

Curriculum Studies, Cultural Studies and the Infinite Potential of Creativity and the Imagination

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THESE FIVE ARTICLES constitute the most we have ever had in our section in one issue of the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*. The articles have one important common thread running through each of them. Elizabeth Johnson writes about performative potentials, Aria Razfar discusses recursivity, Kristal Curry broaches the subject of democratic discourses, H. James Garrett and Sandra Schmidt use the term repeating, and Lisa LaJevic and Kimberly Powell focus on the metaphor of knitting. As a lifelong Weaver, I think knitting is an appropriate metaphor to discuss how all intellectuals put ideas together to create an argument, theory, experiment, or theorem that can take the shape of a poem, research article, speculative essay, opinion piece, dance performance, painting, mathematical formula, or countless other material forms. The authors in this section are all Weavers, but they use different concepts and techniques.

When I read the words performative or democratic discourse, I think of Lyotard and Derrida immediately and how a performance can be an act of instrumentality in which the only thing that matters is a narrow notion of usefulness. I do not need to provide any examples because in the United States and unfortunately in most of the rest of our earth we are surrounded by crass notions of usefulness in which everything has to lead to some kind of profit or monetary transaction. Lyotard and Derrida however mean something different. They are drawing on Georges Bataille's notion of general economy or J.L. Austin's speech acts or what Derrida and J. Hillis Miller refer to as iterability. All of these terms imply an infinite amount of energy that allows anyone to create something. All of these wonderful thinkers were interested in the mind's ability to create something new and potentially original out of something that was always and already there. This is the definition of art and should be, but most often is not, the ideal for intellectual creations.

What holds for Johnson's or Curry's notion of performativity also holds for the idea of repeating and recursivity. Repeating can represent and embody monotony and death, but

common repeating is recursivity. Let me repeat, it is creativity just as I wrote in the previous sentence. Imaginative repeating is the creation of something new even when we are repeating what we just read, saw, sensed, or heard. When we repeat we build from what was but the process of building is always adding something new. Only pure repetition (what schools and dictators do) kills. It kills the spirit, soul, and mind by demanding we create nothing; dictating that we just follow the rules and make money for someone else. This is what universities more and more are expecting from its faculty and students. The consequences of this movement will be dire for most of us. The rise of pure repetition will not affect the elite private schools. They can, and always could, do as they wish. They never need permission to be creative. Only public institutions will be affected and the price a fading democracy such as ours will pay will be severe because of our obedience.

When I think of LaJevic and Powell's notion of knitting I think of information technology. Sadie Plant in *Zeros and Ones* demonstrates that the idea of the computer in the 19th century was based on the Jacquard Loom. When we see a bunch of zeros and ones masquerading as words we have to knit those words to concepts and those concepts to meaning. We are all Weavers (I am sure it pains some to admit they are related to me). To avoid being Weavers we avoid life. Information comes with no meaning just potential and those people who are able to repeat recursively what information presents are the ones we call creative and imaginative. Anyone who tries to control information limits the potential of knowledge, schooling, and inevitably any idea of a democracy. Those people, and one person is too many, who refuse to play the game of Weaving information into meaning are not invited to play the game of democracy. They are unable or unwilling to think for themselves and therefore just purely repeat what they heard some talking head spew from a teleprompter. Fox News is our shrine for spewing but other information sources are not immune to the Fox Spin. They are just not as good at it as Fox. I am sorry to say, as kin, Fox News is a great Weaver. At our family reunions Fox News always seems to get the attention of all the other Weavers.

What will you Weave from these essays? To ignore these essays is to not be in the game and most readers of JCT will skip this introduction and these essays because I am no Donna Haraway and the authors of these essays are not Star Weavers. This is a major flaw in the trajectory of Curriculum Theorizing of late. Stars shine (hagiography is too alive and too well in our field) and Supernova's are not nurtured; just ignored as something too distant to contemplate. It is not the fault of the stars in this saga. They do not control where their light travels and to control the flow of light will undermine the vitality of the only vibrant field in education. The problem is too many curriculum theorists are not interested in following other potential paths of light. Those who follow stars are only interested in purely repeating what the star thinks. Just as when a fan of a movie star says they will be never wash the hand that touched a star, this is what many in curriculum studies are doing. In intellectual fields, however, unwashed hands never create; they only walk around blinded and stunned by the light. I leave you with a challenge that Cat Stevens, now Yusuf Islam, asked many years ago: "oh very young what will you leave us this time? You're only dancing on this earth for a short while. And that your dreams may toss and turn you now. They will vanish away...fading up to the sky."

This JCT issue constitutes my last dance for this section. When Peter Appelbaum, Toby Daspit, (two of the most creative people I know) and I sat down in a Dayton Steak N' Shake to map out what we wanted this section to be some 13 years ago, we wanted to promote something that pushed our thinking into new directions, and offered scholars an opportunity to show how Popular Culture matters in the lives of everyone and how Cultural Studies is an important field of

study. I hope we did this. Rob Helfenbein was to replace me as section editor. Rob is an original and rigorous thinker. He is a good Weaver (we usually sit together at the far left picnic table at the Weaver gatherings but most sit on the Fox side of the Weaver reunions. We are not envious just lonely). Now, he is taking over the reins of editing the whole journal. I am sure you will find his efforts worth reading, and I hope you find the new section editor just as thought provoking as Rob. I also have to thank my fellow Weaver, Marla Morris, for supporting the creation of this section.

