

Promise for a Post-structural Approach to Curriculum

By Don Livingston

Abstract: Rather than directly confronting dominant forms of power, a post-structural curriculum holds the promise to affect change through the disruption and interruption of social practices once thought to be stable forces. This theoretical discussion is augmented with examples of strategies that teachers can use as a philosophical base for facilitating an activist curriculum that has no pre-determined outcomes.

The field of curriculum studies has been embroiled in an internecine series of tumultuous, protracted paradigm wars (Gage, 1989) that began during the reconceptualization of curriculum from 1969 through 1979, a time when rebellion raged against those in the field who crafted curriculum rationales, matrices and prescribed instructional programs (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Storming the barricades of the establishment, those who sought reconceptualization toppled the idea that curriculum studies' role in scholarship was limited to instructional issues such as setting objectives, learning experiences, organization and evaluation (Tyler, 1949). Steeped in the technologies of conflict theories, they challenged the legitimacy of legitimacy itself - the Tyler rationale, and unquestionably succeeded in broadening the idea of what is curriculum. Young scholars on the front lines of the battle opened intellectual frontiers never enjoyed before (Pinar et al., 1995). Their struggle was a struggle against a myopic view that limited inquiry to instructional practice in schools (Reynolds, 2001). Collectively these scholars liberated in the field from a prescriptive stranglehold. As Nathaniel Gage framed it, "As you all know, the critics triumphed" (Gage, 1989, p. 6). And, for a while, the peace was held together by a synthesis of the remnants of scientific traditionalists who were permitted to sit at the table along side of those who began to think of curriculum as a political, racial, gendered, aesthetic and theological text (Pinar et al.)

Yet, this fragile peace was shattered when post-structuralism theory opened spaces that made it possible to embrace Pinar's curricular conception that "curriculum does not exist, it just happens" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 483). Viewing curriculum in this way has become unsettling for some because it not only interrupts the utopian yearning for certainty, stability and unity in the curriculum (Pinar et al.), it also confounds those who desire change through a social reconstructivist approaches (Freire, 2002; McLaren & Fischman, 1998; McLaren, 1998).

Hegel's Trap

I remember as a child playing with what I called a Chinese finger puzzle, a short, colorful cylinder woven with strips of paper that enticed me to place both index fingers into each end, only to discover that I could not escape if I pulled away with oppositional force. After a while in the trap, I began to believe that I would have to spend my childhood, or possibly the rest of my life, with my index fingers stuck pointing at each other. After much frustration and rage, I finally figured out that escape was only possible when I found that the spaces in between the fibers of the trap were the keys to my release. Such is our dilemma today in curriculum, when we wage a direct assault upon oppression the noose only gets tighter.

This is Hegel's trap, one that brings us to an absurd situation where two contrary positions are seen to be capable of reconciliation, to exist without contradiction (McTaggart &

McTaggart, 1896). Our frustration and rage is predicated in Hegel's idea of the synthesis of opposites; it is perhaps the most seductive aspect of Hegel's system. It is the hope that the conflict of direct opposition might vanish to be eventually resolved in a harmonious synthesis.

Rather than naming oppression as domination, then countering this thesis of domination with a liberating anti-thesis in the quest for synthesis, post-structuralism plants the seed for us to imagine spaces between the thesis, and to reject an ontology based on reified fact and its de-ontological anti-thesis, and disengage from the false hope of an ontology of possibility (Derrida, 1994). This is what post-structuralism promises, an exhilarating potential for powerful agency in the spaces that exist between the dialectical conflict (Deleuze, 1987). Post-structuralism is an escape plan that has no prescribed strategy, no ontology of possibility; it is theory that is attempting to get us out of Hegel.

What is emerging in the field as a result of post-structural thought is a conversation without limits. Cyborgs in post-humanity, vampires, country music fiction - particularly science fiction, to name a few, are emerging as rich spaces in which to do curriculum theorizing. But, what in the world do cyborgs, vampires, country music and such have to do with schools? Lois Weiss, at the spring 2002 AERA Annual Conference, seemingly frustrated by an apparent indifference to the schoolhouse, chastened her audience to get back into the dialectical fight against hegemonic educational policies. She tempered her admonishment with a preface to her criticism by saying that while there are some useful ideas that come from post-structural writing, this is a critical time for action (Weiss, 2002). Clearly her call is for the flock to return to counter-hegemonic liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 2002). Donald Macedo, too, rails against post-structuralism in his forward to the thirtieth anniversary edition of Freire's (2002) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, calling post-structuralism's abandonment of class analysis as unconscionable indifference to the horrendous conditions that oppressed peoples endure. Macedo, quoting Freire in Henry Giroux's book, *Radical Pedagogy and Educated Hope*, wrote that we cannot accept the "post-structuralism tendency to translate diverse forms of class, race, and gender based oppression to the discursive space of subject positions" (Freire, p. 14).

In an attempt to broker a peace in this newest paradigm war, liberatory educators now welcome a theoretical framework that includes a multi-variant analysis of race, class, gender, culture, language and ethnicity. The problem with reconciliation between the two is that you can't be in the dialectic and out of it at the same time. By waging a counter assault on perpetrators of injustice, social reconstruction curriculum theory is in a perpetual state of reacting to 'what happened'. Rather, post-structural curriculum theory anticipates what the future holds in order to create ways in which enslavement is averted by a "what is going to happen" position, and we always know what is going to happen. "What is going to happen" is a very different question from the social reconstructionist question "what do we want to happen". "What do we want to happen" is a meta-narrative question that is the function of the structuralism maintained by the State's apparatus of central power. The State already knows where we are going because it conserves the present to insure that the future will serve the same power structures as it serves today. The tricky part is getting out of the dialectic without opposing it because such action would inevitably be captured in the dialectic as an anti-thesis. The function of post-structural curriculum, then, is to find ways in which we can swerve these trends off their present course. But, this is not to say that if post-structural curriculum prevails that the fight for peace and social justice will be abnegated. Quite the contrary, it's just that post-structuralism simply wages war in a fundamentally different sort of way.

Unlike the highly structured social reconstruction war machine, the war machine of post-structural thought does not use a system. Instead, it uses pure strategy to create lines of flight away from the structure and organization of central power (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze uses the games of Chess and Go to show the difference between a war machine built around a system and a war machine that uses lines of flight. Chess is a game where each piece is endowed with specific and limited powers. Go, on the other hand, uses pieces that have no specific power, yet, at the same time, one Go piece has the unlimited power to destroy an entire constellation. A chess piece cannot, by itself, inflict such havoc on an opponent. “Go is war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy, whereas Chess is semiology” (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 353). What is so effective about this strategy is that a single line of flight can rupture the most rigid organization. Always confronting rigidity, the war machine of post-structural thought teaches how to undo things, how to undo one’s self and to show how everything is ambiguous (Deleuze & Guattari).

Rather than being confined by a binary structured semiology, the theory of the sign, the strategy of indifference is the undoing of structuralism. I use the word indifference here not as a description of apathy, but to describe a strategy that subverts the domination of the signifier and playfully writes graffiti on the sign. Semiology commodifies our existence in an attempt to make it possible to fix meaning; while this appears to be an innocent convenience for all of us to acquire common understandings, the problem is that some common understandings oppress others (Pinar et al, 1995).

Fixed meanings are concretizations of power that have become reified in the social structure through continuous repetition of cultural practices. These historically reified cultural practices appear to be real to those invested in that particular social discourse. From this perspective, structuralism is a form of fascism, whereas post-structuralism’s ludic response is the deconstruction of meaning (Deleuze & Guattari, 1989). Seeing through the lens of difference, structure provides the girding for language to have meaning, while indifference needs no meaning - it just is, and it needs no historicity because indifference is not meant to last. Rather than unify, indifference seeks to rupture existing codes and begins to grow new lines of flight from old ways of thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze & Guattari, (1987) use the image of rhizome to elucidate the point that, unlike roots, rhizomes make multiple connections, are in a constant state of rupture and indifferent to the need for permanence. Perpetually in a state of asignifying rupture, old connections are shattered and new ones take their place, or may be abandoned (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Without a permanent narrative, rupture and connection are the only constants. Because it is anti-genealogical, indifference never says “you are this” or “you are that” because of historical forces. A curriculum question that Deleuze and Guattari, ask, and, I believe is also one that liberatory educators are yearning to find an answer to as well, is, “how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, one that nails us down to a dominant reality?” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 160).

Unhooking Ourselves

Foucault (1972) used the term disciplinary power to describe the organization, articulations and formations of language that direct us to never question the words that correspond to things. This apparatus of power is larger and much more fluid than structuralism would have us believe because it is the extant abstraction of ideology, not the imperialism of a fixed language system, that produces a regime of signs and forms of expressions in order to

define our reality. Because disciplinary power operates discursively, we are never as a class, race, gender or ethnicity the signifier or the signified. We are, instead, situated within an existential discursive moment of competing disciplinary powers that tell us to accept the conformity in language because it is something necessary for stability (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

For example, teachers are complicit with structuralism when they use disciplinary power, not to be believed, but to be obeyed and to demand obedience to the words they speak (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This becomes most apparent when teachers order students to obey conventional technologies for change rather than promoting the idea that students must create their own strategies. These technologies are the technologies of civil contracts, such as bureaucratic processes or, more dangerously, belief that majority rule, legitimized through the symbolic act of voting, is truly representative governance. What they do, in effect, is to compel the student to perceive the majority as something that is real, something that is to be believed. While I am not saying that we should spurn liberatory efforts such as voting for those who promise to fight against oppression, I am saying that participating in these political systems is nothing more than a yearning to become the majority. This changing of the guard, what Freire calls an unauthentic revolution, is when the oppressed assume the values of the oppressors, they become oppressors themselves (Freire, 2002).

Yet, it matters not if an authentic or unauthentic revolution has happened, the ultimate deceit is the structural myth that there is, in fact, something real called the majority. Selling the truth of the majority is essential to insure that whomever, or whatever voting block, or a particular cause assumes majoritarian status, the synthesis will always be confined in the dialectic, imprisoned by the structuralisms imposed upon us by the State's apparatus of civil contract. Believing in these technologies of change becomes a sort of existential death sentence because there is never a majority fact, it is only an illusion that there are congeries of like minds and interests (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). That is, power attempts to concretize the concept of majority into an eternal standpoint, yet, it always will fail because there is nothing but an ever-changing flux of minority thoughts that consistently confound the Hegelian trap, giving rise to the hope that one day escape from the dialectic may be possible.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that the, "majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around" (p. 105). Deluded by the State's myth making machine, we have come to believe that the majority acts as the State. But, it really is the other way around; the State creates the majority as an instrument for its own preservation.

As does the liberatory educator, a post-structuralist educator relentlessly exposes the structure of power and domination, yet stops short of calling for cooperation, unity and organization (Freire, 2002). Rather than demand obedience to an empty assumption, teachers grounded in post-structural theory facilitate the transformation toward becoming a minoritarian (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Because the educator has no yearning to be complicit with assumption of the majority, post-structural teaching holds the potential for creative experiences that avoids being identified, and eventually commodified, by the forces of central power.

Grounded in Marx, Ungrinding Marx

Derrida (1994) wrote in the book, *Specters of Marx*, that the ideas of Karl Marx can be described as the “early” Hegelian Marx and the latter “enlightenment” Marx. The early ideas of Marx, so

metimes called orthodox Marxism, demanded that we choose between two distinct and uncompromisable positions, capital or labor. Orthodox Marxism aimed to reverse history through a revolution that would restore the product of labor to its pure state of use-value (Holland, 1997). Early Marxism defines use-value as production without an added value imposed upon it by private capital. When added value, or profit, is imposed upon production, private capital extracts a surplus-value from those who produced the value in the first place. Early Marx critiqued the basic structure of capitalism on these real world ideological grounds. Thus, early Marxism described a meta-physics, namely materialism, which privileges matter over the self and supplants material production as the reality of a real world. Because of the anomic nature of profit seeking, early Marxism claimed that capitalism is an unjust system that must be replaced by a use-value economy. This sort of ideological critique of the real world is the backbone of early Marx (Holland). Early Marxian thought is consistent with much of what social reconstructionists yearn for, a cultural revolution that will replace a regime of inhuman domination with an authentic ongoing dialogue that is in relentless pursuit of genuine freedom (Freire, 2002).

Enlightenment Marxism

While early Marxism framed the world in binary terms, such as labor and capital, “enlightenment” Marxism challenges us to think of these Hegelian binaries as temporary constructions that appear, disappear, and mutate throughout time. Derrida used the metaphor of a ghost to describe enlightened Marxism. Like a ghost, the specter of Marx’s ideological critique retains an instrumental value as a deconstructive tool to eradicate codifications that have reified into something commonly accepted as “real” (Derrida, 1994). Understanding Marx in this way, Derrida rejects an orthodox Marxist view that reality is something that can be objectified. Thus, the purpose of enlightened Marxism is to reveal the fault lines in these reifications, to show why they are vulnerable to a revolution that promises to restore society to a use-value economic system (Derrida, 1994). While enlightened Marxism clings to the destruction of a class-based society, there is the inevitable dialectic entrapment that the use-value victory will become the dominant ontology, one that will surely elicit an opposing response. This process of undoing, or deconstructing, any ontological stance is based on the Marxian thought that expresses the view that while all ontologies are illegitimate, the proliferation of these ontologies is, nonetheless, an ongoing phenomenon (Holland, 1997).

Reading Marx Differently to Get Out of the Dialectic

Post-structuralism is indebted to Marx in a different way than social reconstructionism has been. Post-structuralism uses the thought of Marx to free practice from any sort of code that would seduce us into accepting any ontological stance (Holland, 1997). What is clear is that the dominance of capital has resulted in an impersonal society driven by the market’s desire for cash (Deleuze & Guattari, 1989). The way in which capitalism impersonalizes society is through a pervasive apparatus that seeks out established beliefs, then decodes them, in order to recode them in such a way so that they can be useful to the flow of money and labor in the pursuit of surplus

value (Holland, 1997). Capital defines our linguistic codes, the value of things, our bodies and behaviors all for the purpose of maintaining a cultural order conducive to earning profits.

Rather than socially reconstruct the system with another, post-structuralism promises to produce a proliferation of disruptions that confuse the code with performances that parody the sanctity of established systems. The revolution for post-structuralism is not in anyway grounded in a Marxist view that advocates a wholesale reversal of any social institution. Instead, a post-structural revolution begins with the primacy of multiplicity and indifference to meaning rather than a direct, head-on assault on social institutions. Novel, creative repetitions will interrupt the mechanical repetitions that are currently in place, cracking the structure by finding and exposing the fault lines that hold the social construction together (Butler, 1997). Because visible actions such as storming the barricades or making attempts to redress injustice through representative politics are easily captured by central power, achieving authentic results will only occur when micro-political actions emerge from non-hierarchical sources (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Micro-political actions resist being pinned down by the recoding of the capitalist machine because the strategy is to be in a state of constant change. Everything must be open to variation and improvisation, particularly the mundane practices of subservience, personal habits, economic stations, gender and familial roles (Holland, 1997). Micro-political action suggests that people never accept a 'ontology of something' but instead embrace an 'ontology of practice' where practice is understood to mean productive repetition (Holland, 1997). Productive repetition is a process much like Butler's performative politics, a micro-political position that encourages people to appropriate the impositions forced upon them by dominant forces and to return these injuries back in a different way to confuse the structural apparatus, making it shift, wriggle, and ultimately crack, as it attempts to capture the anomaly (Deleuze, 1987; Butler, 1997). This is what Butler called an ironic hopefulness when she spoke about the use of parody and performance to unmake, just a little at a time, the structures that relentlessly subjectify us. Agency, for Butler, resides in micro-political actions that turn things upside down or unveils the absurdity of the structure (Butler, 1997). If done well, the micro-political action will remain visible as a target of capture until such time that it becomes propitious to dissolve or mutate just before the structural apparatus machine can capture the creativity (Holland).

Becoming Rhizome

Rhizome pedagogy is based on the philosophy presented in the book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). It is important to point out from the outset that rhizome pedagogy is not a method for training or instruction; it is a text that hopes to affect the art of teaching in a significant way by raising the consciousness of those who yearn for a different way to teach.

When one thinks of rhizome, the image of a subterranean ganglia of wild weeds and grasses emerges. With no fixed positions or beginnings worth finding, a rhizome is a network that only has the desire to find the next connection. Deleuze explains it this way, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pg. 7). Unlike pedagogies that are roots, rhizome pedagogy has no universals, privileges nothing and has no origins. Rhizomes are multiplicities of ideas and performatives that have no relationships or need for subjects, nor do they seek unity or coherence of curriculum. The world is chaos; it is best to understand curriculum in this way, too.

How does a teacher teach others to become rhizomes when the institution of education is presently in the cold grips of the social efficiency movement? Socially efficient schooling uses language to order students to obey the dominant discourses of the day. Severe punishment results if students, and their teachers, disobey the orders that they are given. Poverty, “mental illness”, and ostracism are examples of the punishments imposed upon those who dare to disobey (Foucault, 1961/ 1965). Because disobedience results in dire consequences for students, it would be irresponsible for teachers to ask their students to directly challenge such a system. Thus, it is imperative that teachers protect their students from the danger of reprisal. Rather than disobey, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that rhizomes can be developed by creating lines of flight from the present system. Lines of flight are connections from present practices to new ones, not to elude the demands of the system, but to provide a safe haven for escape from the injury caused by present day social structures (Deleuze & Guattari). When drawing lines of flight, it is the space in between the connections that provides a temporary safe haven. To Deleuze, the orders given by these social structures possess, in themselves, “revolutionary potentiality” for radical change (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 110). The intent of the lines of flight is “to transform the compositions of order into components of passage” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 110). Through the creation of lines of flight there lies a possibility that current practices can be disrupted and subverted by exposing the fault lines that run through every system. This exposure might lead to the undoing of the practices presently entrenched in the system (Butler, 1997). Deleuze and Guattari offer us the technology of mapmaking for creating lines of flight, what they called cartography and decalomania, as a way to find multiple points of resistance while, at the same time, maintaining some of the subjectification that sustains us to keep us from the despair of nihilism or even madness:

Staying stratified - organized, signified, subjected - is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever. This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it has to offer, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bring forth continuous intensities for bodies without organs. Connect, conjugate, continue: a whole ‘diagram’, as opposed to still signifying and subjective programs. We are in social formation; first see how it is stratified for us and in us and at place where we are; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held; gently tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of constancy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161).

Michel Serres’ theory of time, and its implications for existence, is an example of what Deleuze is saying (Serres & Latour, 1990/1999). Serres’ concept of time is based on the idea of multiplicity rather than linearity. That is, time does not flow from now to the future, nor is history an upstream exploration. Serres explains that time is like sitting by the stream watching the flow of water rather than being a leaf flowing with it. Knowing time in a linear way is a historical way of experiencing it with the notions of past, present and future. Yet, behind these notions are chaotic noises that consistently defy our attempts to unify the universe around a triad

of past, present and future concepts (Assad, 1999). Serres says that while our socially constructed concepts of time try to unify the chaos around us, these social constructions exclude a multiplicity of understandings of time that might very well become the foundations for inventions, inventions; that could substantially impact our ways of knowing and living.

While we can intellectualize Serres' conception of time, imagine the anarchy that would ensue if linear time, our species' most sustaining social construction, was suddenly abnegated. Serres offers us a way to move toward a polychromatic concept of time without totally abandoning the great molar organization of linear time (Assad, 1999). Serres' accepts the phenomenological premise that there are multiple ways of knowing and that the phenomenological, as well as the undeterminable pre-phenomenological, can, and ought to, co-exist concomitantly (Assad). While rhizomatic teachers constantly deconstruct everything to disrupt the incessant consolidation of power, including linear time, it is pure survival to accept a two tiered understanding of time; an understanding that validates an accommodation of the socially negotiated concept of time along with the time that the chaotic, pre-biotic universe exhibits – this is the Deleuzian construct of the schizophrenic (Serres & Latour, 1990/1999; Deleuze & Guattari, 1989). Because an embrace of this radical theory of chaotic time changes everything, Serres says that we can continue to hug our life saving supports of logic and rationality as a security blanket as we explore other explanations of time. As does Deleuze, Serres suggests that we challenge everything, including the universality of our socially constructed theories of linear time, while, concurrently, holding on to what sustains us (Serres & Latour, 1990/1999; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Such is the schizophrenic nature of rhizomatic teaching. Its survival in structural hegemony while, at the same time, creating multiplicity (Reynolds, 2001). Rhizomatic teachers both survive and thrive in a state of schizophrenia, as they make maps with their students as a way to draw lines of flight away from what harms them. Once again, Judith Butler provides a fine example of how teachers can make maps to help students who are the targets of injurious speech. Butler's example describes the structure that injurious speech assumes and then suggests a way to create lines of flight from the injury by suggesting that the victim re-appropriate the harmful language. Butler (1997) writes:

One is not simply fixed by the name that one is called. In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call. Thus, the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response... If to be addressed is to be interpolated, then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use the language to counter the offensive call. (p. 2)

Butler's strategy is to repeat the injuries without precisely reenacting them. Repetition of the injury, with a spin, permits a critical response to the affront (Butler, 1997).

Rhizome pedagogy helps students expose the subjectifications that they themselves masochistically assume as well as subjectifications that are imposed by those who desire total control over them. By illuminating students to the ways in which power subjectifies them, it becomes clear that confronting the structures that commodify them is futile. Where they will find agency is along the lines of flight, in the spaces between connections in a relentless state of

becoming rhizome. Becoming rhizome is not an end, it is pedagogy for eternity because the “universal figure of minoritarian consciousness is the becoming of everybody, and that becoming is creation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 106). As the teacher makes connections with students by using the elements available that are on the rhizome and conjugates them into novel inventions and perspectives, the root system of structuralism begins to transmogrify, revealing the fascism that keeps it together (Deleuze & Guattari).

Slippery Identities

Rosi Braidotti (1991) warns that it is suicidal for feminism to be duped by the work of post-structuralists. Braidotti criticizes post-structuralism’s avoidance of gender by resoundingly rejecting “becoming rhizome” because it erases the sexual difference of woman as well as feminism when these two constructs are asigned (Braidotti; Goulimari, 1999). What is counter-productive about this critique is that by remaining in the dialectic, women will never escape appropriation and exclusion (Goulimari). Whereas, by becoming rhizome there lies the hope of a multiplicity of feminisms that will not self-destruct but, will proliferate as a force that cannot be captured as a commodity like a Virginia Slims cigarette (Goulimari). From the post-structural view, Butler and Haraway share a different perspective.

Butler, in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), deconstructs the heterosexual male binary in such a way that it is impossible to give intellectual credence to the legitimacy of gender, or bodies, as being in the realm of the Real. Socially constructed in the discourses of power, gendered bodies are easily imprisoned in the dialectic.

Haraway’s decision to become cyborg, rather than a goddess formed in nature, is an example of a post-structural feminism that is elusive to the forces of central power (Haraway, 1992). Haraway writes that nature itself is a social construction and, even if we call something natural, it is important to understand that women are not born, they are made (Haraway). Haraway’s choice to become cyborg is a line of flight away from the goddess, who is marked in relationship to her difference in the heterosexual binary, never able to un-subjectify.

Polemics

Heidegger made the claim that humans will always be at war with one another because of their differences (Losurdo, 1991/2001). Greatly influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophy of the will to power and the overman’s relentless pursuit of conquest, Heidegger understood polemics to be the profanity of modernism (Losurdo, 1991/2001; Nietzsche, 1886/1998). Heidegger pointed to modernism’s ontology of difference, a understanding that bifurcates “Being” from “that which is”, as the problem that makes human existence unreconcilable (Vail, 1998).

This state of never reaching reconciliation is what Jean Hyppolite (1969) described as alienation. Alienation is a direct result of obedience to the monism of Hegel, for the theory is executed in terms of conflict, not of flight. When synthesis occurs, it always results in the confinement of minority thoughts – an alienation that gives rise to the next anti-thesis. And so it goes, perpetual madness in the age of reason (Foucault, 1961/1965).

I, for one, am not the young man who stood in front of the tank in Tiananmen Square. Although it was an act of incredible courage in the name of oppositional politics, the act did nothing but make the forces of oppression more determined to crush their enemies. Loosen the

finger puzzle, find the spaces in between, escape the dialectical nature of a polemical human existence, make rhizome everywhere.

References

- Assad, M. (1999). *Reading with Michel Serres: An encounter with time*. New York: State University of New York, University Presses Marketing.
- Braidotti, R. (1991). *Patterns of dissonance* (E. Guild, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge, Kegan & Paul.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech: Politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1989). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Athlone.
- Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of the mourning, and the new international*. London: Routledge.
- Freire, P. (2002). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason* (R. Howard, Trans.). Toronto: Random House. (Original work published 1961)
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Gage, N. (1989, October). The paradigm wars and their aftermath. *Educational Researcher*, 4-10.
- Goulimari, P. (1999, Spring). A minoritarian feminism? Things to do with Deleuze and Guattari. *Hypatia*.
- Haraway, D. (1992). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Holland, E. (1997). Marx and poststructuralist philosophies of difference. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 96(3), 525-541.
- Hyppolite, J. (1969). *Studies on Marx and Hegel*. New York: Basic Books.

- Losurdo, D. (2001). *Heidegger and the ideology of war: Community, death, and the West* (M. Morris & J. Morris, Trans.). Amherst, NY: Humanity Books. (Original work published 1991).
- McLaren, P. (1998). Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times: rethinking the political economy of critical education. *Educational Theory*, 48(4), 431 – 463.
- McLaren, P., & Fischman, G. (1998). Reclaiming Hope: Teacher education and social justice in the age of globalization. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 25(4), 125-133.
- McTaggart, J., & McTaggart, E. (1896). *Studies in the Hegelian dialectic*. Cambridge, MA: University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1998). *Beyond good and evil* (M. Faber, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1886)
- Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (1995). *Understanding curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Reynolds, W. (2001, October). *Sifting through the ruins: The next generation* Paper presented at the Bergamo Conference, Dayton, OH.
- Serres, M., & Latour, B. (1999). *Conversations on science, culture and time* (R. Lapidus, Trans.). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1990).
- Stanley, W. (1992). *Curriculum for utopia: Social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy in the postmodern era*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Tyler, R. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Vail, L. M. (1972). *Heidegger and the ontological difference*. State College, PA: Penn State University Press.
- Weis, L. (2002, April). *Honoring disruptive practices in schools: Critical teaching, race/ethnicity, and gender*. Paper presented at AERA Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.