

# FOLLOWING THE THREAD OF LIFE IN MARY ASWELL DOLL'S *THE MYTHOPOETICS OF CURRERE*

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*The Mythopoeitics of Currere:  
Memories, Dreams, and Literary Texts as Teaching Avenues to Self-Study*  
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Mary Aswell Doll proceeds in the labor of *currere* by following a thread. She follows the thread of life woven through memory and history, entangled in shadows and chthonic depths, unwound by literature, dream, and myth. In Doll's book *The Mythopoeitics of Currere*, the thread emerges as a theme and a fundamental element of her curriculum theory as she describes the influence of Carl Jung's autobiography on her own thought and "journey into the depths of . . . psychic being" (p. xi). In this context, she contemplates Jung's concept of synchronicity and the perception of reality it affords. According to Jung (1955/1991), synchronicities are acausal yet meaningful connections between psychic and physical events, revealing the interrelationship between inner life and the external world. Doll explains that the experience of synchronicity provides passage into the dimension of the self beyond ego, exposing the continuity in happenstance, the through line of life always partially obscured in the thicket of experience.

Synchronicities remind us, Doll explains, that "things happen and come together for a reason" outside the order of the ego (p. xii). In them, she finds the thread that connects: the thread coiled, meandering, and unfurled in the poetic reality of the unconscious<sup>i</sup> and yet made available to consciousness through dreams, associations, and imaginative thought.<sup>ii</sup> Demonstrating this deeply subjective inquiry, Doll remembers the synchronicity of a dream she had in college, one that, she explains, foretold her father's death. It was "a dream," she writes, "that spoke so forcefully, with such clear and resounding images, that I knew it was truth of another kind" (p. xi).

Synchronicities shock us into awareness of the alterity of psychic life. Doll's work demonstrates that they can also initiate our journeying into the unconscious dimensions of experience. We see this as Doll pursues—through emotional complexity, courageous autobiography, and inspired study—the fuller fabric of meaning that her dream heralds. Although she mentions the dream only briefly in her initial reflections on Jung's autobiography, Doll returns to the dream in a chapter about her father and her relationship with him, threading the line of unconscious significance through her conceptualization of forgetting, memory, and “regression,” that is, “the first step backwards in *currere*” (p. 28). The synchronous dream invites this reflection and elaboration, we learn, because Doll's father “lived in [her] psyche,” his death leaving her “adrift,” the dream offering a promise of return (pp. 28-29). The dream, Doll explains, was “astonishingly true to the actual events that surrounded [her] father's last night,” exposing the fragile yet vital thread that would lead her through the ghostly landscape of loss and to the recovery of his memory (pp. 28-29).

“One needs a thread,” Doll explains, “to navigate the difficult passages of one's journey in life” (pp. xii-xiii). *The Mythopoetics of Currere* thus orients us to—indeed, immerses us in—intellectual and autobiographical journeying that follows the thread of life in the labyrinth of being: “the thread that connects one not only to the exit but to the entrance, to one's beginnings, even to the cord spun while in embryo, even to the archetypes found in myth” (p. xiii).

In this important contribution to curriculum studies, Doll draws on Jungian depth psychology, myth, her own autobiography, her students' writing and art, and an impressive diversity of literary texts to continue her commitment to the inner world of the self as the fundamental source of curriculum understanding, “the pull of the inner life” (p. xi) so manifestly the animating force of her oeuvre.<sup>iii</sup> Even as *The Mythopoetics of Currere* illuminates key threads in Doll's larger body of work, which I will explore below, it is a remarkably new offering to the field, as the numerous and subtly interwoven chapters reveal the uniqueness of her approach to *currere*, both inviting her readers more deeply into this realm of understanding curriculum and generating new language and metaphors for the “coursing” that is educational experience.<sup>iv</sup>

*The Mythopoetics of Currere* is comprised of two major sections. The first section, titled “Dreams and the Curriculum of the Remembered Self,” includes eight chapters; and the second section, titled “The Mythopoetics of *Currere* in Literary Texts,” includes twelve chapters. In this review, I provide an overview of Doll's theoretical contribution to *currere* studies; a conceptual summary of the two major sections of the book; and a close reading of a representative chapter from each.

Doll engages and expands *currere* as a field of thought and practice of inquiry. She elaborates the concept as it was introduced by Bill Pinar and Madeleine Grumet (1976/2014) in *Toward a*

*Poor Curriculum*, explores its use and evolution in subsequent curriculum scholarship (Grumet, 1978, 1999, 2016; Morris, 2001, 2015; Pinar, 1994, 2009, 2012; Salvio, 2007; Baszille, 2016), and specifies the mode of inquiry that illuminates *currere*: the curriculum as lived. As an approach to curriculum research, *currere* study engages lived experience and “the personal” through autobiography—understanding the elucidation of self-experience to be always partial, given an ineradicable subjective opacity. Doll uniquely and powerfully interprets this obscure dimension of *currere* through Jungian depth psychology as “the hidden other dimension that ghosts the self” (p. xii). Her introduction to the concept of *currere* through this Jungian framework indicates the distinctiveness of her project. “The urging of *currere* is to regress into . . . personal histories” obscured in the shadows, Doll explains, and this provocation of the cryptic past, discovered in and pursued through *currere* study, is reduplicated in the “call” of myth (p. xiii)—myth, that mode of writing that “open[s] our portals to what lies beyond, beside, or below the surface” (p. 66).

Though *currere* is fundamentally interior work, Doll makes clear that this mode of study is never solely so, as it requires, as well, a purposeful analysis of the self’s entanglement with history, culture, the world. “*Currere* is Pinar’s major (seminal) contribution to curriculum studies,” Doll explains, “for its re-cognizing the self as an organizing entity that reaches out to reconceptualize the world” (p. 63). She elaborates, stating that as an “organizing entity,” the self is structurally complex, divided against itself in its conscious and unconscious dimensions, ego and shadow. The organizing dynamism of the self thus provokes and blocks self-communication, requiring of the student of *currere* both a regressive turn to inner experience in its chaotic fluidity and a writerly emergence from that regressive “flow” (p. 62). In one of several remarkable close readings of Pinar’s theory, Doll characterizes this act of writing as “a necessary second stage” of *currere* in which one conceptualizes the “remembered self with words” (p. 62), as her own writing in this regard, issuing from her own resurrection of ghosts, advances *currere* as imaginative, mythopoetic journeying between inner and outer worlds.

In Section One of the book, “Dreams and the Curriculum of the Remembered Self,” Doll charts the movement of the mind in its perceptual contact with a “primitive self” (Pinar, as cited in Doll, p. 62) that cannot be wholly disclosed and yet that must be sought if personal meaning is to exceed the telling of selfsame stories. She explores memory and dreams to foster a necessary mode of “dwelling” in the “unfamiliar wellspring” of subjectivity (p. 4), entering the otherness of this psychic terrain with myth as her guide, given that “the psyche is mythic” and “myths are psychic stories” (p. xiii).

“Memory and *Currere*,” the chapter that begins Section One, is an exemplary demonstration of the mythopoetic foundations of Doll’s curriculum theory. The chapter explores the story of Odin from Norse mythology—specifically, Odin’s journey to Mimir’s well where he pledges an eye to drink from this well of wisdom and receive the mystic vision it imparts. Mimir is a

giant whose severed head has been reanimated as the oracle of the well, his name denoting “memory” —in Old Norse, “the rememberer, the wise one” (Simek, 1993, p. 216). Mimir’s well is located beneath and nourishes the Yggdrasil tree, the tree of life or “the great ash tree of the world” (Doll, 2017, p. 3). For a draught from the well, Odin makes the payment Mimir demands, sacrificing his own right eye. Odin’s offering up the right eye is a mythopoetic detail that Doll contemplates in terms of “Left/Right symbolism,” noting that the right eye, governed by the left brain, “controls logic, intellect, reason, and power” (p. 4). Surrendering the eye of rationality and literalism to the “Well of Memory,” Odin seeks intuitive and imaginative capacities diminished, Doll carefully guides us in understanding, by the excesses of reason. Receiving Odin’s eye in the watery realm of memory and wisdom, letting “the sacrificed eye sink deep into the water of the well,” (p. 4), Mimir releases to Odin a wellspring of vision:

Odin drinks from the well. As he drinks all the future becomes clear to him. He sees what will happen to the gods of Asgard and the humans of Midgard. He sees the great battle between good and evil that will play out at the doom of the gods. And he sees that evil will be destroyed so that a new era can emerge. (p. 4)

In the torment and transformation this myth conveys, Doll follows the thread of *currere*. In the surrender of the rationalizing eye to the depths of memory and the deliverance of the imaginative eye within the world, Doll detects the dual direction of *currere* as elaborated in Pinar’s (2012) theory. Through the story of Odin, “clear in its sense of two-ness, right and left, conscious and unconscious,” Doll explains, “we are being re-minded to observe our worlds with greater imagination but also to re-turn to the buried (repressed, forgotten) contents with greater insight, the ‘mind’ of the left eye” (pp. 6-7). Like Odin’s search for wisdom, *currere* study requires and compels regression into memory, yet it reaches no end in the experience of inner dwelling. In its dual directedness, *currere* study engages the past as “the source-book for the future” (Pinar, as cited in Doll, p. 71), recovering memory, Doll explains, “to re-enter the public sphere” (p. 4).

*Currere* necessitates but finds no conclusion in remembrance via subjective regression. Nor does *currere*—the running, the coursing—culminate in a narrative representation of the self having so journeyed into the past. *Currere* proceeds in part through theoretical and scholarly distanciation, given that experience, taken as an exclusive authority, can “provincialize and even mislead” (Pinar, 2011, p. 17). But *currere* does not solve the messiness and uncertainty of experience by merely confirming theory—a theory of historical subjectification, for example—on the evidence of experience lived and recollected. Integrating dual purposes, subjective and social, autobiographical and allegorical (Doll, pp. 4, 7, 62), *currere* sustains a relationship with the enigmatic complexity of the self in the world, countering tendencies toward literalism in personal story and social-political theory (Pinar, 2011, pp. 17, 27, 34). In kind, Odin’s myth, through the “murkiness” and “mystery” of its primary terrain of meaning, teaches that “hidden knowings are not meant to be grasped quickly by literal vision,” given that the thread

of life—the significance of our personal and collective histories—is to be found, Doll insists, in “that which cannot be clearly articulated” (p. 7).<sup>v</sup>

In the labor of self-study, Doll emphasizes, “it is not enough to move in one direction only,” drawing attention to the way *currere* study elicits, intensifies, and pursues a fundamental dynamic of individual subjectivity: the recursive movement between self and world (p. 4). Through the figures of Odin and Mimir, Doll thus illuminates the specificity and significance of *currere* as a mode of inquiry dually engaged, not split but rather animated by study of private and public spheres of experience, subjective and social realms of engagement: animated, to use the Jungian phrase, by the “tension of opposites” (Jung, 1943/1953, p. 53). In the myth, such productive tension is depicted as Odin relinquishes his right eye to the underworld, releasing a chthonic wisdom, and as his left eye remains “above ground,” providing the creative vision necessary to discern “the secrets of the runes” (p. 4). Here Doll correlates the runes—symbols of arcane significance—with the objects and subjects of our study, that which we, students and scholars of curriculum, “must ‘study’ in the company of others to complicate our thinking about self and world” (p. 4).

Such study is exemplified by one of Doll’s art students, Meredith, who, for the final project in Doll’s class on myth, created a painting in response to the Odin story. For the painting, Meredith used a canvas made from elephant dung, following, perhaps, the Nigerian British artist Chris Ofili in his use of the material as a “gut medium,” situating creativity in the linked processes of devouring, absorbing, and rejecting (Awoyokun, 2013, p. 7). The choice of canvas evokes for me, as well, the labor of the dung beetle, or scarab, moving a ball of dung across the landscape, which appears in one of Carl Jung’s visions (Burnett, Bahun, & Main, 2013, p. 128).<sup>vi</sup> In Egyptian myth, this work of the dung beetle symbolizes the movement of the sun across the sky and, thereby, rebirth and self-creation.<sup>vii</sup>

On this canvas, Meredith painted the Yggdrasil tree, an interpretive, mythopoetic painting that unsettles and renews Doll’s sense of the myth’s significance. Through her engagement with Meredith’s painting, enthralled by the creation, Doll returns to the details of the myth (Hathaway, 2002, p. 57), explaining that Meredith,

painted every corner of the five-foot dung piece, highlighting the recognizable aspects of the tree, including the squirrel Ratatosk that runs up and down the trunk, connecting upper and lower realms; the Midgard serpent, encircling the Earth underwater; and the Fenrir wolf tied to a rock with a magic ribbon made of the roots of a mountain, the spittle of a bird, the breath of a fish, and the beard of the woman. (p. 5)

Doll lingers with these details of her student’s work. The particulars are runic yet graspable, taken not as messages with “a one way trajectory” (Grumet, 2006, p. 48), nor as facts in a

sphere of coherent meaning, but rather as expressions of educational experience, indeed curriculum, as Madeleine Grumet (2006) conceptualizes, both of the world and of the subjectivity it conveys.

Doll fosters the emergence of curriculum with lines of movement passing through inner and outer worlds, exemplifying, I believe, an image of curriculum that Grumet (1976/2014) introduces in *Toward a Poor Curriculum* and further elaborates in a more recent essay calling for education to provide passage to the world beyond schooling (Grumet, 2006). Grumet (2006) offers an image of perpetual movement between internal and external realities, reminding us that “at any given point we exist suspended between two worlds that we know only partially” (p. 48). She suggests, in Jungian terms, that curriculum as *currere* functions like a “lemniscate, or figure eight, ever enlarging human experience through its extension of both internal and external non ego” (p. 48). This image of continuous inner/outer movement, an infinite threading of alterities through experience, is vividly enacted in Doll’s text. Throughout *The Mythopoetics of Currere*, Doll pursues with striking verve and vision, in her words, the “various states of otherness [that] lie ready to make claim and awaken consciousness to that which causes the ego to slumber” (p. 98). In her engagement with Meredith’s painting, she pursues the Yggdrasil tree to its metaphorical root, “the deeper stratum of the collective unconscious, the primeval psyche” (p. 7). Traversing the path of the lemniscate, Doll translates the “image awareness” that the painting affords into the world of the classroom, where, with her students, in the public sphere, she pursues “a common effort to restore Memory” (p. 7).

Reflective passage between inner and outer worlds, we learn from Doll, demands inquiry that counters the force of “dangerous literalism,” inquiry that dismantles the “modern myths without metaphors” that have “colonized our ways of thinking” (pp. 49-50). Doll thus calls us, and her students, to engage myths in their imaginative, fictive character, to engage “fiction in all its manifold manifestations” (p. 50), so that we might encounter their meanings as “a beckoning ‘something’” (p. 126). Doll writes: “Myths and fairytales are so canny that their meanings are never overt but rather a beckoning ‘something’ we need to address” (p. 126).

Through detailed accounts of her own reading, Doll reveals her pursuit of the enigmatic “something” that beckons within her own “inner currents” (p. 49). Through careful accounts of her teaching, she reveals that “something” beyond the literal to be the fundamental source of her pedagogy. As her student Meredith re-symbolizes myth, Doll attends to the limits of symbolization, the animating otherness of *currere*, a curriculum—autobiographical in character and rooted in the humanities—as Grumet (2006) suggests, “teetering on the edge of what it means to be human” (p. 50). As a teacher of *currere*, taking up the expressive and interpretive work of her student, Doll epitomizes a humanities orientation to autobiography conceptualized by Grumet (2006): the teacher reading “to discern how another question or understanding would enlarge [an autobiography’s] presentations of self and world” (p. 50).

Attending to Meredith's painting of the Yggdrasil, Doll notes that the details of the painting "are so many and various that they attest to its psychodynamic" (p. 5). It is a curriculum that draws her to otherness without and within, a tree "though still, it moves; though solid, it is fluid; though grand, it is ominous," compelling her to declare, in awe of its enigma and abundance: "This is not 'just' a tree" (p. 5).

Doll then continues, further demonstrating the seriousness and delight with which she regards Meredith's aesthetic study. She first clarifies that an element of the myth that the painting evokes in her memory, the magical ribbon binding the Fenrir wolf, does not appear in the painting:

Meredith was unable to paint the ribbon, I am relieved to say, since magic need not be re-presented. So complex and colorful was Meredith's painting, with rich browns, reds, and blues! But what spoke to me, caught my eye, turned my mind around, was . . . the eye of Odin. Meredith did not overlook the small detail of Odin's eye gleaming from the depths of the well of Mimir.

Doll follows the thread of *currere* in the dynamics of presence and absence, in the unrepresentable force of magic and the re-presented sacrifice of a part of the self. And Meredith, the student, returns to Doll, the teacher, "that strange other detail that lies in the dark waters of Memory" (p. 6). Doll writes:

Up to that point in my teaching of the myth, I confess not to have paid attention to Odin's sacrificial eye. That Odin was recognized by an eye patch was enough detail for me. Teacher can explain and explain, but artist restores memory. I will not forget that moment in class. I was both delighted with Meredith's portrayal and dismayed by my own 'intelligence,' having forgotten this significant mythic motif of the eye in water. (p. 5)

In the study of myth and in the reception of our students' mythopoetic labor, Doll demonstrates, we can rediscover the dynamic tensions of *currere* that so complicate curriculum and our conversations about it: the regression into memory as a passage to futurity, the exploration of interiority as an outward opening to relationality and collectivity, and the engagement with our own subjectivity, in its indistinctness and mystery, as an encounter with otherness. In the study of myth, we see the elemental movement of *currere* toward otherness. "This is *currere*," Doll emphasizes, "a territory of the self both mine and not mine" (p. 4).

Myth enables exploration of this territory. So too do memory and dreams afford passage into the alterity of *currere*. Throughout Section One of the *Mythopoeitics of Currere*, Doll reveals the expanse of otherness, including its cultural and social dimensions, to be intimate in character,

made available for study through reflection on the relationships nearest to us and the images our dreams usher into consciousness. Particularly compelling are chapters in which Doll explores memories of her brother, mother, and father: Chapter 3, “My Brother: Duncan/Bill”; Chapter 4, “My Mother, the Editor, Mary Louise Aswell”; and Chapter 5, “My Father, the Editor, Edward Campbell Aswell.” In these auto/biographical narratives, Doll explores “memory tinged with the ghosts of unresolved tensions” (p. 27), and she ultimately demonstrates that writing through personal memory—through loss and longing, negotiating the chaos of regression and the emergence of self-insight—is a fundamental process of *currere*.

Section Two of Doll’s book, “The Mythopoetics of *Currere* in Literary Texts,” brings heightened focus to the teaching of literature as a route into the self-study that is *currere*. Throughout the section, in conversation with other curriculum scholars who amplify the complexity of reading and literary study (Block, 1995; Greene, 1973, 1995; Grumet, 1999; Salvio, 2007; Sumara, 1996), Doll elaborates the probing of literature necessary to enliven its subjective and pedagogical potential. In her account, reading excavates “the fictions that layer the self” (p. 47). Conceptualizing such reading, Doll counters the goal of so much schooled reading: “symbol hunting and theme grasping” toward the mastery of “some Thing” on a test, the hunting down and offering up of decontextualized literary “fact” (p. 48). Doll is nonetheless concerned with particulars; it is, for Doll, the subtle particulars of the lived experience of reading that initiate and sustain *currere* study. She calls us, therefore, to a reflective, autobiographical mode of reading in which “one might remember one’s pause, one’s momentary, tiny questioning of firm, presentable understanding, one’s ever-so-small crack into chiseled belief systems” (p. 49).

Reading as a practice of *currere* finds in images and metaphors—“the basic givens of psychic life” (p. xvi)—a structure of meaning in which enigma upends the known, in which the familiar gives way to the strange (p. 48). Through such reading, “feelings thought to be central get routed,” “peripheral imaginings begin to take root,” and “one learns about living, about mistakes, and about being coerced by cultural demands” (p. 48). If journeying in the figural complexity of literature “requires readers to tap into their inner turmoil, their courings,” and to witness internally forces of social antagonism, it is, as well, a practice of inquiry that sustains our efforts “to grasp more coherently the world within as well as without” (p. 48). When deeply engaging the figurative threads of literary texts and their shadowed histories, reading becomes, Doll demonstrates, a venture into the symbolic terrain that interweaves fiction and reality, enabling one to “dwell a while in the dark” (p. xv) and to “unearth one’s own foundational images” (p. xvi). Unearthing the images that organize the psyche makes them available for re-symbolization and further study—in both private and public spheres of educational experience.

In Section Two of her book, Doll thus deepens our grasp of not only the subjective foundations but also the social and political dimensions of literary study, further elaborating the



transformative character of literary experience. “Out of the very chimney corner from which the humanities huddle,” she reminds us, “fiction disturbs the status quo” (p. 47). Throughout the chapters of this section, we encounter literature that provokes unruly interpretive practices, as Doll demonstrates a mode of literary engagement that sustains their disruptive potential. Her commitment to this intellectual, autobiographical, and pedagogical labor is evidenced strikingly in Chapter 10, “I am Dirt: Disturbing the Genesis of Western Hegemony.” In this chapter, a rupture of order in a culturally dominant narrative invites Doll to complicate the study of human origin and to specify subjectivity as the site and source of an education that expands and potentially transforms the world.

In Chapter 10, Doll explores the shadow text of the “religious doctrine” of the West: “a dark underbelly known as myth, hidden or stamped out from modern Western consciousness” (p. 58). The reading Doll undertakes in this chapter unravels the knots of a culturally hegemonic narrative and taps the fictive force of the mythical understanding that the dominant narrative conceals. More specifically, Doll interrogates the cosmogony of The Book of Genesis, engaging this “founding story of Western Euro-centric cultural values,” first, toward discerning its legacy: “sowing the seeds of misogyny which forever splits off humans from earth, man from woman, and humans from animals” (p. 58). She then pursues this compelling deconstructive critique toward recovering the modes of relating, communicating, and being-in-time occluded by the ideology embedded in Genesis: the Great Chain of Being (pp. 56-57).

Citing Genesis, specifically God’s call to the newly created man to “have dominion” over all creatures and things, “over all the earth” (cited in Doll, p. 56), Doll traces the links between this theology of dominance and the acts of naming, categorizing, and dividing that are normalized and valorized in Western thought. In Genesis, “Logos, not Eros, rules, meaning that things must be separated and divided logically” (p. 56). This dominant narrative of human origin thus splits hierarchically light and dark, man and nature, man and woman (p. 56). The gendered implications run deep, Doll explains, as “woman, sculpted from the unconscious Adam’s rib, is clearly a second thought, a possession really, and [she is] given no naming powers such as those given to Adam” (p. 57).

In this context, Doll reveals and enacts the power of undoing a narrative, a knowing, a name. She first briefly references the “postmodern, feminist Eve” of Ursula K. Le Guin’s short story “She Unnames Them” — Eve, in this version, “unnaming the animals so as to free them” (p. 57). Doll then proceeds in a similar labor of deconstruction: reading other, early cultural myths of origin, using them to unbind the fundamental terms of Western cosmogony.

Doll recalls that the Adam of Genesis “quickly rises out of the dirt to subdue, rule, and name,” compelling her to chart this “dirt origin” to “early mythic and spiritual cosmogonies” (p. 57). She takes up the story of the child Krishna, of Hinduism, holding all of existence in dirt in his mouth; the story of Spider Woman, from Southwestern Native American cultures, “mixing

four piles of earth—white, black, yellow, and red—with saliva and mold[ing] these piles into the shapes of humans, singing them into creation”; and the story of Obatala, from the Yoruba religion, who descends from the sky, piling earth into chaos, and creating humans from the earth scratched up by a rooster (p. 57). In Doll’s reading, as the dirt spreads around the tale of Eden, the lessons of Genesis—“dominion, obedience, punishment, and debasement (p. 57)—give way to the “tension of opposites” (p. 59), the serpent, once split off as evil, “reclaiming its connection with Earth and woman and reminding woman to do the same with the snake” (p. 57). Ultimately, in the goddess cultures, Doll finds the significance of “the snake-woman connection”:

In myth, opposite worlds blend together, need each other, act in tensive union; the cycle of life necessarily includes the underworld, and woman is not just a rib but a force of creation. A chthonic animal of the earth’s darkness, the snake was once thus highly honored by goddess cultures and endowed with the wisdom of hidden knowledges. As an ancient symbol of rebirth, the snake literally sheds its skin to appear young, born again, when it emerges out of its year hibernation in Earth. [...] Woman’s connection to earth is thus older than Genesis, and true knowledge is really wisdom which comes from unseen places (p. 58).

The story of Genesis “put[s] an evil cast on both [snake and women], punishing all of humankind for women’s curiosity” (p. 58), but Doll reads it askance, following the tendrils of this narrative thicket to its rootstalk, finding in pre-classical myths, including the Pelasgian myth of Eurynome, that the snake is “webbed to the finer points of the cosmos” (p. 57) and that woman, figured as a snake, is the agent of creation, connection, and change. In this reading, Doll does not seek and express a superordinate counternarrative, acknowledging that all cultural myths do not undo the violence of the gendered splitting of Genesis. She pursues instead the countervailing forces of multiplicity, complexity, and flux. More specifically, she explores language and story from various tribal cultures that undermine the hegemony of Western “hierarchy, mastery, and logic” (p. 59) through productive tensions rather than splitting. Doll also counters the risks of essentialism in references to “indigenous knowledge” and “Western Eurocentrism.” She does so by enumerating a host of contemporary writers and scholars whose literature and theory enable us to find difference, complexity, and tension within culturally delimited fields of knowledge and aesthetic production: “Jamaica Kincaid, Hua Zhang, Lisa See, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Maxine Hong Kingston, homi bhabha, Kwame Appiah, Jacque Daignault, [and] Hongyu Wang” (p. 60). The voices of these writers, and the productive tensions they sustain, imbue Doll’s book as she threads them through her own *currere* study.

Writing about Shirley Geok-lin Lim, for example, Doll explores the “several alienations that define her poetics of elsewhere: West and East, Mother and Father, men and women, violence and shame” (p. 101). Lim grew up in the British colony of Malacca, Malaysia—the child of a

Chinese father and Peranakan mother—and she ultimately moved to the United States. In her poetry and memoir, Lim captures her “sense of being an outsider-within” (p. 103), negotiating life within her multiracial colonized homeland and then translates the toxic nourishment of her Western education into a path of individuation, writing in her memoir: “I have seen myself not so much sucking at the teat of British colonial culture as actively appropriating those aspects of it that I need to escape that other familial/gender/native culture that violently hammered out only one shape for self. I actively sought corruption to break out of the pomegranate shell of being Chinese and girl” (Lim, cited in Doll, pp. 104-105). Doll elaborates this remarkable account, specifying the tension that rouses such complex becoming: “[Lim] is both East and West, neither all one or all other, neither one in clear dialogue with the other” (p. 104).

For Doll, the tension of opposites, drawn forth from literary sources like Lim’s poetry and memoir, animates *currere* in its fundamental movement. Splitting, like that enacted in The Book of Genesis, suppresses its force and potential. If Genesis demands “separation from rather than co-operating with cosmos and world,” Doll explains, there is a correlate in “educationism” that severs “subjectivity . . . from the subjects taught” (p. 61). Doll thus warns against education that wholly abstracts knowledge, undermining the depth, specificity, and complexity of individual subjectivity.

What *currere* offers in this context is the recovery of the self that “the abstract individual has suppressed but not escaped”—recovery of the “primitive self” that stirs in the shadows of experience (Pinar, cited in Doll, p. 62). Through the labor of *currere*, Doll argues, “the self, recovered by various means . . . is birthed from the dark, and like the myths of old, brings special wisdom, which must be translated and analyzed” (p. 63). As Doll demonstrates throughout her text, the student of *currere* pursues such insight and inquiry toward self-transformation *and* political engagement, enabling subtle and powerful movement between the primitive self and the public sphere. To emphasize this movement and relationship, Doll returns to Pinar’s notion of “allegory” (p. 62). She explains that the term designates the relationship between the realm of the personal, which is always charged with unconscious meaning, and the realm of the conceptual, which is always exceeded by the worldly forms that our concepts name. Pinar nonetheless situates allegory in the sphere of subjectivity, thus sustaining the tension of social, historical, and cultural otherness in the sphere of the “living ‘I’” (p. 62). Allegory therefore magnifies the relational character of *currere*, reminding us that this subjective labor of study illuminates “the connection humans have always had with other worldly forms” (p. 62). Through the notion of allegory, Doll explains, “Bill Pinar reconceptualizes for postmoderns what premoderns have always known: humans are co-operators with their worlds” (p. 62).

Here, in the relational vibrancy of *currere*, Doll invites us into mythopoetic inquiry that reveals the “capacity,” indeed the “interiority,” “within all things” (p. 96). Attending to the worldly

forms of literature and myth, she orients us to “the reality that lies *underneath* words” (p. 139), broadening our sense of the world’s “inner” complexity, expanding our grasp of the sphere of unfolding selfhood. In *The Mythopoetics of Currere*, Doll demonstrates how memory, dreams, and literary texts productively unsettle regimes of knowledge rigidified through literalism. Narrow orders of truth and being, we learn, give way to the capaciousness of subjectivity—that is, when subjectivity is opened to the forces of regression, reverie, and reading. Doll calls us to witness the diminished interiority of a world forged not only through literalism but also through rage, egoism, and authoritarian compliance, calling us, as well, to explore the capacity of mythopoetics to open inward through the “rupture of structures” held in place by assumed knowledge and values (p. 101). If “interiority” is, as Doll writes, “that which is within all things and so has ‘capacity,’” the mythopoetics of *currere* has a unique reflexive capacity: to recover interiority, to enliven the coursing within, and to help us find the thread of life in “the other inner side of things” (p. 96).

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<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 8, "Beyond the Window: The Inscape of Currere," Doll explicates the poetic reality of the unconscious in these terms: "The unconscious is a poetic not a scientific reality. It can only be apprehended in an 'as if' manner, through personification and metaphor. So embedded are we in orthodoxy, however, that most of us are ignorant of the poetic nature of inner life—just as we are unaware of the rich deviations of our own cultures that draw on fantasy and imagination. The task of

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the teacher, as for the analyst, is to teach how to read psychic speech if the individual is to be brought together with the nurturing symbols of culture" (pp. 38-39).

<sup>ii</sup> The concept of synchronicity is not otherwise elaborated in *The Mythopoetics of Currere*. Doll's writing nonetheless conveys the way she works with synchronicities as pathways to insight, imagination, and the poetic reality of the unconscious.

<sup>iii</sup> One can chart Doll's sustained attention to questions of interiority from her early scholarship in literary criticism to her current writing in curriculum studies. In *Beckett and Myth: An Archetypal Approach*, Doll (1988) explores the "soul searching" in Samuel Beckett's body of work. Reading Beckett through myth and Jungian depth psychology, Doll provides a truly stunning account of his call to inner experience: "Beckett takes us to various places, where soul—glimpsed but not found—is felt at its zero point. Empty rooms and ancient ruins become places that induce a thinking mind to cease for a moment its tiresome habit of figuring things out, always to conclusion, and to feel, for a change. There, in the space that emptiness affords, the living soul suffers. There, the searched-for soul lives" (p. 2). In *Like Letters in Running Water*—a substantial contribution to curriculum studies, literary criticism, and humanities education—Doll (2000) tells us curriculum is "a coursing, as in an electric current," a prelude to her account of the labor of curriculum theory: "The work of the curriculum theorist should tap this intense current within, that which courses through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person's energy source" (p. ix).

<sup>iv</sup> In *The Mythopoetics of Currere*, Doll employs and extends the metaphor of curriculum as an electric current, a coursing—a metaphor she first elaborated in *Like Letters in Running Water* (Doll, 2000). More specifically, in Chapter 7 of *The Mythopoetics of Currere*, Doll pursues the interior condition of curriculum by tapping the current of her dreamlife, recalling and interpreting dreams to "make the descent into dream power" (p. 34). Dreamwork, here, emerges as a fundamental practice of *currere*, as a fundamental approach to studying "the coursings from within" (pp. 34-37).

<sup>v</sup> In *The Character of Curriculum Studies*, Pinar (2011) elaborates the conditions of our always partial grasp of experience: "It is the structural noncoincidence of the alive body—the time and space of subjectivity—that invites us to experience *experience*, for example, to remember what we have undergone, to forget what we cannot bear to remember, and to understand what we can recall and feel compelled to comprehend" (p. 8).

<sup>vi</sup> A scarab appears, as well, in Jung's (1955/1991, p. 31) well-known example of synchronicity—his patient recounting a dream of a golden scarab and then a scarab tapping at the window behind him and ultimately flying into the room.

<sup>vii</sup> In her discussion of dreaming in Chapter 7, "Dreams: The Coursings from Within," Doll describes the Egyptian god Ra moving the sun across the sky, labor requiring that at sunset, he "descend into a dark place where he [has] to confront the monster Apep" (p. 34). The journey into darkness that enables the return of the sun and the light—Doll likens this journey to dreaming. Facing the monster in the dark, the god Ra requires protection from the lion goddess Bast; in the journey into darkness that is dreaming, Doll tells us, each night, she "hop[es] the lion will lead the way" (p. 34).