeared children in Kazuro Ishiguro's (2015) *The Sleeping Giant*. But we do have help. It is in our history of surviving the past. Without this shared text bearing witness to traumatic human history and with no sense of what is real and true (Crichlow, 2014; Simon, Rosenberg, & Eppert 2000), humanizing education might fall to the priorities of a killing capitalism. What is needed more than ever, Mario Di Paolantonio (2015, 2019) finds, is a thoughtful education, forums of education oriented to thinking and forming critical capacities of young people to meaningfully engage the times and each other in a shared old world lying between us (Arendt, 1958/1988). The everyday, on the ground, "folk" curriculum we produce from our felt relations to each other and responses to the world and each other teach us how to hear, talk, and learn from each other to speak as political subjects and act in the world (Rocha, 2015).

With my fellow editors, I gravely assume responsibility of moving this journal into another sphere of reconceptualization that heeds the one in which it was born while considering the challenges for reconsidering curriculum before us. *JCT* is a journal that is often overlooked because it is collaborative, free, and does not adhere to bean counting (Willinsky, 2009). And because it is a forum of free enquiry, in the truest sense of engagement of and for all, it remains so critical, seminal to our scholarly and pedagogical development in addressing the times. At no time in my academic career have I felt this pressing urgency for those of us in positions of power,

tenured in a time in which the work of so many is tenuous and precarious, to hold, what Arendt (1958/1988) described as, the "special" duty of the public scholar/teacher to *freely* study, write, speak, and act for the un/common good and wellbeing, to try to intervene in social hatred, inequality, injustice, and environmental degradation, and, above all, to take responsibility for children and the generations, where and when we can. As readers, educators, and scholars, we must hold ourselves in the "third space" between politics and the state mediating how it is young people and the public can make sense of our lives (Bhabha, 1994). In a time when so many are fighting for their lives, many of them children, we, the teachers, cannot maintain public silence and fail to act in ways that intervene in and with the forces of tyranny, destruction, and extremity that threaten us all.

To those who say poetry, literature, art, knowledge, these curriculum texts can do nothing to stop injustice, intervene in racism, reunite families at the border, I say, think again. It has always been the tiny, intimating, revolting words of the other (Kristeva, 2014) that have stirred us, stirred millions to action. *Mama. Papi. I do not want to be alone* (migrant child in M. Jordan, 2018). *Ain't I a Woman*? (Truth, 1851). *J'Accuse* (Zola, 1898). *Free at last* (Luther King Jr., 1963). *The personal is political* (millions of women in Hanisch, 1970). *I can't breathe* (Garner in Gross, 2017). *Water is life* (Standing Rock Collective in Looking Horse, 2018). *I am here to recruit you* (Milk, 1978). *You are still not mature enough to tell it like it is. You are failing us* (Thunberg, 2019). These words stirring from the inside of others remind us of what it means to be human. These indelible words are spoken out of worlds of struggle and find articulation in its collective expression as a call to read and rewrite the plot and narrative of our shared humanity, to renew mutuality in and of our relations that make up our worlds before it is too late (Den Heyer, 2014). And these words lay the foundations of our collective curricular struggle to regenerate our social movements to equality, liberty, and freedom over centuries. They remind us adults to tell it like it is: not for some unknowable future world of children but to not fail them right now.

As words that attest to one's revolt, perhaps the poem, most of all, as Carl Leggo (2016) insists, *can* support us to theorize curriculum anew. We found our way with poetry in times past, through the words of Olds (1984), Celan (2000), Sebald (2003), Darwish (2003), Hikmet (2003), J. Jordan (2005), Lorde (2012), Rich (2013), and Rukeyser (2020). It is not surprising then that in our dark time poetry is again on the rise in the breath-taking works of Jericho Brown (2019), Ilya Kaminsky (2019), Terrence Hayes (2017), Ada Limon (2018), Mary Ruefle (2016), Garth Greenwell (2020), Ocean Vuong (2019), and so many more, too many to name. I welcome curricular readings of these poetic works supporting us to bear witness to terrible times while offering ways of hope forwards (Tippett, 2019). And, I see regenerating work as textual as it is pedagogical, social, activist, as it is political (Mishra Tarc, 2015)—someone with 'authorial force' needs to read and re-read the times to our young people, to ourselves, and translate those readings into a critical and sensitizing engagement with social life that can profoundly alter the destructive path of the strong men who have seized control of political power over and across the globe. We cannot leave this vital, pressing, existential work to our children with little conceptual resources and limited vocabulary and no political power, whose sense of tradition and history is obstructed by fabricated social media accounts, outright boldface lies, gaslighting how the world is and has come to be.

To strengthen our authorial and rhetorical force as scholars, teachers, as human beings who care about the present and reading to tell it as it is, I ask you to send me your engagement with texts that express both your hope and revolt against the times. Send me your engagements with people and texts, people in texts (Eastabrook, personal communication, 1997-present) that make

you think and feel alive. Send me the readings that kept you going and the ones that you can't let go. Send me engagements that speak the truth and truth to power delivered as pedagogical subjects, one to the other. Send me the engagements that can compel us to stop killing the world we share and each other. Experiment with the "literary pedagogy" of texts that bring us closer to feeling for our own world and those of others (Robertson, 1999). This section is for us to dream up curriculum that sustains our lives in all the existing and regenerated forms it can derive. And above all, read in close, sustained, and critical ways. I have not provided page numbers for citations to the texts mentioned in this introduction. Instead I offer you a book list, a curriculum, a syllabus to urge you to read and locate these works for yourself. The list is eclectic, but so are our lives in this time in this world in these circumstances.

Together, let us set a new chart for curriculum that resounds in the old one but with a difference to acknowledge how vital curriculum is not simply in educating the generations but in ushering the survival of our existence. The cultural politics of knowledge cannot save us, only reading, thinking, speaking, bearing witness to, acting on, and writing of our (in)human condition over and over, again and again, has and can do that. Let us engage texts that carry our lives to sustain us, all livings thing from the tiniest plant to the largest ocean, throughout the generations, to regenerate our fragile and fraught co-curricular existence. We look forward to hearing from you, reading your words, writing with and against your texts, and acting in the world with intention, with renewed meaning.

Notes

1. I wish to acknowledge and am grateful to Kelly Waldrop and the *JCT* editors for the care and painstakingly close reading and review they have taken with this text.

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Examining the Plurality of Literacies through the Habermasian Lens

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IN CONTRAST TO THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF LITERACY as academic skills such as reading and writing, two of the breakthroughs in our understanding of literacy, according to Harste (2003), are "multiple literacies and literacy as social practice" (p. 8). Specifically, the concept of multiple literacies intertwined with different social practices is proposed by Harste (2003), who, in turn, bases his proposition on the findings of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (e.g., Gee, 1994; Street, 1984, 1993). Harste (2003) argues,

> Instead of thinking about literacy as an entity (something you either have or don't have), thinking about literacy as social practice can be revolutionary. When coupled with the notion of multiple literacies, literacy can be thought of as a particular set of social practices that a particular set of people value. In order to change anyone's definition of literacy, the social practices that keep a particular (and often older) definition of literacy in place have to change. (p. 8)

The NLS has not only opened our eyes to literacy as social practice, but also ushered in an era of plural literacies along with their social practices. There is no single literacy or social practice that is superior to others, but different literacies and their corresponding social practices that are applicable to different groups of people and sociocultural contexts. Nevertheless, the plurality of literacies coupled with social practices also arouses a disconcerted feeling, a feeling that is reminiscent of the Cartesian Anxiety.

> With a chilling clarity Descartes leads us with an apparent and ineluctable necessity to a grand and seductive Either/Or. *Either* there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, *or* we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos. (Bernstein, 1983, p. 18, italics in original)

The Cartesian Anxiety results from the dilemma of having to choose between objectivism and relativism. Either there is an objectivist or "fixed foundation for our knowledge," or we cannot

escape the relativist forces of darkness where anything goes. Similarly, in the context of literacy education and research, it seems that the ideology of a singular metanarrative/literacy has been deconstructed. However, what is baffling us now is whether the plurality of literacies has trapped us, knowingly or not, in the "forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos." In other words, have we been brought to the other extreme where the acceptance of every literacy/social practice comes at the expense of what is right and wrong, i.e., social justice?

Therefore, this paper is concerned with how to avoid being trapped in relativism while advocating multiple literacies in the classroom. Specifically, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. On the one hand, it acknowledges the importance of including multiple literacies in a classroom. On the other hand, it argues that all literacies should be examined critically rather than being embraced blindly. In what follows, I will present a brief history of how the definition of literacy is broadened to include multiple literacies along with their social practices. This is followed by a discussion of how to assess different literacies critically. Jurgen Habermas's (1981/1984, 1981/1987) theory of communicative action is then put forth as a viable framework within which to examine the validity claims made in multiple literacies. This paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for literacy education relocated within Habermas's framework.

From Literacy to Literacies

Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1963), in their classic essay, "The Consequences of Literacy," proposed what was called by Halverson (1992) "the literacy thesis" that claimed the superiority of alphabetic literacy over non-alphabetic or restricted literacy. Goody and Watt's literacy thesis argued that the advance from pre-modern to modern society was attributed considerably to its change in the form of literacy, from orality to writing. Implicit in their argument was an assumption "that literacy with a big 'L' and a single 'y' was a single autonomous thing that had consequences for personal and social development. The autonomous model has been a dominant feature of educational and development theory" (Street, 1995, pp. 132-133).

Goody and Watt's "Literacy" or autonomous model, however, provoked much controversy and criticism. One of the most powerful counterarguments was made by Finnegan (1988), who conducted an ethnographic study of the Limba, a tribal society located in the north of the West African nation of Sierra Leone. The Limba are, by and large, non-literate (i.e., not able to read and write) and live in contact with many neighboring peoples who speak different languages. Therefore, many Limba "are often bilingual, or at least able to understand a considerable amount of the neighboring language or languages" (Finnegan, 1988, p. 46). Finnegan (1988) showed that the Limba are aware of and able to discuss the differences among dialects of Limba and other neighboring languages as well. The Limba can also engage in abstract thinking through their language and understand that their language unites them as a people and distinguishes themselves from others. Finnegan's ethnographic evidence, consequently, "demonstrates the dangers of employing literacy as a diagnostic category for making generalizations about types of societies or, more perniciously, using it to rank them in some evolutionary schema" (Collins & Blot, 2003, p. 49).

In her work to dismantle the distinction between the oral and the written, Finnegan (1978) also analyzed oral poetry (unwritten poetry) and written texts.

> Most oral poetry in this century is likely to be produced by people who have at least some contact, however indirect, with the wider world in general—and with writing and its products in particular. The result is a continual and fruitful interplay between oral and written forms of literary expression. (Finnegan, 1978, p. 2)

Finnegan's work has shown that it is untenable to use the written and the oral as mutually exclusive categories in distinguishing literate from non-literate societies. Similarly, Bauman (1996) and Herzfeld (1996) have found that mixed forms of the oral and the written exist in literary works in societies throughout the world. Therefore, the distinction between written and oral literacy is not clear-cut, and there is a continual interplay between them.

Shirley Brice Heath also took issue with the argument implied in Goody and Watt's view that one form of literacy, written literacy, is superior to another, oral literacy. In *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, Heath (1983) studied three communities in a city of the Southeastern United States: Roadville, a White working-class community of families steeped for generations in the life of textile mills; Trackton, an African-American working-class community whose older generations grew up farming the land, but whose existing members work in the mills; and Townspeople, a composite portrait of middle-class town residents of both ethnicities. In tracing the children's language development, Heath (1983) showed deep cultural differences between Roadville and Trackton, whose ways with words differed as strikingly from each other as either did from the pattern of the townspeople, the mainstream Blacks and Whites who held power in the schools and workplaces of the region. Employing the combined skills of ethnographer, social historian, and teacher, Heath (1983) raised fundamental questions about the nature of language development, the effects of literacy on oral language habits, and the sources of communication problems in schools and workplaces. For example, the teachers in Heath's (1983) study reported that students from Trackton did not or could not respond appropriately to even the simplest questions or instructions. Heath (1983) found that children in Trackton learned very early that it was not appropriate to report on the behavior of their intimates to strangers. Therefore, the teachers were likely to receive no answer if they asked a child anything related to the child's family like how many brothers and sisters he/she had. With little knowledge of the child's cultural influence on his/her school behavior, the child was usually misjudged as slow or at-risk. Heath's (1983) work teaches us that there is no universality to literacy. There are many literacies such as home literacy, school literacy, work literacy, etc. Prioritizing one type of literacy over another is ignoring the impact that social and cultural aspects have on the literacy development.

In parallel, Brian Street (1984, 1993, 1995) contended that the meaning of literacy depends on the sociocultural context in which it is imbedded. Street (1984) studied the fruit-growing villages, especially Cheshmeh, around Mashad in North East Iran. The villagers in Cheshmeh attended a Koranic religious school and learned the Koran, which is supposed to be "the Word of God" and fixed in nature (Street, 1984, p. 135). Yet the villagers in Cheshmeh adapted the literacy they learned from the religious school to commercial purposes to help them do business with people in the surrounding villages. Consequently, Street (1984) argued that literacy is multiple and subject to individual interpretation regardless of the fact that it may be first acquired in a textually invariant context.

What we can learn from Street's insight is that literacy is not singular and is closely tied to a social practice. The notion of multiple literacies implies that different cultural groups have different ways of making meaning. There are terms/concepts unique in a culture that are difficult for people in another culture to grasp. For example, the term/concept "Wal-Mart" (an American corporation that runs a chain of large discount department stores and warehouse stores) is so familiar to people in the United States that it has become part of their lives. Implied in "Wal-Mart" is a social practice, i.e., shopping for general merchandise and groceries in a large retail store. Yet in a country where there are no such huge retail stores, it is a term/concept hard to understand, and there is no direct translation for it. Therefore, it is the social practice that keeps the literate terms, such as Wal-Mart, in place and makes them meaningful. To change the literate meaning, the corresponding social practice has to change as well.

The ethnographic approaches to literacy taken by Finnegan, Heath, and Street discussed above have provided alternative ways of understanding literacy to Goody and Watt's oral/written dichotomy. They show that it is not literacy itself, but literate practices situated in social contexts that play an important role in deciding whether one is literate or not. One is considered literate when his/her literate practice is aligned with that defined to be literate. The shift from the autonomous model to plural approaches has come to be called the "New Literacy Studies" (NLS).

> [NLS] attempt[s] to grapple with the power relations that pervade literacy practices; to find new ways of linking the linguistic, the cognitive, and the social; and to confront the meanings of schooling and literacy in circumstances of worldwide economic downturn. (Collins, 1995, p. 80)

Not only did the NLS advance a theory of multiple literacies, but it also replaced the autonomous model with an ideological model where situated approaches to literacy are emphasized (Collins & Blot, 2003). Specifically, literacies are situated in social contexts and power relations.

The NLS approach to literacy has broadened our view of the definition of literacy and the potentiality of literacy education. Instead of one metanarrative, diverse literacies along with their social practices should be understood and respected. Harste (2003) proposes that literacy educators should know what kind of social practice is in place and, as a result, how literacy is being defined in their classroom. In addition, literacy educators need to understand who benefits from this definition of literacy and who is marginalized. To make the classroom a place where students feel their home literacies are honored, literacy educators should also reflect on what social practice they have to put in place to make the everyday literacy that students bring with them to school legitimate. The goal is to foster a learning environment where students are not alienated from the school literacy and its corresponding social practice. For example, citing Ogbu, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000a) reminds us that "African American learners often are treated as if they are corruptions of White culture, participating in an oppositional, counter-productive culture" (p. 206). As a result, their language (e.g., Ebonics/African American English), prior knowledge, and values are looked upon as deviant and worthless in the school setting. In fact, some teachers even presume that their job is to "rid African American students of any vestiges of their own culture" while, to the contrary, the African American culture should be considered distinct and valued as an asset in the school curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2000a, p. 206).

To create a classroom that encourages multiple literacies, Van Sluys (2005) suggested that we should include texts that reflect linguistic and cultural diversity; represent a variety of

genres, purposes, and authorial perspectives; and move beyond words and encourage many ways of knowing. Such texts will help students, according to Van Sluys (2005), "see themselves as active and valued participants and become more than readers of words" (pp. 69-70).

Concern about the Plurality of Literacies

The NLS has led us away from the myth of one metanarrative and emphasized the importance of including and respecting diverse literacies along with their social practices. However, Nieto (2010) warned us that, because we are "concerned with equity and social justice, and because the basic values of different groups are often diametrically opposed, conflict is bound to occur" (p. 257). Therefore, teaching literacies as multiple social practices should be based on the understanding that no social practices are fixed or unchangeable and, thus, are subject to critique. Passively accepting the status quo of any set of social practices runs the risk of perpetuating the ideologies embedded in the practices. Yet substituting one type of literacy for another without critique contradicts the fact that no literacy, along with its social practice, is superior to any other. Therefore, to include multiple literacies along with their social practices is not to romanticize and embrace them blindly, but to acknowledge that differences exist and should be examined critically.

Similarly, Gee (1993) recognized the importance of assuming an inclusive attitude toward multiple literacies, but he also pointed out a problem with this pluralistic view.

> If no sign system can be validated as against any other, if all sign systems are rooted simply in historically derived social practices instantiating the desires and claims to power of various groups, then how can we morally condemn the school's (and society's) treatment of the black child whose story we have seen above? How, indeed, can this black child—and her group—come to form a viable theory and practice resistance? (Gee, 1993, p. 291)

To tackle the problem—to morally condemn and resist social injustice—he suggested two conceptual principles that serve as the basis of ethical human discourse:

> [First,] that something would harm someone else (deprive them of what they or the society they are in view as "goods") is always a good reason not to do it. [Second,] one always has the ethical obligation to try to explicate (render overt and conscious) any social practice that there is reason to believe advantages oneself or one's group over other people or other groups. (Gee, 1993, pp. 292-293)

Gee's proposal of the principles governing ethical human discourse should be applauded. Without such guiding principles, we are likely to fall into the trap of relativism where anything goes. I expand on Gee's work, taking his proposal as a point of departure. My argument, which is not explicitly articulated in Gee's work, is that certain communicative features of Habermas's (1981/1984, 1981/1987) theory of communicative action can be appropriated to articulate and supplement Gee's principles for ethical human discourse in a world of multiple literacies.

Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas's theory of communicative action (TCA) steps beyond the scene of a lone, passive subject/observer and replaces it with that of two or more sentient beings communicating with each other.

> The concept of *communicative action* refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 86, italics in original)

Therefore, TCA is an action-based dialogical paradigm built on mutual understanding. One of the most salient features of TCA is that there is more than one subject involved. The subject assumes a performative role in communicative action oriented toward understanding (Habermas, 1981/1984). The subject in the dialogical paradigm is no longer a sovereign, authoritative figure, but an actor who communicates with other subjects and whose being as an actor requires other subjects and the internalization of other subject positions.

TCA is the core of Habermas's social theory. It is a broad theory integrated through the concept of communicative action. Therefore, it is not my intention to review it in detail in this paper. To gain a thorough grounding, interested readers can refer to Habermas's (1981/1984, 1981/1987) two-volume work *The Theory of Communicative Action*. What will be presented below focuses primarily on certain communicative features of TCA that can be appropriated to articulate and supplement Gee's principles for ethical human discourse.

Validity Claims and Criteria

Instead of "truth," Habermas uses "validity" to emphasize that truth should not be perceived monologically, but contested and validated communicatively. A claim made in communicative action is a claim to validity, and Habermas argues that every meaningful act carries validity claims. "A validity claim is equivalent to the assertion that the conditions for the validity of an utterance are fulfilled" (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 38). That is to say, a validity claim is an assertion made by an actor that his/her utterance is of "truth, truthfulness, and rightness" (Habermas, 1998, p. 24). However, the actor's assertion or validity claim can be received with a yes, no, or abstention, depending on the extent to which the other actor is convinced. In addition, in the case of each claim, support can be given only; validity cannot be established once and for all. It is fallible.

The question is how the actors determine whether the validity claims are true, truthful (sincere), or right. That is, what are the criteria for evaluating the claims? Habermas would respond that the claims made in each meaningful act can be divided into three categories and that each category has its own criterion for validation. The three categories, or what Habermas calls three formal-pragmatic worlds, consist of objective, subjective, and normative claims:

> The objective world (as the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible); the social [normative] world (as the totality of all legitimately regulated

interpersonal relations); [and] the subjective world (as the totality of the experiences of the speaker to which he has privileged access). (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 100)

To objective claims there is multiple access, whereas there is only privileged access to subjective claims. Therefore, the criteria for objective claims and subjective claims are multiple access and privileged access respectively. The criterion for normative claims is shared interest. Hence, each kind of claim is evaluated by a different criterion.

The Ideal Speech Situation

In her editorial introduction to Habermas's (1998) *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Cooke stated that the ideal speech situation includes the conditions "that participants are motivated only by the force of the better argument, that all competent parties are entitled to participate on equal terms in discussion, that no relevant argument is suppressed or excluded, and so on" (p. 14). The ideal speech situation is ideal because it can never be reached empirically. However, as a necessarily presupposed standard, the ideal speech situation is approximated and referenced by every communicative act. Habermas recognizes that, in reality, not everyone desires to have the ideal speech situation. Yet this does not change the fact that it is necessarily presupposed, he argues, even though it is sometimes intentionally distorted. The ideal speech situation is not an empirical goal to attain, but serves as an idealizing guideline for regulating rational argumentation. For those who distort communicative action intentionally, their intention can be recognized as it violates the ideal speech situation. Therefore, whether or not the ideal speech situation is wished for, it is a presupposed standard for argumentation in communicative action.

Habermas and Gee

The communicative features of Habermas's TCA discussed above have a close relevance to Gee's principles for ethical human discourse. Specifically, both Habermas and Gee felt it necessary to provide criteria or principles to evaluate validity claims or discourse. For Gee, the validity of discourse is evaluated against the principles of not harming someone else and not advantaging oneself or one's group over other people or other groups. These principles are similar to Habermas's criterion for assessing normative claims—shared interest. Doing something not to harm someone else or not to advantage oneself or one's group over other people or other groups is showing concern about someone else's interests. Therefore, Gee and Habermas converge in their view on how to evaluate what Habermas calls normative claims. In fact, the criteria Habermas suggested for evaluating the validity claims are broader than Gee's principles. While Habermas classified validity claims into three categories—objective, subjective, and normative claims with corresponding criteria of multiple access, privileged access, and shared interest, respectively—Gee's principles are concerned only with shared interest and, thus, cover only normative claims while objective and subjective claims are not addressed. As a result, Habermas's TCA presents a more comprehensive picture of how to evaluate validity claims.

Implications for Literacy Education

Now let us look at what insights we can gain about literacy education from the perspective of Habermas's TCA. Specifically, I will discuss the implications for literacy education relocated within Habermas's TCA.

Literacy Education Is Communicative Action Oriented toward Understanding

Recall that Habermas argues for a dialogical paradigm of communicative action oriented toward understanding to replace a subject-centered model where the subject plays an authoritative role of making sense of the world. Therefore, literacy education recast in Habermas's TCA should be conceptualized differently. Literacy learners are not supposed to passively receive "knowledge" from teachers, but interact with their teachers dialogically. The purpose of the interaction is to understand not only the text (or the intentions of the author of the text), but also the viewpoints of learners and teachers. While understanding what the author means is important, it does not necessarily mean that the learners have to agree with the author. As in communicative action, the learners, as actors but not passive knowledge recipients, can question the validity claims of the author and give reasons to support their argument. Likewise, the teachers, as actors but not authoritative figures, have to give reasons to support their interpretations of the text or, otherwise, respect the interpretation of the learners. In this way, literacy education as communicative action repositions the learners and teachers as peers in their effort to understand the text.

Understanding Texts Is Examining Their Validity Claims

Communicative action is oriented toward reaching an understanding. The understanding is broadly interpreted to include at least three kinds: agreement, disagreement, and abstention. Similarly, in understanding a text, literacy learners can agree or disagree with the author or abstain. In this sense, understanding the text is no longer trying to grasp what the author means and take it for granted, but examining the author's validity claims in the text. This is an important reconceptualization of understanding the text, especially when literacy is regarded as political and can be used to position the readers (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015).

To see how to examine the validity claims of a text in a Habermasian way, let us look at the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* as an example. Because there are several versions of the story, I will briefly present Leanne Guenther's (2015) online version to avoid confusion. The story revolves around a little girl called Little Red Riding Hood. She walks through the forest to bring food to her grandmother. Despite her mother's reminder, the girl dawdles along the way to pick some flowers for her grandmother and even talks to a stranger (a wolf). She tells the wolf she is on her way to see her grandmother, who lives through the forest, near the brook. While the girl is picking the flowers, the wolf goes to the grandmother's house and gains entry by pretending to be the girl. He swallows the grandmother whole and disguises himself as the grandmother, waiting for the girl. A few minutes later when the girl arrives, she notices that her grandmother is very strange. When the wolf jumps out of bed and is about to eat her, Little Red Riding Hood realizes the person in the bed is not her grandmother, but a wolf. Her cry for help is heard by a

woodsman who is chopping logs nearby. He grabs the wolf and makes him spit out the poor grandmother who is a bit frazzled by the whole experience. The woodsman knocks out the wolf and carries him deep into the forest where he will not bother people any longer. Then Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother have a nice lunch and a long chat.

Examples of each kind of validity claim (i.e., objective, subjective, and normative claims) may be found in the text above, and we can examine the claims according to their corresponding criteria (multiple access, privileged access, and shared interest) proposed by Habermas. One of the objective claims made in the text is that there is a little girl called Little Red Riding Hood. It is an objective claim because repeated observations can be made to see if Little Red Riding Hood is mentioned in the text. The criterion to evaluate the claim is multiple access. Specifically, one, two, or more people can be invited to read the text and check if there is a girl called Little Red Riding Hood in the text.

Implied in the text is also a subjective claim that Little Red Riding Hood likes her grandmother. This claim is implied because it is not clearly stated in the text. In one place in the text, we find that Little Red Riding Hood brings food to her grandmother. In another place, she picks flowers for her grandmother. Therefore, it is implied in the text that Little Red Riding Hood seems to like her grandmother. However, we cannot know for sure whether Little Red Riding Hood truly likes her grandmother because the criterion to evaluate this subjective claim is privileged access. In other words, only Little Red Riding Hood herself knows the answer. We can only guess from the objectively observable facts, such as what Little Red Riding Hood says and how she acts, but we can never know for sure what she feels about her grandmother due to the nature of this claim.

A normative claim is also made in the text where Little Red Riding Hood is told by her mother that she should not talk to strangers. A normative claim is an assertion that something is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, should or should not be, etc. The criterion for evaluating a normative claim is shared interest. A normative claim is contested by finding a consensus between the parties in dispute and then arguing from it toward the norm or value position in disagreement. For example, a possible consensus between Little Red Riding Hood and her mother could be that being safe is important. Based on this consensus, her mother could then move on to arguing that, since talking to a stranger is considered unsafe, it would be better for Little Red Riding Hood not to talk to a stranger.

In sum, when understanding texts is considered examining their validity claims based on the Habermasian criteria, we can avoid the risk of embracing texts blindly. In addition, false validity claims embedded in the text can be identified according to the Habermasian criteria. This is quite important when texts are multiple and vary from culture to culture.

What Literacies Should Be Taught and How?

Recall that one of the NLS's influences on literacy education is that literacies are considered plural and connected to social practices. While the NLS rightly dismantles the myth of one metanarrative, there remains a question to be answered—what literacies should we teach? We want to promote diverse literacies of the students. However, does this mean that the dominant literacy should not be taught in the classroom? Janks (2000) warns us that "diversity without access ghettoizes students" (p. 178). In other words, if we deny students access to the dominant literacy, we will perpetuate their marginalization in a society that continues to

recognize the value and importance of the dominant literacy. Therefore, we should provide students with access to the dominant literacy while at the same time valuing and promoting the diverse literacies of our students. This, however, comes with other questions: Will the teaching of the dominant literacy contribute to maintaining its dominance? If so, "how" do we bring in the dominant literacy without perpetuating its dominance? This is where I believe the communicative features of Habermas's TCA can play a part.

Before I address the "how" question above, it is important to note that all kinds of literacy, dominant or not, along with their social practices are enmeshed in power. The power differentials do not only exist between the dominant group and the non-dominant group, but they are also prevalent within each of the groups. For example, a Latino male may be among the oppressed population in American society due to his ethnic background. However, this same male may also be a chauvinist husband at home. Thus, he can be categorized as a victim in one context and as an oppressor in another. Similarly, examples of nuanced experiences of oppression and struggle can happen within the dominant group. According to Carr and Lund (2007),

> Francophones have historical differences with Anglophones in Canada, the Catholics and the Protestants have been at loggerheads for years in Northern Ireland, the Hungarian minority has not had a favorable experience with the majority Romanian population, and the Basque population has been involved in a separatist movement in Spain for generations. (p. 3)

Whites, as opposed to Blacks and other minority groups, are often portrayed as the dominant group. Yet, there exists diversity in language, religion, and political orientations even in this seemingly homogenous group that is subject to further differentiation. As a result, being in a certain group does not automatically legitimate or negate one's validity claims because the grouping is usually simplistically done and fails to take into account a complex web of relationships among race, culture, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, language, and so forth.

We should not simplistically categorize people into groups and then base the legitimacy of their validity claims on the group to which they belong. Instead, our focus should switch from people to validity claims themselves. This is where Habermas's TCA comes into play. It allows us to evaluate the validity claims of all literacies, dominant or not, according to the Habermasian criteria. The credibility of the validity claims should serve as the basis on which to determine whose literacies and social practices are legitimate, because we are in a complex society where we can be dominating or oppressors on one occasion and oppressed or victims on another. In a classroom where multiple literacies are taught, TCA helps us identify and take action against ideologies or illegitimate validity claims. This is "how" literacies, whether dominant or non-dominant, should be taught in a classroom.

In addition, the ideal speech situation also serves as a contextual standard for "how" literacies should be taught. Specifically, it ensures that the participants in contestation are motivated by the force of the better argument and free from coercive power. To see the ideal speech situation in action, suppose that I taught a course on American history in college, and you were one of my students. There was a discussion in class after an article on Native Americans was read. Close to the end of the discussion, I commented, "I agree with the author of the article that Native Americans chose to live on reservations." At this, you raised your hand and said, "Professor, but that is not what I got from the article." Feeling humiliated by the comment you made before the entire class, I rebutted, "I've taught this class for years, and I am pretty sure I

am right." Before allowing you to respond, I continued, "You should read the article more carefully, or I am afraid you will fail the exam." Instead of discussing the issue rationally with you, I suggested that, if you did not agree with me, you would fail the exam. In this case, reason no longer served as the medium to reach an understanding. Instead, I used my power as a professor to force you to agree with me, or, otherwise, you would fail the exam. Therefore, the ideal speech situation was violated. The consensus thus reached was not due to mutual understanding, but coercion. However, even if you were coerced to agree with me due to the unequal power relations between us, both you and I knew that the ideal speech situation was violated. This violation, thus, served as grounds for continuous contestation or resistance.

Habermas's framework can be also helpful in guiding us on "how" to teach when "what" we want to teach is compromised. For example, if we are provided with a scripted curriculum to follow in our instruction of literacy, which is not uncommon in many P-12 school districts, we can still apply Habermas's communicative features in analyzing what we are required to teach. Specifically, the validity claims in the scripted text can be evaluated by the teacher and students according to the criteria (i.e., multiple access, privileged access, and shared interest) in a learning environment that resembles the ideal speech situation. Teaching the scripted text in this way will help the students not only have a good understanding of the text itself so that they can pass the test and/or meet the standards, but also identify what is lacking or biased in the text. This is similar to what Ladson-Billings (2000b) calls "reading between the lines and beyond the pages;"

> In both classrooms, the content of the curriculum is viewed critically and examined by both teachers and students. Ann and Julia [the teachers] constantly ask their students to examine the validity, reliability, and logic of what they read. The students are asked to compare their own experiences with what they read and to make assessments about the value of their readings. For these teachers, being literate assumes being able to evaluate critically and make decisions about what you read. (p. 149)

Conclusion

The link between literacy and success is often taken for granted and used as a reason to justify what we do in literacy education, including imposing on students the dominant literacy along with its values and ideologies as if they were neutral and desirable. While the dominant literacy is important and should be taught and learned, teaching it uncritically and as the only kind of literacy ignores the fact that literacies are plural and associated with social practices. The NLS helps us see that learning literacy is not simply mastering literate skills cognitively, but is concerned closely with our social practices. However, there also arises a problem of how to evaluate the plurality of literacies and keep our literacy classroom from turning into the "Tower of Babel." This paper has shown that Habermas's TCA is a viable framework that helps us eschew the aporias of going back to the metanarrative mindset, on the one hand, and provides criteria for us to evaluate validity claims made in multiple literacies along with their social practices, on the other hand. Literacy education reformulated within the Habermasian framework assumes an inclusive attitude toward various literacies/social practices. However, it does not embrace them blindly, but holds them accountable for the validity claims they make. In addition, literacies should be taught and examined in a learning environment that resembles the ideal

speech situation where the participants are driven by the best argument and free from coercive power in their contestation of validity claims.

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Conceptual Research in Theoretical Studies
Intersections of Human Education and Curriculum

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THIS PAPER EXAMINES DAISAKU IKEDA'S PERSPECTIVE and practice of *ningen kyoiku*, or "human education." Ikeda and the Soka tradition of education informing his perspective and practice have gained increasing purchase in the field of Curriculum Studies (Goulah & Ito, 2012; He, Schultz, & Schubert, 2015). Here, I apply peace education pioneer Betty Reardon's (2017) approach to understanding the alternative mode of thinking present in Ikeda's philosophy and practice of peace to his philosophy and practice of human education. For Reardon (2017), these modes include "values, i.e., moral and ethical principles and standards; concerns, i.e., problems that violate the values; proposals, i.e., ideas for overcoming or resolving the problems; actions, i.e., steps to implement the proposals; and consequences, i.e., potential outcomes of the actions" (n.p.).

Building off of this framework, Goulah (2019) identified a sixth mode of thinking, Buddhist philosophy, and indicated that Ikeda incorporates Buddhist philosophy to shed light on the problems and challenges he discusses. I argue that these six modes of thinking present in Ikeda's perspective on human education indicate his fundamental intent of outlining a vision in which human becoming, or what he calls "human revolution," should be the central focus of all human endeavor and a central principle of Curriculum Studies. Salient to the field of Curriculum Studies, Schubert (2009) asked, "What is worth knowing, needing, experiencing, doing, being, becoming, sharing, contributing, and wondering?" (p. 22). I conclude that the intersection of these questions in relation to human revolution and human becoming in education lead to the need for teacher agency in schools as "learning cultures of human becoming."

Values

Present in Ikeda's perspective on human education is a notion of values that describes moral and ethical principles and standards (Reardon, 2017). Although there are many values we could articulate, fundamental to Ikeda's perspective on human education is the unwavering and

selfless commitment of one individual to another even against challenging obstacles. At the age of 21 and under the pen name Shinichiro Yamamoto (1949), Ikeda wrote an article about the great Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), in which Ikeda chronicled the life and character of Pestalozzi, emphasizing his unwavering and selfless commitment to his students.

After unsuccessful attempts as a farmer, Pestalozzi began teaching a group of students nearby who were too impoverished to attend school and who were also "malnourished and lice-ridden" (Yamamoto, 1949, p. 2). Ikeda (as Yamamoto, 1949) wrote of Pestalozzi's efforts, "[he] poured his energy day in and day out into enabling these children to become fully human" (p. 2). Ikeda continued by stating, "In the midst of his own poverty, he fed the children good food, keeping the bad parts for himself. As a result, day by day the children became healthy and grew rapidly, overflowing with vigor" (p. 2). Regardless of the obstacles at hand, Pestalozzi was committed to enabling the children to become fully human. Through his consistent efforts, his children were able to develop quickly.

Over time, Pestalozzi's circumstances degraded, and he became ostracized from his community. However, Pestalozzi remained committed to his children. Ikeda (as Yamamoto, 1949) wrote, "People increasingly distanced themselves from him. But he remained undeterred and, convinced of the value and importance of education, dedicated himself more and more to the children" (p. 2). Eventually, Pestalozzi became regarded in the field of education and was emulated for his approach. Ikeda concluded by stating, "Nothing is more important for the advancement of humankind than education" (p. 2).

It is quite clear that the education Ikeda is speaking of is a form of human education that emphasizes human becoming or human revolution. From his writing on Pestalozzi, it is evident that, for Ikeda, human education is marked by an unwavering and selfless commitment of one individual to another and that it is these efforts that are most important for the development of human beings and all of humankind.

Concerns

Ikeda (1980a, 1980b) noted that this unwavering commitment to fostering the lives of others is greatly challenged through both external and internal forces, perhaps most notably, the lack of empowerment and loss of conviction and sense of self experienced by many people. Ikeda (1980a, 1980b) shared his own feelings of this nature when he recalled his childhood experiences at the end of World War II when the people of Japan were struggling to survive after placing trust in the Emperor and the government and facing the destruction of Japan's defeat. Ikeda (1980a) wrote, "I could no longer believe in anything," and "We had utterly lost our connection to reality" (p. 24). Ikeda (1980b) continued to discuss the despair that limited people from advancing:

> people were jaded just trying to keep body and soul together. Life had become one sigh or one gasp after another. Everyone had to push to the limit just to exist one day at a time.... The desolation and discouragement...robbed people even of the ability to think. (p. 51)

It is important to note that the destruction and devastation people experienced was at a significant time in human history, although these internal forces are not specific to that time or space. Ultimately, Ikeda argued that limitations or barriers to fostering human potential lies in the hearts

and minds of individuals. Although Ikeda explored this within the context of the war, he also related this same force to contemporary bullying.

Ikeda (2010a) stated, "bullying is just war in miniature" (p. 122). He continued, "Pettiness, arrogance, jealousy and self-centeredness—all those base and destructive emotions violate human rights" (p. 122). In other words, individuals' struggles to overcome their own limitations and negative tendencies are barriers that prevent the growth and development of self and others. Essentially, Ikeda was stating that disregarding the value of one's life leads to the devaluing of others, which can manifest itself as discrimination against others; the polar opposite of human education. Ikeda (2010a) wrote, "These negative tendencies are what make our society discriminate against people and ignore human rights" (p. 122). Therefore, Ikeda (2013) wrote, "Respect for the individual and the dignity of life must be the foundation for all things" (p. 5). In other words, by having conviction in the dignity of our own lives, we can respect the lives of others. With this as our foundation, we can overcome our negative tendencies that limit our engagement with others, thereby, facilitating our human revolution and fully engaging in the process of fostering others.

Proposals

In his address at the general meeting of the education division of the Soka Gakkai on August 25, 1984, Ikeda (1984) stated, "The true goal of education should be the cultivation of the individual character on the basis of respect of humanity" (p. 329). As indicated, this individual character that is the aim of human education is embodied through the unwavering, selfless commitment by Pestalozzi to others and is made through efforts to overcome one's negative tendencies amidst challenging circumstances based on the respect and dignity of human life. Therefore, by overcoming one's self and seeking to fully engage with the unique individual right in front of us, we can fully engage in human education and foster others. In the context of education in schools, Ikeda (1984) wrote, "Recognizing each student as a unique personality and transmitting something through contacts between that personality and the personality of the instructor is more than a way of implanting knowledge: it is the essence of education" (p. 336). Ikeda (2010b) elaborated further by stating, "It is only in the burning furnace of intense, soul-baring exchanges—the ceaseless and mutually supporting processes of inner and outer dialogue between one's 'self' and [an]...'other'—that our beings are tempered and refined" (p. 57). That is, only by fully engaging with others with our whole beings can we undergo our human revolution, create value, and develop as human beings.

Developing our character to the level of engagement needed to foster others is difficult. Therefore, Ikeda (1996) proposed three essential elements that individuals should seek to embody. It is these same elements that also comprise Ikeda's definition of a global citizen. They are as follows:

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living;
- The courage not to fear or deny difference; but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them;
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places. (Ikeda, 1996, p. 55)

Obelleiro (2012) elaborated on these three elements of global citizenship. Of wisdom, he wrote, "This 'wisdom to perceive,' then, entails a way of looking at the world that yields understanding...this is an understanding not of mere matters of fact, but of the normativity of an interconnected world" (p. 47). Ikeda's perspective of wisdom fosters the disposition in others to seek understanding based on the interrelation of all beings. Yet, forming relationships with others based on this deep understanding of interconnectedness requires courage. Obelleiro (2012) commented further on Ikeda's notion of courage, "We live in a world of conflict and danger, and to perceive it in its true light we need courage" (p. 49). Courage is then augmented by compassion, which Obelleiro (2012) noted is "not just based on empathy, but also on solidarity" (p. 50). Goulah (in press) synthesized these elements in relation to human education. He wrote,

> Significantly, these qualities of wisdom, courage, and compassion are not just the essential elements for global citizenship. Within [Ikeda's] framework of *ningen kyoiku*, or "human education," they are also key to unlocking one's full humanity. That is, for Ikeda, being human is an action, a continual process of *becoming*. (p. 14)

Therefore, to engage in human education is to foster global citizens is to be and become fully human. Thereby, a global citizen is one who is consistently in the process of becoming fully human. Consequently, we can state that a global citizen is one who undergoes human revolution to create the utmost value and contribute to all of humanity.

This is evident in Ikeda's 2014 peace proposal as he writes of human revolution, "I emphasized that a renewed focus on humanity, reforming and opening up the inner capacities of our lives, is key to enabling effective change and empowerment on a global scale. This is what we in the SGI call human revolution" (p. 2). This "opening up the inner capacities of our lives," this human revolution, of becoming fully human, is also the essence or aim of human education.

Ikeda continued by stating that only through this human revolution to overcome our own challenges can we create value, transform society, and solve the global challenges humanity faces. Ikeda (2014) wrote,

> the courage and hope that arise from this inner change must enable people to face and break through even the most intractable realities, a process of value creation that ultimately transforms society. The steady accumulation of changes on the individual and community levels paves the path for humanity to surmount the global challenges we face. (p. 2)

That is, only by continuing to undergo human revolution can one create the utmost value and contribute to global society. Therefore, by engaging in human education, one can develop the capacity to fully exist, foster others, create value, and contribute to society.

Actions

Despite the traditional societal perspective of a global citizen, one does not need to go too far to engage in the process of becoming fully human and to manifest the global-citizen-elements of wisdom, courage, and compassion. Goulah (in press) wrote, "For it is here in the daily realities of our normal lives that global citizenship...emerges most fully" (p. 17). In other words, through

the interactions of our daily lives, we can engage in the process of becoming fully human. To ensure that individuals can engage in human education and fully develop as global citizens, Ikeda founded the Soka schools: Soka Junior High School and Soka High School in 1968; Soka University of Japan in 1971; and 12 additional Soka schools throughout Asia, Brazil, and the United States (Gebert & Joffee, 2007, p. 77). Soka University of America in the United States has as its mission "to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life" (Soka University of America, 2020, n.p.).

Soka University of America (2020) also explains that it is founded based upon "the sanctity of life" and states:

> Education is an integrating process in which students gain an interdependence of themselves, others and the environment. Wisdom, courage and compassion—values treasured by the university—do not exist in isolation. They emerge in individuals as they learn the importance of service to others, to the natural world around them, and to the great cause of peace and freedom. (n.p.)

The elements of human becoming, of wisdom, courage, and compassion, have formed a foundation for a humanistic educational system that seeks to develop fully human beings or global citizens through direct engagement and dedication to others who take action in their daily lives and local communities.

An underlying current that has been expressed throughout as part of Ikeda's human education is the intense relationship between fully committed individuals for others. This is best conveyed as the mentor-disciple relationship or, at times, the teacher-student relationship, which most accurately describes Ikeda's development of becoming fully human through his engagement with his mentor Josei Toda. Goulah and Ito (2012) stated, "Ikeda revised and expanded the notion of *ningen kyoiku* [human education] into a *principle, process,* and *goal* of becoming fully human in the truest sense (in and outside school)" (p. 62). They continued, "For Ikeda, it is the continual volitional development of one's wisdom, humanity, and creativity through creative coexistence with others; it is the human education that he experienced as a disciple with [Josei] Toda" (p. 62). It is this relationship of mentor and disciple, teacher unwavering in their full commitment to their students, to surmount obstacles and undergo their human revolution, that enables their students to become fully human and develop as global citizens to create value and contribute to the lives of others. It is this relationship that is the hallmark of human education at the Soka schools that Ikeda founded.

Consequences

As a result of these efforts, individuals who are educated under the Soka ethos of human education express the importance and significance of teacher-student relationships. Goulah and Gebert (2009) wrote, "There is, thus, in the Soka schools and among educators inspired by the philosophy, a strong emphasis on the human qualities of teacher-learner interactions" (p. 126.) In Takazawa's (2016) dissertation, the author acknowledged that some students who engaged in humanistic education from the Soka schools became educators who instruct based on the relationship of mentor-disciple, stressing the importance of the teacher-student relationship for fostering the growth of their students. Takazawa (2016) noted that "the quality of relationship

between the teacher and the students...is demonstrated by a teacher's sense of care" (p. 116), which can be likened to the unwavering and selfless commitment of the educator as embodied by Pestalozzi. Takazawa (2016) stated the following based on his interactions with an educator, Alex, who engaged in human education under the Soka ethos,

> Alex disclosed that she provides unconditional love for her students even if the students do not love her in return. She also strove to champion her students' cause by giving them a voice in an adult world often dismissive of children. She demonstrated her care by being inclusive of every student, especially those students with special needs and embracing students for who they are. (p. 116)

From this anecdote we can glean Alex's unwavering and selfless dedication to her students amidst the many obstacles we could imagine she faced. By working toward her human revolution and overcoming these difficulties, she was able to care for the individual in front of her based on their needs. She had to manifest the wisdom to know how to engage with her students, the courage to take action, and the compassion to fully understand. As a result, as she was enabling her students to become fully human through their life-to-life interaction, she was also becoming fully human and developing her capacity as a global citizen who can create value under any circumstance and contribute to the well-being of others. This is perhaps the foremost implication of human education—that each individual engaged participates in a process of becoming fully human, thus, being able to develop their lives more fully and contribute to the growth of all of humanity. In essence, human education creates a flow of individuals becoming fully human and contributing to the welfare of all human beings.

Buddhist Philosophy

Ikeda (1996) described this exemplar global citizen who ceaselessly engages in the process of becoming human and takes action for the sake of others as a bodhisattva. Ikeda (1996) stated,

> Buddhism calls a person who embodies these qualities of wisdom, courage and compassion, who strives without cease for the happiness of others, a bodhisattva. In this sense, it could be said that the bodhisattva provides an ancient precedent and modern exemplar of the global citizen. (p. 56)

In other terms, we could say that the bodhisattva is fully engaged in human education by participating in the continual process of becoming human through ceaseless engagement to contribute to the development of the lives of others. Yet, understanding the difficulty of manifesting the elements of wisdom, courage, and compassion that are inherent in global citizenship and human education, Ikeda stresses the significance of faith. Goulah (in press) wrote of Ikeda,

> in his Buddhist philosophizing Ikeda clarifies that courage can be difficult to muster. In such instances he insists that faith can be substituted for courage, faith to spark even a glimmer of willingness, intent, or interest that, in time, manifests as courage. He declares

that "Faith is another name for courage" and that "faith is invincible courage; it is indomitable conviction infused with the spirit to never give up." (p. 16)

This spirit of "never giving up" is the spirit of the bodhisattva, the global citizen, and the essence of fostering others through human education. Although Ikeda draws on faith in Buddhist philosophy to express his perspective, Goulah (in press) noted that the power of equating faith with courage is that it "can be universally expressed and freely chosen by anyone, anywhere; it is completely drawn volitionally from within" (p. 17). Therefore, we can conclude that the only limitations to acting in accordance with the bodhisattva, to engaging as a global citizen, and becoming fully human lie in the resolve within the depths of each individual. It is this firm resolve oriented towards becoming fully human that is most necessary for the development of humanity.

Significance and Implications

Ikeda (1996) wrote,

the root of all of these problems is our collective failure to make the human being, human happiness, the consistent focus and goal in all fields of endeavor. The human being is the point to which we must return and from which we must depart anew. What is required is a human transformation. (p. 54)

Therefore, Ikeda (1996) stated, "The task of education must be fundamentally to ensure that knowledge serves to further the cause of human happiness and peace. Education must be the propelling force for an eternally unfolding humanitarian quest" (p. 53). Since the human being should be the "consistent focus and goal in all fields of endeavor" and education must drive "an eternally unfolding humanitarian quest," it is logical that our schools transform into learning cultures of human becoming.

How do we enable all children to engage in human revolution, develop as global citizens, create value, and become fully human? How do we teach to manifest wisdom, courage, and compassion? How do we foster the spirit to "never give up" or to have an unrelenting commitment to others? How do we engage with our local communities? What is the role of knowledge in a learning culture of human becoming? Whose knowledge is it? These are some among the many questions that we would need to answer when conceiving of the practical implementation of a school situated as a learning culture of human becoming and responding to Ikeda's notion of human education.

In the field of Curriculum Studies, Schubert (2009) wrote, "What is worth knowing, needing, experiencing, doing, being, becoming, sharing, contributing, and wondering?" (p. 22). He, Schultz, and Schubert (2015) acknowledged these questions in relation to the fluid and dynamic complexity of curriculum as the interactions between subject matter, teachers, students, and milieu or environment as curriculum (p. xxv-xxvi). The authors elaborated by stating,

Seeing curriculum as a continuous ebb and flow of these interactions reveals the need to continuously ask the basic questions about what is worthwhile and for whom it is worthwhile in adjusting relationships among subject matters, teachers, students, and milieus in every situation. (He, Schultz, & Schubert, 2015, p. xxvi)

Therefore, as teachers interact most directly with students, a learning culture of human becoming would require teachers' agency to create and respond to changing circumstances and human dynamics. He et al. (2015) wrote, "Educators...must be enabled to imagine, invent, and practice ideas that respond to situations as they arise" (p. xxvi). With teacher agency oriented in the direction of human becoming, new educational practices would emerge to create learning cultures of human becoming. Ikeda (2013) wrote, "The classroom experiences of individual educators will undoubtedly give rise to good, constructive ideas" (p. 5). Yet, Parkison (2019) noted that an emphasis on teacher agency rooted in dialogical relations and oriented towards human becoming is not our current state of public education. Rather, our current system of public education approaches academic standards as objects of study with restrictions for developing curriculum as opposed to considering them as "subjects of intention," in which they are defined by our "purpose in relation to them" (p. 47).

From this perspective, curriculum is viewed as a course of specific content to be learned, as opposed to an area of human inquiry in which agency and meaning can be made in relation to the subject matter and each other (Kromidas, 2019). Therefore, Parkison (2019) commented on the inauthenticity derived from an oppressive educational system in which teachers are "totaliz[ed]" by academic standards, testing, and accountability, and Parkinson added, "Authenticity and dialogue free from monologic ideological narratives like the [Common Core State Standards] depend upon intentional and empowered participation in the dialogical processes of curriculum development and instructional decision-making" (p. 51). Sinclair (2018) echoed these sentiments by discussing how reading instruction and activity have declined to a state where they are devoid of relation to making meaning in the world and are replaced by building a skill for career readiness.

> Reading has increasingly been rendered merely a passive tool one must acquire to get a job instead of being framed as a rich, dialogic activity of engagement in the world and ideas. Reading has become about isolated spectacle instead of dialogic lived experience. (Sinclair, 2018, p. 26-27)

Spector (2018) elaborated on "bureaucratic dehumanization" and emphasized that educators' roles have become purely functional and impersonal, indicating limited time for educators to actually think about their instruction and relationship to students.

Consequently, Parkison (2018) stated, "The relational nature of learning and the classroom require a teacher who is engaged, has made meaning of, and has ownership of the content, processes, and products of the curriculum" (p. 51). Kromidas (2019) also emphasized teacher and student agency and affirmed education as a process of "continual becoming." Kromidas (2019) stated, "we invite teachers and their students...to ask what the goals of our endeavours should be...and to work out how we should teach to enact them in the present" (p. 84). Returning to Sinclair (2018), the author also called for teacher and student agency and stressed the significance of acting on student experience to uphold their right "to act as agents in the world" (p. 41). Lastly, Spector argued that "under the jurisdiction of instrumental rationality, one is freed from having to think for oneself" creating the conditions in which teachers blindly conform to the task of achieving predetermined objectives instead of taking "ethical responsibility" to foster student learning in relation with them (p. 518). Therefore, it is clear that, in order to create conditions in which students can engage in a continual process of human becoming, teachers must have agency to take thoughtful action in dialogic relation with their students. Teacher as agent of curriculum, thus, becomes the core element in creating schools as learning cultures of human becoming. As

Knight (2019) succinctly put it, "Curriculum is a site of possibility...for imagining alternate and renewed stories of the human" (p. 106). The teacher as agent of curriculum can create and engage in dialogical relations to foster human becoming. However, as indicated, the current systems and structures make this is a challenging feat.

Therefore, it is ultimately the resolve of educators to perceive themselves as agents of curriculum and to engage in their own process of becoming fully human with the determination to enable others to do the same that is required to foster students as fully human beings, as bodhisattvas, and as global citizens to take the lead in an "eternally unfolding humanitarian quest" for the happiness of all of humanity.

Notes

1. I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Jason Goulah and Dr. Melissa Bradford for their tireless and continuous support throughout this process.

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"If You Wanna Play the Saxophone"

A Review of *Troubling Method: Narrative Research as Being* by Petra Munro Hendry, Roland W. Mitchell, and Paul William Eaton (2018)

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T*ROUBLING METHOD* IS A BOOK WRITTEN BY FOUR AUTHORS: the three present on the cover (Petra Munro Hendry, Roland W. Mitchell, and Paul William Eaton) and a fourth, Becky Atkinson, who is the first co-author of chapter six. The book is divided into three main sections. Before and after the three main sections, there is a prologue, introduction, and conclusion. These pre- and post- scripts are written under a single authorial voice—with the exception of a point in the introduction where the authors break into dialogue—whereas, the rest are clearly marked by their respective authors. These demarcations are important and remind the reader that all but one of the six featured chapters contained in the three sections are republished articles and chapters. Eaton introduces each section, and they end with an "Interlude," i.e., a dialogue that mainly happens between Hendry and Mitchell, with Eaton interjecting lightly.

On my reading, it seems clear that the three main authors bring different concerns and preoccupations into the book that surround the notion of narrative and its application in the social sciences. Hendry addresses narrative as something primordial to and constitutive of research while also trying to imagine a future without research as we know it. In this sense, she writes about narrative in a way that precedes the social sciences and qualitative inquiry while also attempting to look beyond them. Her tone might be read as homiletic and at times even prophetic in the style of the Jeremiad. Mitchell, by contrast, writes from a specific set of concerns that are framed by questions of race and gender in educational institutions—and it is this specificity that introduces us to a series of characters such as "Dr. Mason," his co-author, Atkinson, and those present at a conference session. Mitchell's writing also unfolds with clear methodological suggestions for the practice of narrative inquiry and qualitative research more broadly. His tone is direct but ponderous in the sense that he applies an almost Midrashic series of questions to the anecdotal events he describes; his prescribed theoretical interventions into narrative inquiry distinguish him from Hendry in the sense that his platform seems to be reformist and constructive in nature. Eaton's concern is admirable as a curator of the work of his former teachers and co-authors. He also seems

to be the most insistent voice about the book's subtitle, *Narrative Research as Being*. Given this insistence, we might frame Eaton's concerns as primarily ontological, but a closer reading shows that, unlike Hendry and Mitchell's mutual concerns, which we will soon see, his concerns revolve around the permission to "keep thinking" (words he quotes from Mitchell's advice to him as a student). This motto seems to presently occupy a specific set of theoretical viewpoints in Eaton's thought that "new empiricism" and "ontological turns."

While the book refers to itself as "assemblage," this trendy piece of jargon may not sufficiently describe the exact structure of the work and the conditions under which that structure emerges. After all, this book is 229 pages, not a thousand plateaus. I find this structure and these conditions among the most interesting aspects of the book, which is manifestly not an edited collection nor a single or dual author book. Indeed this basic question—what kind of book is this book?—reveals a key and, to my mind, salutary basic element that takes this work out of its more specific social scientific domain and into the wild world of letters, into the more wide open place where the very idea of the "book" can be studied that we might call the humanities. Unlike the edited collection or the single or dual-authored book, this book in some respects resembles the book we call the Christian New Testament, a book that is comprised of separate books, curated internally and externally from letters and epistles, where the characters and authors diverge and converge and even disappear. It is perhaps more synoptic than apocryphal, but my main point is to simply show that the structure and conditions of emergence of this text hold an important lesson about the kind of work we can and do make as curriculum scholars—and I do use the word "scholars" here intentionally as opposed to the word "researchers." I am sure the scholar searches and researches and even re-researches—there is nothing wrong with the search or the journey or pilgrimage—but I refuse to pretend that we are consigned to being researchers in the Academy. We must assert our fundamental freedom to only conduct research as scholars, first and foremost.

I suppose I can now interject that this note on scholarship is my proposed solution to one of Hendry's questions about what would become of the research university in the absence of research. The complicated historical answer is that the idea of *Wissenschaft*, which gave birth to the ideas of the Prussian research university and has become a part of the American university of today, was never meant to be simple "research;" there many kinds of *Wissenschaft* or research in this university, including those that are not sciences, that do not obey or submit to the natural sciences or their methods. In German, these would be called the *Geisteswissenschaft*, which might be literally translated to the science of the spirit or mind. They refer to a sense of social science that does not grow in the shadow of the *Naturwissenschaft* or, in English, the sciences of nature. Notice how this word "science" is not reducible to the science we have Anglicized into Science and the debates of scientific method. On this complicated yet oversimplified historical and linguistic analysis, the social science of qualitative research, living within the monumentally stupid Creswell Trinity of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, has chosen to live in the *Naturwissenschaft*, but recently, it seems to have realized that it would rather dwell in the *Geisteswissenshaft*, where the human sciences are contained in the work of what we would today in English call the arts and humanities. A number of simple confusions concerning these entities pervades the field, but I think what is most interesting about this book (as I now return to my more technical analysis) is how it suffers from the same confusion but also surpasses it in key confessional moments of insight and expressions of desire. When the authors together ask the question, "What do we fear?" I read this question as itself a potential mark of the fear that today's field of education, still reeling from Dewey's psychologism and Thorndike's instrumentalism, has in finding its way from the *Naturwissenschaft* of the social sciences to the *Geisteswissenschaft* of

the humanities, where concept as method—older than 400 years as we see in *elenchus* known today as Socratic Method or *lectio*, *quaestio*, *disputatio* known today as Scholastic Method—and where even the concept, history, and practice of concepts have always and will always live and abide both in and out of the formal academy. In case my assessment seems out of place in curriculum studies, allow me to join the chorus of reconceptualists who, even before foundation of the Bergamo conference in 1979, were already saying these things. In her 2006 preface, added to the second edition of *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, Grumet notes that she and Pinar wrote their book—and in many ways inaugurated curriculum theory—"to propose a humanities methodology as an alternative to the social science inquiries that were dominating educational research." (p. ii). When I read the question "What do we fear?" in this reconceptualist register, I read a field that has become afraid of its own shadow, and while this book does have its redemptive moments, it might also be relieved of some of its psychic burdens by the consolation of knowing that, at Bergamo, curriculum scholars has always done this work of the humanities.

Returning to the book, there is unique and exceptional feature to be found in the interludes. The conversations read roughly like a transcript, but the roughness gives way to a realism of a conversational voice. In these pages, we find incredible soul and honesty. Hendry talks about the spiritual longings of her heart that she finds in stories and the gift of language that feminism was to her and questions of death and eternal memory. Mitchell speaks of his love of history and the material conditions that led him into the field but also of the soulful and tragic question that haunts him: the question of human suffering. Together, in these personal interludes, Hendry and Mitchell lift away many of the more technical and theoretical aspects and concerns for method or narrative or ontology and display a mutually troubled concern for social change. I must admit that I was prepared to launch a full offensive, in every sense of the word, in this review until these interludes stopped me in my tracks. Their depth convicted me and forced me to re-read their chapters in this light. Suddenly, I was guided by the spirit of their mutual concerns and no longer saw them as a collection of separates. Eaton's voice, which is minimal in the interludes, was transformed into a great listener: a student who truly knows how to study. I was convicted by that, too.

I would like to conclude with four notes that hopefully repeat the spirit of the sense of narrative I took from this book. I am afraid that I do not have time to closely elaborate my argument that the idea of narrative in this book is phenomenological in certain respects but also in grave danger of falling into the phenomenological pitfall of psychologism. On the one hand, narrative is understood as an appearance, a phenomenon. But this is not the end of the story for a phenomenological concept; we must also at the very least move from the natural attitude to a phenomenological or philosophical attitude in our attention and attendance to it as a phenomenon. I think the book has a mixed record of this, but the interludes, as I have shown, exceed the very phenomenon of narrative and open up a new reduction that I am still trying to appreciate and understand. On the other hand, a great deal of the claims about narratives being objects that have agency is too cavalier, in my view, about the dangers of objectification. Humanism—that much abused but little understood word—need not entail that only humans experience the inner life of subjectivity, but phenomenology is boldly and crucially humanist in the sense that the life of narrative cannot exist outside of its ontogenetic *poesis*. What this means in plain talk is that stories surely can be ascribed a life of their own in letters and books and song and verse and more, but this life is not natural or objective so much as it is a *work*, a making, it is the result of what the Greek word *poesis* means: "to make." In Curriculum Studies, there is an entire transition from James McDonald to Timothy Leonard that is about a sense in which *mythopoesis*—which means "to make stories"—is argued to be what curriculum fundamentally is. This mythopoetic tradition

has not enjoyed the popularity or success of the narrative social sciences, but it does show us a clear path towards a study of narrative that is a part of the *Geisteswissenschaft* tradition not the *Naturwissenschaft*, the humanities not the social sciences. However, this tradition shares all of Hendry's primordial senses of narratives while perhaps suffering from other defects from Mitchell and Eaton's perspective.

My final two points are iterative in the sense that they are two stories that repeat the same thing. I would like to end with them as parables that may explain my own reading of this book and also, perhaps, if I may be so bold, allow me to add some notes to its message. The first story comes from the book of Matthew, Chapter 19. In this story, a rich man asks Jesus what he must do to possess eternal life. Jesus replies that he must keep the commandments. The rich man replies, saying that he has kept all the commandments and now wants to know what he should do next. Jesus replies that he should now go and sell all of his possessions and give the money to the poor and then come and follow him. Upon hearing this, the rich man walks away in shame. To this Jesus says, "In truth I tell you, it is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven." This is a story about method; it is about the law and the commandments. It is also a story about troubling method and asking the most difficult questions, confronting what we fear. To understand it better, we might turn to another story that is more mythic in the ancient sense because it comes to us as verse and song. It is a song written for episode 2310 of the American educational public television show, *Sesame Street*, entitled "Put Down the Duckie." The song is a duet sung between Hoots the Owl—a seasoned jazz saxophone player—and Ernie, the constant companion and partner to Bert. Ernie is well known for his love of his rubber ducky, and he sings a series of odes to his rubber ducky, most famously "Rubber Ducky You're the One," sung from his bathtub in which rubber ducky accompanies Ernie, squeaking between each stanza of the chorus. In "Put Down the Duckie," however, Ernie's love of his rubber ducky becomes an obstacle to his desire to play the saxophone. Hoots the Owl sings to him, "You got to put down the Duckie if you wanna play the saxophone." I read Hoot's message as analogous to the Matthean narrative about Jesus and the rich man. The message is that our possessions can get in the way of the things we truly desire, things like eternal life and playing the saxophone.

In a similar spirit, I read *Troubling Method* as asking similar questions at depths as theologically and educationally ambitious as these two stories I've shared. The book asks the reader to imagine and consider what we would be willing to give up in order to be able to do the kind of work we really want or need to do. The book might be said to be asking us as scholars to trouble not only method but to trouble ourselves by attending to the question, "What are the desires of my heart?" What are the things I want to want, how should we live and die, and more. These are surely curriculum questions, too, and I would invite you to read the book in that way. Where the trouble emerges is in the interludes where it becomes clear that educational research is filled with people who love the *Geisteswissenschaft*, who love literature and history and philosophy, but, for some reason, many of them cannot seem to put down the ducky of social science to play the saxophone or Maxine Greene's blue guitar: the tools and instruments we possess to truly study as scholars who search, not as researchers who mine scholarship for citations.

With thanks to the authors, I end by simply echoing those sage words of Hoots the Owl the Scholar to Ernie the Social Scientist and sing: "You gotta put down the ducky, you gotta put down the ducky, you gotta put down the ducky if you wanna to play the saxophone."

References

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