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Pedagogies of the Imagination

Mythopoetic Curriculum in
Educational Practice



Springer

Chapter 1

Introduction

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“Just the facts, ma’am.” The words of Sergeant Joe Friday on the old television series *Dragnet* are perhaps the most famous, if inaccurate, in the history of television. As simplistic and inane as these words are, they dominate educational policy and practice in the English-speaking world. Nothing is wrong with getting the facts, of course, but the problem is that all facts are mediated by history, memory, imagination, and cultural construction. We never know “just the facts,” for they are mediated by myriad versions and visions. An educational system that does not deal seriously with these versions and visions is destined for extinction.

The project of this book is urgent. Resistance to the domination of education by belief in the facts revealed solely by mandated standards and standardized testing must be practiced on many fronts, none of which is more fundamental than the imagination, which is the source of all versions and visions of the natural and cultural world.

Such resistance is not new. In the late 1960s and early 1970s several scholars in the field of curriculum and instruction were trying to account for the wide range of approaches to the field. In their view, one could not discount the ideas and practices of curriculum scholars and practitioners merely because they were not swimming in the mainstream. The mainstream paradigm for curriculum studies at that time had been established by the work of Ralph Tyler. Tyler had published the syllabus for his course at the University of Chicago “Basic principles of curriculum and instruction” in 1948. According to Tyler, a curriculum emerged from a school district’s response to four questions: What are the objectives the curriculum sets out to achieve? What are the learning experiences that are best suited to achieve those objectives? How are those learning experiences best organized in the light of the objectives? And how do curriculum workers evaluate the extent to which the objectives have been met?

The model was elegant in its simplicity and its common sense practicality, for all curriculum workers and teachers act purposefully, attend to the details of student responses to learning materials and instructional practices, and evaluate the results. One could both analyze existing curricula and develop new ones based on these principles. However, the Tyler model left so much up to the educational philosophy and learning theory of the individual school or district that it could not account for the range of approaches to curriculum building and interpretation that were being

advocated and practised in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, by confining the evaluation of curriculum to the assessment of its original objectives, the model diminished the role of personal interaction, imagination, emotion, and serendipity in the lived experience of teachers and students in actual classrooms.

One of several attempts to develop a model that would account for the wide range of philosophical approaches to curriculum was made by James Macdonald in his 1981 essay “Theory, practice and the hermeneutic circle” (Macdonald 1981). Macdonald noted that the field was constituted by three kinds of theorists and practitioners:

1. Those who were mostly concerned with the control of student learning and behavior (sometimes referred to as control theorists)
2. Those who applied a class, racial, and gender analysis to “control” theories such as Tyler’s, and understood curriculum as a resistance to the hegemony of unfettered capitalism, racism, and patriarchy (sometimes called critical theorists)
3. Those who rejected the way the Tyler model is used to reduce, if not eliminate, the role of imagination and compassion in student learning (sometimes called reconceptualists, interpretivist, humanistic, or holistic theorists)

Macdonald called the curriculum work of the humanistic and holistic educators “mythopoesis.” This book is a collection of essays by writers who think it essential to re-engage curriculum thought with Macdonald’s insights, particularly in the current era of state-mandated accountability run amok, in which not a single state or nation publishes a standard that says, “Teachers and students shall be able to critically examine these standards and to imagine standards that differ from the ones contained in this document.”

The chapters of this book move beyond this tripartite conception of curriculum work through a focused analysis of the term “mythopoesis” and the role of imagination in educational practice. Mythopoesis is derived from the Greek word meaning myth making. While some people might think that it is demeaning to call teachers and curriculum workers myth makers, the authors of this volume consider such a denomination unavoidably true, worthy, and useful. Teachers and curriculum workers are, indeed, myth makers. The term “myth” in this text does not mean untruths. On the contrary, it means the stories we tell that give meaning to existence. We live in the stories that make up our lives. Within and around these stories are many other stories. Some of the stories give us a place to stand in the world, and constitute the narratives we are accustomed to call the disciplines of knowledge, including science and mathematics. Others help us to reason about the world. Others ignite our imaginations to imagine the world and the others who inhabit it: to imagine other persons and other cultures. Some stories provide outlets for humor, humility, humanity; they fill our lives with self-effacement, elation, and good old laughter. Still other stories challenge us to speak and live compassionately, seeking a world that thrives on truth and practices justice. Though the authors of these chapters differ on how mythopoesis functions in the curriculum, they each offer generative or practical versions or visions of a curriculum that takes mythopoesis seriously, as a direction educators must take.

The link between imagination and mythopoesis as understood here was provided by James Hillman (1981) in his conception of “imaginal knowing.” Imaginal knowing is not fantasy, but is linked to the way humans imagine the real world. Imaginal knowing moves the heart, holds the imagination, finds the fit between self-stories, public myths, and the content of cultural knowledge. It is deeply personal, yet open to the universe. The curriculum, as conceptualized here, is the medium through which imaginal knowing is evoked in both teachers and students. As Thompson put it: “The capacity to think in images and then transform them into other dimensions of reference is vital to art, poetry, and science” (1987, p. 8).

Karen Armstrong in a recent review (2005) spoke of two elements in human thought, one stressing the rational and the real, the other the imaginal and the significant. As she writes:

In the pre-modern world, particularly for the Greeks, it was generally understood that there were two largely complementary ways of pursuing thought in order to come to truth. These were called *mythos* and *logos*. *Logos* (reason; science) was exact, practical and essential to human life. It was validated by its so-called testable correspondence to external reality. Myth expressed the more mysterious aspects of human experience and corresponded to the human desire to make sense of a world in which humans are often out of control. (Armstrong 2005, p. 43)

Some of the authors of this collection hold this distinction to be very useful in discerning the place of mythopoesis in the curriculum. Others hold the distinction as useful only as an analytical tool, but consider *mythos* and *logos* to be indistinguishable in the experience of teaching and learning.

In Chapter 2, Patricia Holland and Noreen Garman set the notion of mythopoesis in curriculum in the context of its historical origins in the work of Macdonald. They question Macdonald’s claim that critical theorists make their arguments on the same ground of linear rationality adopted by control theorists, and they argue that mythopoesis in fact underlies the break critical theorists made with control theorists. They argue that mythopoetic methodology moves in two directions simultaneously. The first of these directions they call “demystifying,” a process of reducing illusion. The second they call “demythologizing,” a process of restoring meaning. Thus, by joining what they call the critical and interpretive approaches to curriculum within the frame of the mythopoetic, Holland and Garman set the tone of this book, which is that the mythopoetic frame in curriculum work moves educators to “imagine the real” (Lynch 1967).

In 1967 ninety per cent of Australian voters approved a referendum granting citizenship to Indigenous Australians, and granting power to the government to pass laws regarding Indigenous peoples. This event was the formal beginning of what Australians call reconciliation. Until that time the Australian government had never made any agreements about, or treaties with, Aboriginal peoples. In the forty years since the referendum, some, but insufficient, progress has been made in these matters. When Australians speak of reconciliation they are referring to the movement to honor the culture of Indigenous Australians while providing support for granting them equal status with all Australians. An integral part of this movement is the education of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Peter Bishop addresses

this reconciliation movement in Chapter 3, advocating a mythopoetic pedagogy that takes into account the need to imagine all the contradictions of Australian history while also imagining the possibilities of genuine reconciliation among all the people of Australia. Bishop draws upon a wide range of sources: philosophers, novelists, poets, and psychologists from Third World countries as well as from Australia, Europe, and North America. Through his intense analysis of reconciliation pedagogy in Australia, he asserts a powerful hope that imaginal dialogue among conflicting cultures in any nation may become a source for what might be called in other contexts peace learning and “peace education.” While skeptical about such mythopoetic dialogue entering the monkish culture of the universities, he sees it as a crucial marginal source for highly imaginative and beneficial change in society.

Aidan Davison, in the lyrical Chapter 4, is not skeptical of mythopoesis’ potential to enter the curriculum. Much like Bradbeer (1998), he envisions that mythopoetic practice will enable teachers to be aware that they are indeed bearers of myth. What he means by this is that current mainstream positivistic curriculum practice honours reliability, consistency, and measurable indicators, more than the basic messiness of human experience; but when teachers step from behind that mask of order and certainty, they enable students to recognize both the vastness of human ignorance, and the need to engage with teachers and each other in imaginative and shared inquiry.

To help teachers develop the kind of awareness that Davison requires, John Dirkx uses his experience as an adult and teacher educator to explore the uses of imaginative and mythopoetic pedagogy in the education of professional educators. In Chapter 5, Dirkx explores the complexities of the self–other relationship when people come together to provide a service or effect change. These self–other relationships, he says, are imaginatively constructed and emotionally charged in particular ways that may challenge the integrity of the very work that has brought these people together. Given this reality, Dirkx explores the process of self-formation in professional education. For Dirkx, the process of self-formation moves professional education students to enter into relationships with their own students and their peers in a way that is both centered and empathetic.

In Chapter 6 Timothy Leonard studies the case of mythopoetic pedagogy in the science and mathematics curriculum. There is an assumption in this chapter that the teacher self-formation developed by Davison and Dirkx can be effective, for science and mathematics are considered as a shared search for beauty. Leonard claims that, when science is conceptualized as a search for beauty that is shared by teachers and students, imprecise and sometimes erroneous statements need to be accepted as part of the process of learning. Following the thought of Charles Sanders Peirce, he claims that science moves in a communal process from what he calls the fantastic imagination to the realistic imagination, from common-sense language to precise language and mathematical formulation. As the community of inquirers moves towards beauty it is enveloped in myth, in stories that give the search meaning. The key to this chapter is the notion of high drama—beautiful drama—at all levels of scientific conversation from beginners to experts, from imprecise yet accessible words, to sophisticated and precise visual representation.

To help readers get a picture of the kind of work Dirkx refers to when he speaks of educating educational professionals, David Wright in Chapter 7 describes research he has conducted with a group of beginning and pre-service teachers in a series of workshops focused on the creative process. The starting point of these workshops was theater and improvisation. Wright makes a distinction between mythopoesis, which he considers a social construct, and autopoiesis, which he considers a personal construct. Through autopoiesis actors and improvisers look at themselves participating in mythopoesis. This requires both action and reflection, and through the testimony of participants Wright describes improvising, acting, reflecting, and communicating as essential elements of mythopoetic pedagogy. These elements synthesize the body, the imagination, and the mind in public discourse that moves participants to a usable future, not just a remembered past. Wright concludes that, by using the body and the voice in unaccustomed, challenging, and public ways, participants reveal to themselves and each other the potential of learning as a body—mind—communal experience.

One of the perennial predicaments of educators is the relationship between the individual and the community. Neo-Rousseauian educators of the 1960s and 1970s, such as John Holt (1995), struggled mightily against predominant social-efficiency educators, yet the general public tended to think of their work as too extreme in its fostering of the individual child and tended to disregard what they were saying. Renewed attention to the work of John Dewey and the work of contemporary prophetic pragmatists such as Cornel West may be viewed as a welcome attempt to synthesize the person and the common good in education. The authors in this collection, with their emphasis on imagination and narrative, are all reaching for such a synthesis, yet from slightly different perspectives. We think that psychoanalytic and depth psychology have revealed crucial information about the individual person that Dewey and the pragmatists were either unaware of, or overlooked. This is why the work of Freud and Jung, Corbin and Hillman are so important to us. Wright's work in Chapter 7 exemplifies this attempt at such a synthesis. Yet the pull of introspection and self-reflection is unavoidable. The self-psychology of Heinz Kohut provides a frame for understanding this attraction and its importance to educators who have the public interest at heart. The clinical practice of Kohut and his followers throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand has found that introspection enhances empathy, which in turn renders human understanding and compassion more likely (Strozier 2001). Educational autobiography, then, is not merely a solipsistic exercise, but can serve as an awakening to a deeper level of teaching, as is evidenced in Chapter 8.

Peter Hilton's autobiographical Chapter 8 is a story of inspiration. Through a series of what Eric Voegelin (2000) calls "anamnetic exercises" he recalls moments in his life that have made significant differences to him and those around him, in his and their way of being in the world. The chapter reveals how literacy comes to some of us in highly particular ways through the caring and hope-filled persistence of particular people, how reading widely and deeply moves some of us to teach others with passion and empathy, and how permitting the muse to guide us enables us to in turn be an inspiration to others. It is a chapter that both embodies and explicates the mythopoetic in pedagogy.

In Chapter 9 Patricia Cranton uses stories from her own practice in the university to tell how disrespectful it is to ignore soul while paying homage at the altar of institutional policies and procedures and mandated curricula. For Cranton, mythopoetic pedagogy is practised through reciprocal story-telling, creating and beholding artistic work, and crafting evocative experiences. The chapter shows how imagination and mythopoesis can create joyful learning and enable teachers and students to connect deeply and meaningfully with each other.

The first nine chapters of the book are, of course, fairly theoretical, and, while some theory remains in the last half of the book, its focus is more on the field, on schools and institutions that take the opportunity to practice the principles of imaginative and mythopoetic education.

James Bradbeer and Abdul Ghafoor Abdul Raheem teach humanities in an Islamic secondary school in Melbourne, Australia. In Chapter 10 they write of their work with students brought up in a rigid orthodoxy who, growing into adulthood, begin to sense contradictions between the received truths of their religion and their lived experience of the world. "Because it is impossible to prove God, there is no answer but to make oneself capable of God," Abdul Ghafoor quotes Henry Corbin's interpretation of the Sufi Ibn 'Arabi. This quotation sets up the tension experienced by both teachers and students in all schools, not just those in religious schools. How can teachers support students in their quest for truth and at the same time hold them to an acceptance of received truths that they sense may be, in fact, not true at all? The authors' answer to this question is that the task of teaching is to help make students capable of truth. The unique pedagogy for making students capable of truth is the mythopoetic, and Bradbeer and Abdul Ghafoor tell stories of how this pedagogy proceeds in their classrooms.

The songlines of Australian Aborigines are drenched with meaning. Nothing in their world is merely material. The material and the spiritual are wholly bound up in each other. In Chapter 11, Rod Fawns inventively unpacks this mythical vision and demonstrates its significance in the field-based education of science teachers. Thus he confirms Aidan Davison's view in Chapter 4 that all teachers are bearers of myth. In addition, Fawns shows that the materials teachers use in the science classroom are not mere replaceable instruments for the delivery of instruction, but hum with their own rich messages derived from a range of myth-making communities of discourse. In this way he also confirms the notion developed in Chapter 6 that science education can be viewed as "wildest dreams" examined in communities of inquirers.

Chapters 12 and 13 represent the realm of religious education, which has a natural affinity with mythopoesis. Using an autobiographical technique similar to that of Peter Hilton, Leona English tells the story of three sources of inspiration in her life: the leaders of the Antigonish Movement, which worked to improve the lives of fishermen and farmers; a group of thirteenth-century Christian mystics whose deep spirituality led them to challenge power and inequity; and the spirituality of Sharon Butala, a naturalist mystic who has spent decades learning from the prairies of Saskatchewan. Contemplating these sources, English sets out principles and practices for adult education such as negative capability, tolerance of fluidity, and

appreciative inquiry. As she explains the power of these principles, English affirms the centrality of reflective practice and contemplation.

Fr. Gerry Healey then tells the story of how an institution, the Society of Jesus, has worked worldwide to maintain the fundamental inspiration of its origins when formal membership in the organization is in serious decline. The project he describes aims to maintain the characteristic Jesuit vision of education in a time when there are very few Jesuit teachers in their schools. As membership of the society began to decline it was thought to be sufficient to tell lay teachers what this characteristic vision is and that they should communicate it to their students. When it became apparent that this approach was not working, the society turned to more intensely mythopoetic measures to inspire their teachers with the Jesuit vision. The evaluation of these newer approaches, which Healey describes, is quite persuasive. Chapter 13 provides a dramatic illustration of the power of mythopoetic pedagogy to move beyond the overly simple approach of “delivering instruction.”

Writing from the perspective of counselor education, in Chapter 14 Frances MacKay illuminates the relevance of mythopoesis to pedagogy as well as counseling, and does it in a way that inspires both intellect and passion. At various parts of this chapter the mythopoetically inclined reader might want to leap up and say “yea, that’s right,” or “that’s clear,” or “this really fits.” Especially moving is her use of imagination as inspiring scientific investigation as well as the arts. She could have well added mathematics, music, and dance, but that would have been another chapter. The chapter puts one in mind of Antonio Damasio’s *Descartes’ error* (1996), which confirms the truth of MacKay’s chapter from a formal neurobiological perspective. MacKay holds that mythopoesis provides a deeper layer in a person’s self-narrative that challenges the divide between *mythos* and *logos*.

Brenton Prosser, in Chapter 15, directly confronts the inadequacy of critical theory, when it emphasizes the rationality of its approach to such an extent that it ignores imagination and emotion. Through reporting research among teachers in an impoverished area of South Australia, Prosser synthesizes critical theory and mythopoesis in a manner that complements the claims of Garman and Holland in Chapter 1, and demonstrates the power of mythopoesis to perform both its demystifying and demythologizing functions in the education of teachers.

When the editors first read Mary Doll’s Chapter 16, “Capacity and *currere*,” we recalled the claim ascribed to Diogenes, “Nothing human is alien to me.” In a powerfully moving way, Mary uses Shakespeare, Hillman, Edward Albee, and Toni Morrison to make the reader aware of the depth and breadth of what it means to be human. We do not want to give the story away, but it speaks directly to the fact that self-awareness brings with it the ability to imagine and embrace the other. This makes it possible for self-aware teachers to bring full humanity to the classroom.

The image of head, heart, and hands has been integral to western spiritual practice at least since the seventeenth-century work of Jean Jacques Olier (Walsh 1949), and perhaps reaches back to the Cappadocian Fathers’ reflections upon the Holy Trinity (Armstrong 1994). In Chapter 17, Tom Stehlik summons this image to mind as he integrates the Waldorf education of Rudolph Steiner into the conversation about mythopoesis and imagination in pedagogy. Stehlik shows how Waldorf

education grounds the development of mind in the development of imagination, thus affirming that mind is a function of imagination rather than imagination being a function of mind. This chapter describes the way Waldorf education cultivates the imagination of the young to provide them a firm emotional foundation upon which to build a sound intellectual life.

In the eighteenth chapter Peter Willis nicely rounds out the book by describing a specific application of mythopoesis to adult vocational education in a way that echoes much of what has been developed in the earlier chapters. The image of head, heart, and hands reappears. Willis considers the engagement of the whole person through story-telling, sociodrama, dialogue, and a carefully organized set of evocative experiences as an example of mythopoetic pedagogy in the preparation of teachers and health professionals. The combination of what Willis calls “expressive phenomenology” and “mythopoetic reflection” is described as a pedagogy that moves the mind and heart of human sector professionals so that they, as he says, “get a feel” for the work.

The authors of this book are truly an international assemblage, coming from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. As they have drawn upon sources ancient and modern, readers are likely to recognize old ideas and practices and have a sense of déjà vu. Mythopoesis is truly an ancient form of education. Yet there is something new here. Each chapter reaches in its own unique way to integrate the imaginative world of teachers and students with the specific conditions of a post-industrialized English-speaking world. That world, in general, offers an unimaginative and ultimately mindless educational system that serves multinational corporate interests at the expense of working people, the poor, and their children. In our view, mythopoesis, if properly revived in educational practice, offers a way of synthesizing the best of both progressive and critical approaches to education in this cultural context.

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Part I
Mythopoesis and Curriculum Theorizing

Chapter 2

Watching with Two Eyes: The Place of the Mythopoetic in Curriculum Inquiry

Patricia E. Holland and Noreen B. Garman

Abstract This chapter begins with a discussion of Macdonald's understanding of the mythopoetic as a methodology for creating curriculum knowledge. Next, the authors link the mythopoetic to two schools of hermeneutic thought alluded to by Macdonald in his earlier work. They explain how these two schools produce a schism in curriculum studies that leads in one direction toward the works of critical theorists (as demystifying), and in another direction toward the works of interpretivists (as demythologizing). They then develop the argument that both of these hermeneutic schools use mythopoetic expression to articulate their ideas. The authors conceptualize the mythopoetic by examining myth as a source of knowledge that shapes our routine actions, and by examining the expressive powers of language that invokes the poetic and uses it to communicate mythic knowledge. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the authors recognize those who embody the mythopoetic in their writing, including curriculum theorists identified with both critical and interpretive approaches, as well as those who live with children in classrooms. These writers help us both to understand the mythopoetic as a force in curriculum, and to experience its power to shape our sensations, feelings, and impulses to act.

Introduction

And twofold always. May God us keep
From single vision and Newton's sleep. (William Blake, Letter to Thos. Butts, 22
November 1802, in Blake 1988, p. 722)

It is more than fifteen years since we wrote an earlier version of this chapter for publication in the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* (1992). Since that time, we have been aware of a handful of curriculum scholars who have invoked the mythopoetic. What we have seen in their work is not so much that they attempt to define the mythopoetic, which remains elusively below the horizon of rationalism, but rather that they consistently locate the mythopoetic within the symbols, images, and metaphors contained in narratives. We also have been aware of the different curricular ends that these scholars envision as being served by explorations of the mythopoetic in narratives.

Chet Bower (1995), for example, invokes the mythopoetic in the context of narratives that express ways of knowing within particular cultures. He argues for the importance of recognizing patterns of relationships and interdependencies that are assumed by dominant cultural narratives in order to choose or shape narratives that further a curriculum for ecojustice. Kathleen Kesson (1999) and Mary Doll (2000), on the other hand, see the mythopoetic at work in the narratives of educators. Their purposes for exploring the mythopoetic are to uncover the tacit meanings that shape curriculum (Kesson) and learning (Doll), and to encourage educators to use these insights to reclaim their voice in curricular discourse. As Kesson, and also Peter Willis (2005), recognize, such explorations of the mythopoetic have the emancipatory potential to forge and strengthen democratic communities among educators.

We have come to think of the work of those scholars who have written about the mythopoetic in this last decade and a half as heroic. They have gone against the grain of much of the current discourse in education that portrays curriculum as a tool for instrumentalist purposes of control and uniformity. While, on the surface, they focus on different curricular ends served by explorations of the mythopoetic, the work of these scholars has a unifying purpose of creating an—albeit modest—meta-discourse about curriculum that infiltrates the current horizon of expectations to expose deeply archetypal individual and cultural elements that shape an understanding of curriculum. We are proud to rejoin their ranks as we revisit our earlier efforts to articulate a conception of the mythopoetic in curriculum inquiry.

A Question of Meaning

Early in the writing of this chapter, we could have titled it “In search of the mythopoetic.” It is a compelling term, and when Bill Pinar used “mythopoetic” to describe a curriculum genre and writers associated with it, the term caught our attention. Although Pinar used the term in the introduction to *Contemporary curriculum discourses* (Pinar 1988a), he never really indicated what he thought it meant.¹

It was James Macdonald, we discovered, who used “mythopoetic” in his thinking about the state of curriculum theorizing. In his 1981 article “Theory, practice and the hermeneutic circle” Macdonald argues that curriculum theory is a search to understand the realities of educational events. As such, the search is experienced in the hermeneutic process. The mythopoetic, according to Macdonald, has its own epistemological implication for curriculum inquiry. He mentions science and critical theory as two methodologies (or, rather, epistemological approaches) for creating curriculum knowledge, but posits “a third methodology; that of the mythopoetic imagination” (1981, p. 134).

¹ In a later telephone conversation, Bill Pinar told us that he borrowed the term “mythopoetic” from James Macdonald’s 1981 article.

As we thought about the way in which Pinar and Macdonald used the notion of the mythopoetic, we were disturbed. “Mythopoetic” has an intriguing resonant quality. It conjures up visions of eloquent language and elegant ideas. It seemed to us to provide the linguistic form and melody of hermeneutic expression. Both scholars, we decided, had too narrow a view of its potential. By separating the mythopoetic writers from the critical theorists, for instance, a major flaw occurs in the process of differentiating. First, both groups ground their scholarship in hermeneutic thought and, second, the language of both has more in common than not. We were certain both groups shared mythopoetic expression.

So we embarked on a search for a broader understanding of the mythopoetic in curriculum inquiry. We were searching for a conceptual version of “mythopoetic” that would help curriculum scholars better understand the nature of their work.

At first we thought that we could point to Macdonald’s use of the term and give a short introduction from his 1981 article. After such a brief tip of the hat to Macdonald, we could then move on to the literature of philosophy and literary criticism for the rest of the paper. This was not possible. We found that we had to revisit the major words of James Macdonald as well as others’ writings about his intellectual accomplishments.² It was clear that he not only wrote about the mythopoetic; he embodied it in his intellectual being. It is the sound of his eloquent language and elegant ideas that guide us in the following sections.

Revisiting Macdonald’s Personal and Intellectual History

Near the end of what was to be his abbreviated life, James Macdonald proposed that the “mythopoetic imagination” (Macdonald 1981) offers a means of expression for curriculum theorizing. This proposal reflects what was to be the final evolution of his thinking about the philosophical bases for curriculum inquiry beyond an early phase in which he admits to being “much enamored with taxonomics, general systems theory, and technical schemes such as the ‘Tyler rationale and behavioral objectives’” (Pinar 1975, p. 3).

Tracing the biographical history that led Macdonald from an empiricist’s infatuation with the technical aspects of curriculum study, to embrace a richly complex hermeneutic notion of curriculum theorizing that could include such an unruly aesthetic notion as the mythopoetic, reveals a transformation that was both personal and intellectual. Fortunately, his writing chronicles this transformation. For instance, in a biographical statement prepared for Pinar’s *Curriculum theorizing: the reconceptualists* (1975), Macdonald describes the “two major value themes” that influenced his work:

²See, for example, Burke (1985). In the same issue of the journal, scholars Michael Apple, Madeleine Grumet, Dwayne Huebner, Alex Molnar, William Pinar, Susan Stinson, and Bernice Wolfson all honor James Macdonald with personal reflections. These essays collectively provide excellent examples of mythopoetic writings. See also Brubaker and Brookbank (1986).

One has been expressed in a desire to construct intellectually satisfying conceptual maps of the human condition which were educationally meaningful and personally satisfying. The second has been expressed in a utopian hope that somehow people could improve the quality of their existence, specifically through educational processes and generally through broader social policy. (Pinar 1975, p. 3)

It was, as Macdonald admits, the first of these values that dominated his early career. The second found full voice when he encountered the work of Habermas and, in it, a hermeneutic methodology. In a piece entitled "Curriculum and human interests" he says of this experience:

During the past year I have discovered a book that might have been written specifically for me at this time, that is, it spoke to me as only a few books can in a lifetime ... Somehow the cultural content and my personal interests were "matched." At any rate, the book, by Jurgen Habermas, is called *Knowledge and Human Interests*. (Macdonald 1975, pp. 285–286)

Reading Macdonald's description of his discovery of Habermas and the hermeneutic, one can sense the excitement of the "aha" experience, of the transformative power hermeneutic methodology gave him to account for what had seemed previously unaccountable questions of personal or, in his words, "utopian" values in curriculum theorizing. The hermeneutic perspective afforded him a broader philosophical base from which to think about approaches to curriculum theorizing in a way that would allow for interpretive and critical processes.

While under the influence of Habermas, Macdonald continued to think of the hermeneutic in methodological terms, as "a self-reflective science" whose exemplary model can be found in the relationship between theory and practice in psychoanalysis. This relationship of praxis, based as it is in a methodology of critical theory, holds that knowledge as theory is generated and used in practice to serve human interests, particularly those allowing people to transcend or overthrow confining social practices and conventions. Over time, however, as he continued to explore the literature of hermeneutics Macdonald found this methodological relationship between theory and practice still did not account for all that was implied as human experience within his utopian value. As he put it, "Habermas does not deal adequately with the aesthetic" (Macdonald 1981, p. 135).

His investigation of hermeneutics engaged him in the schism in modern hermeneutics between Habermas's methodological orientation and a rival line of thinking deriving from Heidegger and developed by Ricoeur and Gadamer in which hermeneutics is not an epistemological system of rules and methods that exists outside of some lived experience, but rather is the ontological process of understanding and interpreting the world as it is experienced. Rather than taking an either/or position and accepting one notion of hermeneutics over the other, Macdonald proposed a separate methodology of the mythopoetic imagination which he called the "poetic method." This poetic method would be concerned with a form of knowledge distinct from that of either science or critical theory; it would, in other words be a third paradigm that would explore and express the aesthetic dimensions of human experience. Macdonald says that the poetic method is

particularly related to the use of insight, visualization and imagination, which is essentially separate from science and praxis ... it is perhaps best called the methodology of "so what?" Its search is for meaning and a sense of unity and well-being. (Macdonald 1981, p. 134)

Three Paradigms of Inquiry: Sorting out Educational Traditions

The evolution of the philosophical themes in Macdonald's work parallels the evolution of the field of educational inquiry in general. By the beginning of the 1980s, it was clear that other scholars, bothered by the inadequacy of positivism as the dominant mode of inquiry, were attempting to sort out the different languages and logics of educational research. Dual terms such as qualitative/quantitative, naturalistic/empirical, positivist/constructivist suggested the early attempts to move away from a scientific (or rather scientistic) approach. By contrasting the positivist orientation with hermeneutically oriented positions, educators sought to break from the tight grip of positivist thinking. The 1980s would bring a concern for inquiry into the human intersubjective meanings of educational events.

One of the most influential articles to attempt the sorting out of educational traditions was Jonas Soltis's "On the nature of educational research" (1984). His perspective draws from the roots of three dominant twentieth-century philosophic positions as laid out by Bernstein (1976): logical empiricism (positivism); interpretive theories (analytic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic); and critical theory (neo-Marxist). Soltis argues that educational events are characterized by empirical (causal), interpretive (meaningful), and critical (normative) dimensions, and hence need to be studied from within these three traditions. This triadic classification is a generally accepted distinction useful in characterizing the traditions of educational inquiry.

Earlier, Macdonald (1981) had argued that the bipolar scientific and critical theory categorizations were not sufficient. He also argued for a triadic classification, naming the three categories as science, critical theory, and poetics. In that article, Macdonald's classification establishes a more inclusive recognition of hermeneutic philosophy than does Soltis's, which places hermeneutics in the interpretive position only. Macdonald recognized the schism of modern hermeneutics, which represents the breach between the interpretive and critical paradigms. In other words, both paradigms are grounded in hermeneutic inquiry, albeit from different philosophic schools of thought.

In this study we argue that Macdonald's inclusive notion of hermeneutic inquiry is important as the basis from which to begin to recover the mythopoetic. We contend, however, contrary to Macdonald's position, that both hermeneutic paradigms, the interpretive and critical, use "myth" as a source of knowledge and the language of "poetics" as a means of expression.

It remains then to examine what these constructs of "myth" and "poetics" might mean if they are used to delineate a rigorous process of educational inquiry with specific reference to curriculum theorizing.

The Two Eyes of Myth in the Hermeneutic

It was said in the old days that every year Thor made a circle around Middle Earth, beating back the enemies of order. Thor got older every year, and the circle occupied by gods and men grew smaller. The wisdom god, Woden, went out to the king

of the trolls, put him in an arm lock, and demanded to know how order might triumph over chaos. "Give me your left eye," said the king of the trolls, "and I'll tell you." Without hesitation, Woden gave up his left eye. "Now tell me," said Woden. And the troll replied, "The secret is, watch with both eyes!"³

So it is with the mythic in the hermeneutic quest. Drawing from Ricoeur, Macdonald (1981) alludes only briefly to the duality within hermeneutic thought (or, as we have painted it, the "two eyes" of the mythic quest). He suggests that one is "focused upon the restoration of meaning" and the other "on the reduction of illusion" (p. 132). Palmer (1969) describes these two different mythic stances in modern philosophical thought as demystification and demythologizing. Demystification refers to an approach that seeks to destroy the traces (or symbols) of myth as the representation of false reality. Demythologizing represents the notion of treating the symbols in a respectful fashion in order to recover meanings hidden in them. Palmer quotes Ricoeur in making this significant distinction: "The demythologizers treat the symbol as sacred reality: the demystifiers treat the same symbol as a false reality that must be shattered" (1969, p. 44). Because of these two antithetical approaches to the interpretation of symbols today, Ricoeur (1979) asserts that there can be no universal canons for exegesis, but only separate and opposing theories regarding interpretation of myth. In our view, the two eyes provide the necessary vision for fuller understanding.

Still, like Woden's ironic sacrifice for wisdom, modern educational theorists argue over which eye will best serve their inquiry, missing the point that both the interpretive (demythologizing) and the critical (demystifying) approaches are required for a complete range of vision and adequate depth perception.

Recovering the Mythopoetic

Perhaps the best way to proceed in developing an understanding of what the "mythopoetic" means is to recognize the two separate concepts, myth and poetic, that are joined in the term, and to consider the nature of the implied relationship between them.

Thus to begin with myth, the premise put forth by scholars of myth such as Campbell, Cassirer, and Eliade, is that myth is a source of knowledge (see also Garman 1983; Holland 1983). Having acknowledged its epistemological status, the difficulty of describing mythical knowledge, because it differs so radically from the knowledge of science and reason, quickly becomes apparent. Cassirer, for example, admits that

Myth is non-theoretical in its very meaning and essence. It defies and challenges our fundamental categories of thought. Its logic—if there is any logic—is incommensurate with all our conceptions of empirical or scientific truth. (Cassirer 1944, p. 73)

³We borrowed the Woden "Myth of two eyes" from Gardner (1978).

Despite this caveat, however, Cassirer (and later Campbell) suggests that myth as a “symbolic form” contains the contents of the mind. According to Cassirer:

It may be said of any symbolic form, of language, art or myth . . . that each of these is a particular way of seeing and carries within itself its particular and proper source of light. (Cassirer 1944, p. 79)

As for what the mind contains that myth depicts, the best response might be that it is multi-layered meaning. It is what Joseph Campbell describes as the potential for myth to be interpreted on various levels, from the local scenery to the “universal being, which is Everyman, as he both knows and is afraid to know” (Campbell 1959, p. 472).

What distinguishes interpretations of myth as knowledge is their call to action. That action may be what Nelson Goodman (1978) calls “world making” in the creation of language that symbolically portrays some truth of human experience, or it may be the exercise of a socializing function, the setting forth of norms for belief or behavior both for the holder and the bearer of myth. In either case, myth functions as knowledge in the sense captured by Lindblom and Cohen’s notion of usable knowledge: “knowledge is knowledge to anyone who takes it as a basis for some commitment to action” (1979, p. 12).

Considerations of the interpretation of myth introduce the concept of the poetic, and its concern for the nature of the language through which mythical knowledge is construed. The association of myth with language has been a focus for scholars of myth for over a century, perhaps reaching its extreme with Levi-Strauss’s (1963) structural analogies between myth and language. The linking of myth specifically with poetic language is important because it recognizes the denotative and connotative power that resides within language. The language of the mythopoetic conveys what Cassirer describes as

the basic supposition [which] is that word and name do not merely have a function of describing or portraying but contain within them the object and its real powers. Word and name do not designate and signify, they are and act. (Cassirer 1955, p. 40)

Macdonald’s explanation of “the more personalized and uniquely biographical manner” (1981, p. 135) required to capture the mythopoetic includes both the tacit and personal nature of the mythic as a source of knowledge, and the notion of poetics as the expressive form for communicating this knowledge:

Here, broadly speaking, insights, images, and imaginative (or speculative) symbolizations are created as possible meaning structures. These meaning structures are however created as much or more by the concrete and practical experience of the participant in relation to the symbols, as they are in the coherence of the symbolic structure itself. The process of self-reflection in this case is the reflection upon the self, not reflection on the theory in a critical theory mode. (Macdonald 1981, p. 135)

Macdonald’s explanation includes both the tacit and personal nature of the mythical as a source of knowledge, and the notion of poetics as the expressive form for communicating this knowledge. Mythic knowledge derives from the unconscious self in wordless communication with its own apprehension of the elemental human life force; it is a sensing of sacred truth about the human experience. This sensing of

myth is a particular way of knowing, distinct from the symbolic forms of language and ritual which interpret myth and become its expression, its rendering into some communicable form. As forms of expression are superimposed on the sense of myth, then that which is apprehended in myth is made accessible to consciousness as—to borrow again from Macdonald—“personal awareness, insight and vision for self-reflection” (Macdonald 1981, p. 136).

The Power(s) of the Mythopoetic

In subsequent sections of this article we have turned to scholars in literary criticism to help illuminate the meaning of the mythopoetic. Iser (1974) reminds us that, all too often, literary criticism has been concerned with the author's point of view, paying little attention to how the reader might be affected. He advocates a perspective in which a text would be studied according to the influence it exercises over the reader—that is, the means of communication by which the reader is brought into contact with the reality represented by the author. Iser draws from Kenneth Burke's distinction between the terms “semantic meaning” and “poetic meaning.” “Semantic meaning” attempts to find a description by the elimination of attitude. “Poetic meaning,” on the other hand, is intended “to awaken specific attitudes in the reader by what Burke calls the ‘strategy of communication’” (Iser 1974, p. 57). It is important to note that Burke equates the term “poetic” with the effect, or rather the power, a text has upon the reader.

Mythopoetic expression has a particular kind of power. As we have emphasized earlier, the power derives from mythic knowing embodied in forms of human communication. We could say, inspired by Rousseau, that human communication is a social contract based on subliminal laws, and that a culture's myths contain its semantic jurisprudence (Maranda 1980). Mythopoetic power represents a force that guides the reader to a vivid understanding through expression. We are suggesting here that, in order to understand the power of mythopoetic expression, we must begin to delineate particular powers of the mythopoetic, that is, powers that are described here as reflexive, moral, controlling, and evocative in their expression.

Reflexive Power

Reflection, and in particular self-reflection, is a major theme in hermeneutic writings. It is what Gadamer (1975) describes as the self-understanding that derives from the human sciences. Habermas (1979) assumes that human beings have an emancipatory interest—an interest in securing freedom from distorted communication. This interest, according to Habermas, is grounded in humans' capacity for rational action and self-conscious reasoning. Rational language, however, is often associated with expressions from the world of empirical inquiry. We argue that it is

the mythopoetic that gives power to the language of self-understanding within hermeneutic expression.

The literary critic Northrop Frye (1963) reminds us that any discussion of the “poetic” has to begin with the field that it works in, the field described by Aristotle as “nature.” The poet Wallace Stevens (1951) calls it “reality” by which he means not simply the external world, but the taken-for-granted world in which “things are as they are.” It is ordinary human life on the level of absorption in routine activity. As Frye points out:

Human intelligence can resist routine by arresting it in an act of consciousness, but the normal tendency of routine is to work against consciousness. The revolution of consciousness against routine is the starting point of all mental activity, and the center of mental activity is imagination, the power of transforming *reality* into awareness of reality. (1963, p. 239, emphasis added)

The mythopoetic author’s primary obedience, however, is not to reality but to the “the violence from within” of the imagination that resists and arrests it (Stevens 1951). The minimum basis of imagination, so to speak, is ironic realism, the act of simply becoming aware of the surrounding pressures of “things as they are.” This develops a sense of alienation, which is the immediate result of imposing consciousness on reality. This “act of mind” is where imagination begins. It captures and combines perceptions of the world that lie beyond the individual and also internal impressions of that world (Frye 1963). In that act there is born the principle of form or order. Like the image of Woden in the allegory of two eyes, the inner violence of the imagination is a rage for order. It is the mythopoetic expression that engages the “act of mind” and helps to bring order to the sense of chaos and alienation. In expressing the mythic in our daily lives, the mythopoetic gives significance to routine activity in a very special way. As Kathleen Berry says, “The mythological ... moves us into regions of respect and amazement of ourselves being in the world” (1989, p. 5)

Moral Power

If science is the language of detachment, mythology is the language of concern. Myths humanize rather than imitate reality, turning, for instance, the passage from winter to spring into a drama of death and rebirth that obviously has greater moral and emotional appeal than a weather forecaster’s chart (Fischer 1985). Although the mythopoetic violates scientific standards of objective expression, it nevertheless creates a world that Frye (1970) can at times call reality. As he says, “The world, that is, the human world, has constantly to be created, and the one model on which we must not create it is that of the world out there. The world out there has no human values, hence we should think of it primarily as absurd” (1970, p. 51). In other words, when we ask that myths correspond to the “world out there,” we refuse to accept that humans create their world anew from a moral conscience. We cannot have it fit something outside itself.

Mythopoetic expression is moral language. It speaks about the rightness of good conduct and the consequences of evil action, both individual and institutional. It has implicit, as well as explicit, normative nuance. “The very wellspring of ethical behavior,” writes Nel Noddings, “is in human affective response” (1984, p. 3). She argues that feeling is a necessary part of moral decisions. If we are aware of ourselves as personal constructs with an ethical ideal, we shall be able to make moral choices from within the circular (reflective) relations of caring. There is a moral imperative in caring and, in return, mythopoetic language gives moral power for generating a caring spirit. In a curriculum challenge, Starratt (1989) calls this power “knowing at the level of sympathy,” which involves an appreciation of the world and learning how to make it a better place for the whole human family. Moral power, then, is the mythopoetic expression of individual and social responsibility.

Controlling Power

Perhaps “control” is too harsh a word to describe the rather subtle rhetorical influence of mythopoetic language on the audience. Certainly it can be claimed from such a rhetorical perspective that the purpose of mythopoetic language is to channel the ways in which the reader or listener responds to what is written or said. Such a claim, however, does not distinguish mythopoetic language from any other form of linguistic expression, in that all language directs its audience’s attention and responses. Distinguishing the mythopoetic as a particular form of rhetorical functioning illuminates those aspects of control that separate it from a generic view in which rhetoric is seen as

the study of the ways in which character and community—and motive, value, reason, social structure, everything, in short, that makes a culture—are defined and made real in performance of language. (White 1984, p. xi)

The controlling power of mythopoetic language is its unique ability to prescribe the way in which the myth it embodies will be treated. The reader or listener is directed by implicit cues in the language to adopt what has been described above as either a demystifying or a demythologizing view of the work—those “two eyes” of the hermeneutic. Seeing through the eye of demystification focuses the reader or listener on emancipatory interests inherent in critical theory, while the eye of demythologizing directs her/him to an interpretive focus and a consideration of sacred truths and universal meanings. Thus, the controlling power of mythopoetic language would seem not to be that such language indicates its own unique methodology, as Macdonald had posited, but rather that it has the power to control which methodological perspective—which eye of the hermeneutic—the reader or listener will employ.

Evocative Power

The notion of the evocative is inherent within the poetic. This quality comes from allusiveness, incorporating the texture of echoes, rhythms, names, and thoughts

derived from the shared experience of author and audience. The “poetic” normally expresses itself in what one might loosely call word magic; it is the power of evocation, charm in its original sense of spell, to reinforce the “act of mind” with dream-like reverberations, to echo and enlarge the significance of memory and the unconscious. Through this power of evocation the mythopoetic invokes and engages the imagination.

Analysis of the evocative power of the mythopoetic recognizes its relationship to what Jerome Bruner has described as the “narrative mode of thought.” He distinguishes narrative from paradigmatic thought, which he says leads to “good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis” (Bruner 1986, p. 13). The narrative on the other hand is the product of imagination, not reason, and yields

good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily “true”) historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. (Bruner 1986, p. 13)

As Bruner uses it, “narrative” describes the form of the text produced by the imagination; we would add that “mythopoetic” describes the nature of the language used within that form.

The evocative power of the mythopoetic is also related to what Paulo Freire (2000) calls “dangerous words.” In Freire’s context and concern for emancipation words like “policeman,” “landlord,” and “lease” have about them rich clusters of allusive connotation; they are perceived viscerally and carry with them a threat to tidy realms of reason and order. Kozol, in his recent *Illiterate America*, speaks to the need for dangerous words and their evocative power:

These are precisely the allusive words that people need to use if they are to find avenues of exit from the crowded prisons of their souls, to give voice to their longings, to give both lease and license to their rage. (Kozol 1985, p. 134)

While the notion of “dangerous words” is associated with the methodology of critical theory, words similarly rich in their power to command attention are found within the interpretive realm. In fact, it is common to think that language having evocative power is a characteristic only of interpretive works. As we argue, however, such power resides in mythopoetic language itself, and this language can be found in both the critical and interpretive paradigms.

A final point to be made about the evocative power of the mythopoetic is that it is intended to provoke action. It does so by appealing to emotion and eliciting response at an emotional as well as a rational level. The emotions that are so evoked implicitly dictate what action must be taken to satisfy them. Thus the critical theorist employs the mythopoetic to direct the reader toward emancipation, to action intended to gain freedom from the power of myth by denouncing it as a false reality. The interpretivist, on the other hand, uses the mythopoetic to encourage the reader to recover the sacred meaning of myth as it expresses essential human experience. In doing so there may be “dysfunctions” that surface. However, these do not deny the essential respect for myth itself.

In our attempt to recover an understanding of “mythopoetic” we have discovered that the mythopoetic includes both the tacit and personal nature of the mythical as

a source of knowledge, and the notion of poetics as the expressive form for communicating that knowledge. Mythopoetic writers call forth the power of this expression to create their texts. And, as in literary text, effects and responses are properties neither of the text nor of the reader; the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process (Iser 1978). We have articulated this “potential effect” as mythopoetic powers—reflexive, moral, controlling, and evocative powers—that flow between the text and the reader. They bring into play the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the author and the reader in concert. In the following section we illustrate that the mythopoetic depends on the participation of the reader. Our object is not to explain the works but rather to reveal the conditions that bring about the various possible effects in mythopoetic writings.

Mythopoetic Writing

In his edited collection, *Contemporary curriculum discourses*, William Pinar points to “mytho-poetical” work as its own category of curriculum writing. He implies that such writing falls outside the categories of “political” works, which most often reflect a critical orientation to inquiry, and also outside the “aesthetic” and “phenomenological” categories, which have interpretive orientations (Pinar 1988a, p. 7). Pinar’s distinction, which at first seems a rather minor classification decision, has serious implications in its separation of poetic expressions of myth from their hermeneutic traditions.

For us Pinar’s distinction raises a flag. It not only sidetracks curriculum writers such as Haggerson, Krall, the late Ronald Padgham, and others from the main paradigms of educational and curriculum inquiry, it also suggests that the mythopoetic is not to be found in texts that Pinar would place in other categories such as the (critically oriented) political, or the (interpretively oriented) aesthetic and phenomenological.

In our efforts to recover the mythopoetic as an expressive form that exists within a notion of the hermeneutic that includes both interpretive and critical traditions, we have first located the mythopoetic as a concept for curriculum theorizing in the work of Macdonald, and then explicated the nature and powers of the mythopoetic in the abstract. It now remains to illustrate within representative writings the functioning of those powers that we have described as characterizing the mythopoetic.

Pinar (1988a) mentions Nelson Haggerson as a mythopoetic writer, and it is clear that Haggerson’s Macdonald-Prize-winning paper, “Reconceptualizing inquiry in curriculum: using multiple research paradigms to enhance the study of curriculum” (1988) is a vivid example. In it he invites the reader to undertake a journey with overtones of a mythic quest. Using the metaphor of the “stream” to represent the domain of curriculum, the mythopoetic power of the text resides primarily in its ability to allow the reader to experience reflexively the stream from various inquiry perspectives. Haggerson also draws on the power of the mythopoetic to put forth a compelling moral agenda for researchers to understand and accept these differing inquiry paradigms as complementary rather than contradictory.

Florence Krall's piece "The shape of things in art, nature, and academia" (1985) exquisitely captures—as is characteristic of her work—the evocative power of the mythopoetic. Who, having heard or read this piece, fails to recall not the description but the experience of following the sensuous line of a Henry Moore sculpture, of holding fear in one's hand as a bloody severed penis of a grizzly bear, or of seeing in the polished gleam of the bear's penis bone a symbol of spiritual recovery and freedom from the misshapen forms of daily life. The non-linear flow of Krall's writing conveys her mythic sensing of the world, depicting it in terms of image and narrative that challenge rational analysis and yet, at the same time, communicates fully important universals of the lived human experience.

For both Haggerson and Krall the power of the mythopoetic is directed toward what Ricoeur (1970, p. 27) describes as a hermeneutic of restoration for demythologizing. The controlling power of the mythopoetic is used to influence the reader to uncover (or recover) previously hidden insights and meanings, and to reach a deeper comprehension of human experience and its relationship to curriculum theorizing. As such, both writers exemplify the mythopoetic used within the interpretive paradigm to further both their own and the readers' understanding of the sacred truths to which their writing hearkens.

While curriculum writers such as Haggerson and Krall, and others who work within the interpretive modes, use the mythopoetic as strong warp threads to shape the phenomenological fabric of their writing, writers within the critical tradition more often use the mythopoetic in subtle ways, like weft threads that give pattern and texture to the fabric of their work. A notable exception to this generalization is the work of Madeleine Grumet, wherein the mythopoetic is used expansively and extensively—a manner more characteristic of interpretivist writers—to explore critically dimensions of feminism in education, for example in Grumet's *Bitter milk: women and teaching* (1988). While works within the critical paradigm may require closer scrutiny to find the mythopoetic, such scrutiny is rewarded by evidence of how messages of social and political criticism are conveyed through the language used.

In order to recover a focus on the mythopoetic in critical writings we have chosen representative works of Michael Apple and Henry Giroux, two scholars generally recognized to be prolific, both in terms of their own writing and that of their respective students.

One of Apple's best known pieces is *The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict* (1979). His discussion of how the essential nature of conflict in scientific and social communities is denied in science and social studies curricula reflects the subtle invocation of the powers of mythopoetic language. For instance, close reading reveals widespread use of powerfully evocative adjectives used to emphasize points in the discourse. Students are described as facing "complex and often repressive political realities and dynamics of power in their society" (1979, p. 79), social studies texts are acknowledged to have "over the years, presented a somewhat biased view of the true nature of the amount and possible use of internecine strife" (1979, p. 80), and students are forced to learn "a basically unrealistic and essentially conservative perspective on the usefulness of conflict" (1979, p. 82)

These few examples point to a larger effect of placing the reader within the text and reflexively engaging her/him in the very conflict that Apple decries the lack of in school curricula. They also point to the moral agenda of the piece, which is to bring the reader to care positively about the conflict that he/she is experiencing and to become indignant at the lack of intellectual honesty and political utility in curriculum. The reader is made ready to act to change this “hegemonic” state of affairs.

Apple leaves little to chance as to how his reader ought to respond. He lists several “programmatically suggestions” to control what actions are to be taken to “counterbalance the hidden curriculum and selective tradition most evident in science and social studies as representatives of the formal corpus of school knowledge” (1979, p. 93). The reader is thus led through the powers of mythopoetic language to the critical theorist’s essential position of demystification in which the hidden denial of conflict in school curricula is viewed as promotion of a false reality that must be overturned.

Henry Giroux’s use of the mythopoetic is more obvious than Apple’s, in large part because Giroux’s writing uses evocative language more broadly to effect its often overtly polemic tone. In an essay entitled “Liberal arts, teaching and critical literacy: towards a definition of schooling as a form of cultural politics” (1988), he summarizes ideas explored more fully in his book *Schooling for democracy: critical pedagogy in the public sphere* (1987). His chapter offers a good example of the ways in which Giroux employs the powers of mythopoetic expression.

In his calls for a “critical literacy”—what he describes as “a language of possibility that allows educators and others to rethink the meaning and purpose of education in this country” and for teachers to be “transformative intellectuals” (1988, p. 261)—Giroux sounds the rallying cries for the battle that must be waged to

rescue the language of tradition, morality, and possibility from the militarists, ideological fundamentalists, and corporate technocrats who are more aggressive than ever in smothering those voices that do not represent their own interests and who treated the quality of life and civil liberties that need to be preserved and extended in this country. (1988, p. 261)

By such scathing delineation of the opposition and through numerous uses of the word “struggle” throughout the piece, the tone set is that of a moral crusade.

While the martial ring of this evocative language may be, at least in part, unintentional, the purpose it is to serve is not. It is intended to engage the reader in a winner-take-all struggle for schools as institutions that support and maintain Giroux’s critical theorist view of democracy. The reader is invited to identify with and become the kind of transformative intellectual whose task it is to wage and win this battle. The critical literacy that is the most powerful weapon in this fight is, upon examination, a form of demystification used to smash any opposing arguments.

The previous discussion provides only a hint of the kind of analysis that is possible in an attempt to recover the mythopoetic in curriculum writings. Other critical theorists whose writing in the curriculum field reflects mythopoetic expression are (to mention only a few examples): Peter McLaren (1986), Ira Shor (1986), Cameron McCarthy (1988), Jean Anyon (1988), and Patti Lather (1985), best known for her feminist orientation. Interpretivists who also contribute to the feminist literature include Janet

Miller (1988) and Jo Anne Pagano (1988), who both use an autobiographical voice to capture the self-reflexive nature of the mythopoetic. Canadian David G. Smith (1988) takes a phenomenological perspective and another Canadian, Terry Carson (1989), defends the interpretive position in his writing. John Albertini and Bonnie Meath-Lang (1987) base their work in journal writing. Like many writers, Jacques Daignault (1983) cannot be characterized easily as either critical theorist or interpretivist. His writing reminds one of an Escher woodcut in that he writes with paradoxical metaphors and mind-bending images about curriculum. Prolific writers such as Elliot Eisner (1985), Maxine Greene (1988), as well as Max Van Manen (1986) and William Pinar (1988a, b) continue to use mythopoetic voices and remind us, in their messages, of the importance of the aesthetic response in curriculum inquiry.

Writers mentioned thus far are often identified as those who contribute primarily to curriculum theorizing. However, it is important to include in the list of mythopoetic writings those authors who are not generally associated with curriculum theory. We are thinking particularly about the stories of teachers about their classroom experiences. Stories told by teachers themselves include, for instance, Vivian Paley's *Walley stories* (1981) and Stuart Palonsky's *900 shows a year: a look at teaching from a teacher's side of the desk* (1986) as well as the second-hand accounts of Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson, *Through teachers' eyes: portraits of writing teachers at work* (1986). Philosopher Gareth Matthews' *Dialogues with children* (1984) shows children's capacity to ponder profound questions and, of course, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's *The good high school* (1983), Eleanor Duckworth's *The having of wonderful ideas* (1987), and Tracy Kidder's *Among schoolchildren* (1989) probe the souls of those who inhabit schools. In all of these writings, the authors have used vivid experiential accounts of the lived world. Each one has an ear for conversations and an eye for rich and significant detail. It is the mythopoetic that gives renewed life to their narratives.

The Journey Continues

This study has been a journey in search of the place of the mythopoetic in curriculum inquiry. As we began, we revisited the writings of James Macdonald because he spoke about the "mythopoetic imagination" and his intellectual journey seemed to give us the direction we needed. His road was the hermeneutic path. We took his advice about the relation of theory to practice:

The test of "good" theory in practice is thus, not centrally that it works (i.e., that we can control practice), but that in the engagement of theory and practice we are emancipated from previous misunderstandings and are then freed to reinterpret situations and reach greater understandings. (1981, p. 133)

We chose to recover (or perhaps reinterpret) the possible meaning Macdonald had for "mythopoetic imagination." In a somewhat narrow framework, he posited that the poetic method should be considered as a third paradigm for curriculum inquiry distinct from science and critical theory. Yet he was most articulate in arguing that

the theory–practice relationship is a hermeneutic process. Theorizing, he said, is an act of creation: creating oneself and thereby eventually recreating the world. “There is a mystery to be probed, curiosity to be satisfied, confusion and ambiguity to be faced and lived with” (Macdonald 1982, p. 58).

We remind ourselves about the two schools of hermeneutic thought that Macdonald alludes to in his 1981 article. The schism leads in one direction toward Habermas’s methodological orientation including emancipation through self-understanding within the political and social worlds, and in another direction to a rival line of thinking deriving from Heidegger, developed by Ricoeur and Gadamer, in which hermeneutics is seen in the ontological process of understanding and interpreting the world as it is experienced. In curriculum writing this schism can be felt in the works of the critical theorist (as demystifying) and the interpretivists (as demythologizing). Our contention is that writers in both of these hermeneutic schools use mythopoetic expression to articulate their ideas.

In order to conceptualize the mythopoetic we visited the writings of Eliade, Cassirer, and Campbell, recognizing their comprehensive descriptions of the life-sustaining force of myth. From them we take as our assumption that myth is a source of knowledge that shapes our routine actions. It is, however, in understanding the power of poetics, especially through literary criticism, that we are able to articulate the expressive powers that poetics can take from communicating mythic knowledge. Mythopoetic power, we contend, includes reflexive, moral, controlling, and evocative powers that flow between the author and the reader.

Perhaps the most important visit we made was in order to recover the mythopoetic from those who embody it in their writing. Curriculum theorists identified with critical and interpretive approaches, as well as those who live with children in classrooms, provide us with the cases for understanding the power of the mythopoetic in curriculum writing.

We are convinced that an understanding of the mythopoetic in curriculum inquiry is essential. The language of education would be impoverished indeed if we accepted the vernacular of science as our sole means of expression. Scientific knowledge may provide us with a flattened version of facts. Mythopoetic expression is the essence of human intellect because it is in such expression that we find the sensations, feelings, and impulses to act. To engage in the mythopoetic search is to embark on a journey for greater understanding that motivates and satisfies us. As we see in the writings of Macdonald, even after his death on November 21, 1983, the journey never ends.

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Chapter 19

Conclusion: The Mythopoetic Challenge

Timothy Leonard and Peter Willis

The insight that the human mind is a function of imagination is the unifying thread of the mythopoetic project in curriculum and pedagogy. It is clearly the underlying commitment of the authors in this collection, whose work is filled with an uncommon hope in a time dominated by forces that would kill imagination in favor of linear, controllable rationality.

Of course imagination and the stories that it generates is never killed as such, but it can be repressed and heavily disguised. Current western militarist culture has sought to control human imagination through the “spin making” of image industries under control of state and large corporations and the unfettered appropriation of the power of the imagination in advertising. Curriculum in cultural studies that attempts to unmask the iron fist in the velvet glove of such advertising and media “spin” has been a valuable contribution to a socially aware curriculum. It does the learners a service in evoking critical attention and skepticism towards the truth claims of consumerist culture but of course the critical approach tends to be focused on the important but not exclusive arena of logical rationality. Logical rationality, this book has argued, needs to be complemented and enriched by the creative dimensions of human imagining with its links to the heart as well as the head and this has become more and more necessary.

A commonly held contemporary stance that curriculum must be a process contained within mathematically measurable parameters is not neutral. It is hegemonic. It is a corollary of the view that all persons are commodities, that all human interactions are markets, and that all conflicts are wars. It has two major toxic elements. Through its passion for control, this linear/rational orientation towards education has the potential to crush the imagination of its teachers and produce a culture that is literally mindless. Fundamentalist upheavals in the world’s religions are the most newsworthy reactions to this imperialist rationalism and, having gathered momentum for almost a century, these movements have become a credible threat in their own right to the future of imagination, mind, and reason itself. Paradoxically, then, an unbalanced and narrow rationality has spawned two dark enemies of reason: firstly, its own insistence that all knowledge is derived from science and technology; and secondly, the fundamentalist response that all knowledge is contained in the literal interpretation of divinely revealed texts.

As the essays of this collection demonstrate, there is hope that educators and curriculum workers can resist this domination of technical rationality and re-establish imagination to its central place in the curriculum through the process of mythopoesis. The mythopoetic is at once traditional and progressive; holistic and emancipatory. It can be practised in general education across the curriculum as well as in professional education and training. It uses story-telling, conversation, social-dramatic play, religious experience, spiritual practice, informal logic, critical analysis, and a comprehensive sense of the beauty of mind and matter in a synthetic manner that seemed unavailable even during the remarkable era of progressive education.

Though some are skeptical of the potential of mythopoesis to enter into the mainstream of education thought and practice, we are not. In the view of the majority of the writers represented in this volume, myth establishes meaning in the lives of persons, communities, states, and nations whether we notice it or not. The task of this book has been to push educators to take notice. By taking notice of the myth of western superiority, for example, one can, with Peter Bishop, imagine its power as experienced by Aboriginal peoples and find ways to educate for reconciliation. By listening to Mary Doll's experience of imagining, with Edward Albee, the circumstance of a man in love with a goat one can learn to "imagine the other," which may be a prerequisite to all meaningful learning, particularly in a world where awareness of human differences is becoming unavoidable. Some human differences are, of course, the result of human callousness and indifference, and the mythopoetic practice of Brenton Prosser in Chapter 15 may awaken in the teacher the realization of the profound incoherence of social inequality in the modern world. While not shunning a Deweyan problem-solving model to global inequalities, Prosser demonstrates the power of myth to help teachers stare these dismaying inequalities in the face in a manner beyond the capacities of mere critical theory. Out of such awareness grows the *practical* in education as understood by Aristotle and Joseph Schwab.

The authors of this book, of course, are not alone in their pursuit of imagination in curriculum and pedagogy. Recent research in neurobiology confirms the underlying physical unity of imagination, feeling, emotion, and thinking. The work of many phenomenological and qualitative researchers in education such as Kieran Egan, Max Van Manen, and Robert Bullough, postmodernists such as William Pinar and Joe Kincheloe, and psychologists such as Les Todres, Steen Halling, and Howard Gardner are complementary to the work of mythopoesis. But the movement ought not to be confused with qualitative research, with multiple intelligences research, or with postmodernism. While mythopoesis draws upon such movements, it also refocuses them by asking: how can we use our imaginations and our myths to engage students in the critical pursuit of personal and political meaning and living?

We think the essays presented here shed light on this question. We are certain that many teachers throughout the English-speaking world do this every day and have further light to offer. The great need now is to find those teachers, to unearth their work, and make them known. The struggle of imagination against mindlessness must be joined every day.