

Tropological Curriculum Studies: Puppets and Statues of Curriculum Quagmires¹

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There is a never-ending tension between conceiving of educational experience as enabling and as constraining. We seem locked into this dichotomy with no escape: In *The Character of Curriculum Studies*, William Pinar (2011) notes that the sociology of education, so dominant in the field of curriculum studies, has seemingly “won out” as the clearest interpretation of schooling: schools are institutions of social reproduction. Rather than accepting this idea and moving on, we persevere, constantly creating new research projects that reconfirm the hypothesis, which of course, in Foucauldian terms, makes for a successful perpetuation of practice and guarantees a career. But what would it mean to “move on”? A psychoanalyst would define repeated behaviors with no “results” as psychosis. If reproduction studies *as social change* is the result sought, then yes, we would have to recommend serious therapy for curriculum studies. If the goal is to establish careers in a field that excels at critiquing schooling, then we might instead celebrate our field as fairly healthy. Regarding the possibility of “therapy” for our field of research: In his introduction to *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek evokes Hegel’s assertion that it is folly to alter a corrupt ethical system without changing the religion, to make a revolution without a reformation. The basic tension is not so much between reason and feeling, but instead between knowledge and a disavowed belief embodied in external ritual. That is, between logical consistency and the notion that “I know what I am doing, but nevertheless I am doing it.”

Bildung and the Bildungsroman

The origins of curriculum studies are comingled with the culture of the *Bildungsroman*, a genre of literature in which a young person becomes an adult member of society, and through which one can understand or propose a form of education of the individual as a member of society. The premise is that there is a dialectic between the education of the individual in the broadest sense of education and the ongoing creation of a good society. I claim that most if not all of our efforts in curriculum studies accepts the “theology” of *Bildung* and enacts the *Bildungsroman* over and over again. In doing so, curriculum studies perpetuates the assumptions, tensions, and paradoxes of the genre *ad infinitum*.

A quick genealogy begins with Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* books, usually considered the first of the *Bildungsroman* literary genre. The first of two books opens with Wilhelm playing for countless hours with a miniature puppet theater. Later, Wilhelm secretly defies his parents’ expectations of working in the family business, and instead becomes a director of a traveling theater, realizing his childhood dream with live-action, human puppets that follow his direction. Still later we come to realize that Wilhelm’s defiance of his parents is critical to



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the “most appropriate” education of all. A team of adults has spent years overseeing his adventures, like puppet masters behind the scenes, making sure that life-threatening yet important learning experiences don’t actually lead to death. In this way, fulfillment is achieved through practical activity that promotes the development of one’s own individual talents and abilities, which in turn lead to the development of society.

In this way, Goethe’s articulation of *Bildung*, the education of the young adult, does not simply accept the socio-political status quo, but rather includes the ability to engage in a critique of one’s society, and to ultimately challenge the society to actualize its own highest ideals. Perhaps ironically, in the end, Wilhelm has been prepared by such critique to accept and *embrace* his social role. We see, thanks to Goethe, that this seemingly liberating pedagogy but conserving philosophy relies on the careful crafting of the puppet show of life by well-meaning adults. If I am right, that the historical genealogy of *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman* might be a useful exercise, then one theme of such scholarship would be the unpacking of education as social reproduction, present in the ostensibly liberating and socially ameliorative idea of *Bildung* itself. Goethe’s well-known conservative politics set such an intimate link in motion from the start.

As I have written elsewhere (Appelbaum 2008), the *Bildungsroman* literature, even as recent as the *Harry Potter* novels and films, repeatedly serves the function of facilitating our perseverance with the apparent paradox of a liberating pedagogy of autonomy for a conservative, social reproduction *ad infinitum*. Our perseverance is a critical quagmire, a stutter that never stops. Goethe’s genius, which can be applied to the analysis of this quagmire, is evident in the trope of the puppets. Indeed, puppets are the metaphor endemic to pretty much all educational thought, from the teacher as crafter of a classroom theater to the use of objects and stories in the classroom to represent concepts and relationships. The artifacts of classroom life take on metaphorical puppet elements all of the time: a graph in a mathematics classroom becomes a voice through which a child explains her argument for or against an interpretation of the original word problem; a beaker and a Styrofoam cup in Biology lab allows a student to step outside of her assumptions about heat and cold in much the same way that a storyteller might use a potato prince to try on characteristics of a benevolent despot; base-ten blocks personify place value while the number of books in one’s stack of “those I’ve read” works like money in a theatrical candy store. Much theorizing, from Judith Butler to Anthony Giddens to De Certeau to Louis Althusser to Simone de Beauvoir, has helped us to perfect a discourse for demonstrating the simultaneous ideological limitations and revolutionary potential of such everyday practice. The difference emphasized by the puppet trope is between an actor who embodies roles, and a puppet that externalizes a self or an idea that can be looked at, as if in a mirror, or located on a map. It’s uncanny in the Freudian sense. As we play *this kind of* teacher of *that kind of* student, we see ourselves and not ourselves in the bifurcation. And when we externalize a concept via a model, we are both outside ourselves and inside ourselves at the same time. We also *become ourselves* as we perform a self, always becoming and re-becoming ourselves in and with everyday practices.

To treat oneself as a puppet in a puppet show is not quite the same thing as performing with or through puppets, because of the uncanny bifurcation as distinct from the very embodiment of our becoming. In this sense, we might more fully capture the spirit of a classroom if we think of the actors as statues come to life. Before the classroom encounter, the students and teacher are ossified, so to speak, awaiting animation off-stage. The educational



encounter is a fantasy of animation, bringing the actors and the curriculum to life. Terms such as motivation are stand-ins for the magic of animation, of the bringing to life of sleeping or not-yet-born “learners” and “teachers.” A curriculum – in the sense of Ralph Tyler, the set of concepts and skills to be learned, something made and sculpted, something that “represents” cultural traditions, legacies, fears and fantasies -- is usefully understood as a statue, fossilized and ossified until a school community gives it life, dead until reborn. An educational encounter is a Pygmalion kiss.

Puppets and statues help us recognize that knowledge is sometimes mistakenly theorized as technology. It can become a prosthesis. Attached to a human being, it gives him or her super powers beyond what could be done without the knowledge. More nuanced theories understand humans as co-emerging with their technologies. Cyborgs, mixtures of the biological and the machine, digital and organic, are caught in webs of signification and complexification. Yet in either case, prosthetic super-powers or cyborg mutation, we are stuck unable to understand the tensions and paradoxes among the individual and the group, structure and agency, signifier and signification. Whether we imagine strapping on prostheses or transforming with our technologies, we are always also using puppets, communicating through and with puppets and statues, interacting with our puppets and statues, creating puppets and statues that are “real”, imagined, still and moving, things in themselves *and* representations. Puppets and statues, if we pay attention to them, offer a chance to think about the plurality of semiotic signifieds. This is qualitatively different from wielding tools and weapons: instead of “use” we are looking at acts of concealment, revelation, substantiation, and evocation. Puppets and animated statues help us understand our dreams of a moving, non-static curriculum.

Enter Žižek

Žižek offers much to this conversation, especially in his fun book, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*. Žižek is re-reading Walter Benjamin’s (1940) essay, “On the Concept of History.” Benjamin told of a seemingly mechanical chess player who could win every game: inside was a dwarf chess master who guided the moves of the puppet through strings and levers. For Benjamin, the Dwarf behind the chess player of contemporary thought was History, which was taken to be steering and manipulating all that follows. Žižek updates the story, recognizing the more current role of theology as the dwarf hidden inside contemporary theory. This dwarf might be the dwarf of a people’s theology – a set of beliefs and practices simply accepted hegemonically as the reality in which one exists; or a positive theology – dogmas and rituals imposed by an all-powerful earth-bound or divine authority; or a theology of reason, the result of subjecting belief to enlightenment rational critique. Žižek suggests in the style of Lacan that our contemporary theory has as its divine authority the fundamental act of representation, that is, the puppet trope! The dwarf behind the theological puppet show that we call experience is none other than the authority of semiotics, the premise that everything is a signifier for everything else. Žižek helps us see that “the real” is not external to the symbolic; the “real” is the symbolic itself (p.69).

To bring this back to the quagmire of curriculum studies, that the very ideas of *Bildung* are its own contradiction, and that the very contradictions of the field are its origins or its center, it can be useful to read Žižek’s spin on origins and centers. In the Appendix to *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek uses the theology of representation to interrogate representation, and in so doing, he models a way of working, a method, that we can use ourselves. Ideas,



theories, concepts, plans: these are all reified in ways that are very much like a *Kinder Surprise Egg* – a thin, mediocre chocolate egg with a plastic toy surprise inside. Ostensibly people buy the egg for the chocolate, which they destroy quickly in order to reveal the surprise. In this way, the egg is a perfect example of Lacan’s motto, “I love you, but, inexplicably, I love in you more than yourself, and therefore I destroy you.” (p. 145) In general, the egg is the example *par excellence* of *l’objet petite a*, the small object filling the central void of our desire, the hidden treasure at the center of the thing we desire. The material void at the center stands for the structural gap on account of which of which no product is “really *that*” – no product lives up to its expectations; in other words, the small plastic toy is not simply different from chocolate (the product we bought) – while it is materially different, it fills the gap in chocolate itself. A commodity is a mysterious entity full of theological caprices, Žižek writes, a particular object satisfying a particular need, but at the same time, promising something more.

What *do* we desire? Educational experiences that are meaningful, rich, empowering, socially transformative? At the center of schooling is always a void, and what is filling that void is always promising more than itself, an unfathomable satisfaction that requires our destruction of schooling itself in order for us to achieve it. In this sense, educational studies is a traumatic experience. We act on our theology, which includes a faith in the enabling and emancipating potential of education, only to find social reproduction as the accompanying catastrophe. Schooling as enabling is at once probable and impossible. There is a kind of temporality to this experience reminiscent of Žižek’s discussion of Dupuy, who himself retold the story of Henri Bergson, who experienced the conflict of emotions in 1914: “In spite of my turmoil,” he wrote, “and although a war, even a victorious one, appeared to me as a catastrophe, I experienced ... a feeling of admiration for the facility of the passage from the abstract to the concrete: who would have thought that such a formidable event can emerge in reality with so little fuss?” (Žižek, p. 159) Žižek notes the crucial modality of the break between before and after. Before the outbreak, the war appeared to be simultaneously probable and impossible, a complex and contradictory notion that persisted to the end. Afterward, it suddenly became both real and possible at the same time.

Similarly, we imagine all sorts of fine and wonderful things that we can do with teachers and learners. We can build a whole new world! All we need to do is honor the dialectic relationship between education and democracy. And then, oh dear, what we get is social reproduction and the constraining function of schooling. The paradox lies in the retroactive appearance of probability. Bergson never pretended he could insert reality into the past and work backwards in time. But he could insert there the possible, at every moment, so that the new reality finds itself having always been possible. Oddly, it is only at the precise moment of its actual emergence that the reality begins to always have been; yet, this possibility, generated by its future, now becomes a historical reality itself.

Here is the dwarf in the machine of Benjamin, history moving the puppet who always wins every contest for explanations. Similarly, we always find reinserted into our explanations of educational experience the dwarf in the named theology, so that our faith in education despite its paradox reinserts itself into our stories of social reproduction no matter what.

Rancière and the Pedagogical Stance

The faith in curriculum and pedagogy having potential specific affects on the “outcome,” and the ongoing layering of history and memory as well, can be interrogated through what Rancière (2009) called the problematic “pedagogical stance:” One affect of a pedagogy designed to influence the desires and future actions of an audience is to inadvertently perpetuate the passivity of that audience, and the need to be taught. Curriculum Studies as an academic enterprise embraces this fully, as scholars strive to enlighten others so that their ideas might have an impact on their field. What the audience does with the products of this dream is typically disappointing. We love our audience in the sense that we love something more within our audience, that potential to create our ever-lasting careers, so we destroy our audience, our colleagues, in the process. Social movements expecting educational campaigns to change the world are similarly disappointing. They establish the audience as passive and in need of being taught, and hence work against their goals of creating actors who make social change. Educational campaigns create consumers of campaigns rather than social change agents. So, too, can manipulative materials and curriculum content be understood as inculcating passivity and the need to be taught rather than the seemingly positive goals of autonomy and the disposition to question received information or act on one’s critique of the status quo. Base-ten blocks or poetic metaphors in a classroom coexist with, and are also independent of, specific learning outcomes and goals for transforming individual desires and social relationships. They both *can* be traced back to making a difference, and are also both not necessarily identifiable as a cause of transformation. It is only the dream of the moving statue that evokes our fantasies of the trace while maintaining the likelihood of the non-present cause, that we can bring the curriculum to life through the “teacher’s kiss”.

Žižek proposes the trick is not to employ the historic strategy. Analogously, since the catastrophe of education cannot be domesticated, the only option left is to posit this catastrophe as real, to inscribe it into the future (p.163), to embrace it as unavoidable. The seduction of history is powerful: we can see the common and interwoven histories of curriculum as *Bildung* and colonialist Europe as the clear and precise “cause” of our frustrations. Just as metaphor in a poem might be a representation of a concept, just as every manipulative material in a classroom is a puppet through which the learners enact a puppet theater, Colonialism can make a person into a commodity to be bought and sold in slavery. Here we catch a glimpse of a shared hegemony among *Bildung*, colonialism, imperialism, and the crystallizing practices of reconceptualization. The fundamental faith in representation (puppetry itself) as the dwarf behind the puppets of schooling cries out for the applause of closure.

Yet, why don't we try out an alternative, in the style of Žižek? One should ... invert the existential common place according to which, when we are engaged in a present historical process, we perceive it as full of possibilities, and ourselves as agents free to choose among them; while, to a retrospective view, the same process appears as fully determined and necessary, with no room for alternative: on the contrary, it is



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the engaged agents who perceive themselves as caught in a Destiny, merely reacting to it, while, retrospectively, from the standpoint of later observation, we can discern alternatives in the past, possibilities of events taking a different path.” (p. 164)

One application of Žižek's ideas is retrodictive curriculum theorizing (Appelbaum 2010), in which one writes the fictional history of an imagined future. Žižek's use of Dupuy to suggest that we confront the catastrophe by perceiving it as fate, totally unavoidable, and then projecting ourselves into it, adopting its standpoint, and retroactively inserting into its past counterfactual possibilities upon which we act now, adds a significant orientation to this work. A fine example that Žižek shares is the perpetual war on terrorism in the U.S. Instead of endlessly suspended terrorist threats, postponed until they might happen, we can see that we are not merely waiting for the catastrophe to happen; the “real” catastrophe is the life we are currently leading, under the constant shadow of the permanent threat of catastrophe. Žižek might have made his point more simply with the example of curriculum studies. We are not waiting for the next catastrophic imposition of standards and quantitative assessments. We experience the living hell of emotional abuse and the closing off of humane lives for the majority of children in our schools every day (Block 1997).

Deborah Britzman (2009) asks (p. 133), “Can one event really lead into another? Where would one locate transformation or meaningful change?” She might be writing of the surprise inside the Curriculum Studies chocolate egg. The “something more” that always eludes our pursuit as we destroy education is analogous to the unconscious in Britzman's discussion of psychoanalysis. The techniques in that context are not instructions, and cannot really be taught, but are themselves instructive. For example, transference is both resistance and the means to its overcoming. Freud's thoughts late in his life, in terms of fantasizing about cures, endings, and limitations, questioned the analyst's translations of psychoanalytic education and even the nature of education. “Essentially,” writes Britzman, “the impossibility of the profession leads Freud to the impossibility of its education, of the profession learning over time.”(Britzman 2009, p. 20)

Can we take wisdom from the psychoanalytic discussion into the puppetry of Curriculum Studies? To embrace the catastrophe of education as unavoidable, and to inscribe it into the future, retroactively inscribing alternatives into its past, would be instructive rather than instructions. At the same time, we must recognize with Rancière that the instructive

characteristic of these practices risks everything if they devolve into a pedagogical process. Does it make sense to speak about the education of curriculum studies? It makes *a lot of sense*: We love you, Curriculum Studies, we love more in you than you, yourself; therefore, we destroy you.

Curriculum Tropology

As much as we might feel like we have “gotten somewhere” with that last statement, I returning to some thoughts on the puppetry of representation, and curriculum scholarship, which in themselves appear to re-perform the *Bildungsroman* motif over and over: that is, curriculum studies as a field seems to be “growing up” – maybe breaking the rules of the previous generation with each crop of graduate students who become professors and who take on important work in schools and other social institutions, yet always seeming to take on its role in the broader world of educational studies again and again. Often positioned in a critical stance, challenging assumptions of schooling and educational program planning, curriculum studies scholars dabble here and there as itinerant theorists, hoping that new narratives and new concepts would offer new futures and new histories of curriculum that rarely transform the dominant paradigms of those social institutions they wish to critique. A puppet show, on the other hand, is not only an act of manipulation. It is also an aesthetic experience, often a narrative performance, and, in this sense, like much art, a puppet show can often be assumed to compel us to revolt when it shows us revolting things. That is, it supposedly mobilizes when it itself is taken “outside of the workshop” or “museum”, and incites people to oppose systems of domination by denouncing its own participation in that system. And so we have the dream of the public intellectual wielding her or his scholarship of representation “in the streets,” whether expressed as a work of art or as the scholarship of a curriculum theorist.

Puppets and Statues: These two cultural tropes are my entry into the confusing paradoxes of curriculum studies as an enterprise. While the terms are rare if ever present in curriculum studies, they are I claim present by proxy, carrying with them essential assumptions, questions, expectations, fears and fantasies. A genealogy of curriculum studies finds stand-ins for puppets and statues in most every treatise or essay, provoking the constraining and enabling characteristics of curriculum as a field of study and practice. I call for topological study, which I believe promises a useful analysis of the ways that curriculum scholarship maintains colonialist epistemologies even as it works for post-colonial practices, undermining its professed moral and liberating aspirations that curriculum might be “good for people.” Maybe we do not often stop to think about the ethics of our work, since we would all, I suppose, imagine that we are good at heart. Yet, unless we take the opportunity more often, we will, I claim, continue to perpetuate fundamentally racist and oppressive practices: there is no way out, I fear, if we continue to take on the curriculum studies project; however, to recoil in passivity would be no better. We must, if we have any fantasies of productive international collaboration, find ways to embrace the paradoxical quagmires of curriculum studies itself.

“Trope” is a term in rhetorical studies, usually defined as the use of words to mean something other than what they would normally mean. Concepts other than puppets and statues stand in for these two human forms of production and practice, carrying with them the semiotic and psychoanalytic implications of puppets and statues without making this clear to ourselves or to others. Puppets and statues are thus hegemonic, since we do not realize that we are talking about puppets and statues, both literally and in more generalized, conceptual ways,



as we work. “Tropological” analysis of curriculum studies looks at the ways that tropes for puppets, statues, and other critical cultural concepts are used in the development of our practices. Tropological study has some roots in Christian biblical interpretation, emphasizing the morally edifying sense of tropes in theological scripture. One common critique of tropology is the ways that a study of tropes can hide the assumption that there is such a thing as “normal” language use, in which words are not used to mean something other than what they would “normally” mean. We certainly do not want to fall into such an additional quagmire – we have enough lacunae of our own already in curriculum studies, and I do not wish to add this to the mix! Instead, we will focus on the simple idea that the words we use are always meaning something other than what we might believe we are taking them to mean. Just as Žižek reclaims the theology of history, curriculum studies can employ techniques of tropology in the analysis of curriculum’s faith in puppets and statues. And this method can be extended in future work to additional tropes.

I find puppets a natural entry into considerations of representation, transformation in conceptual understanding, agency and identity. A puppet can be anything – a piece of paper, a scissors, a ball, a box, and yet become *anything* – a scissors becomes a dragon about to eat a flower, dental floss held aloft, and anything can *do* anything when it is a puppet – a rabbit can be reborn, an evil ghost (performed by a spotlight) held at bay by a flying eggplant (made from a toothbrush dangling from a wire), a class of shoelace 3rd-grade children can enter the magic castle (42 stuffed animal unicorns piled high) and use it to administer first-aid to a swarm of injured humming birds (each crafted from tissue paper). A person can become a puppet, and dance with or without a mask, either making an inner sense of self more visible in the process, or taking on a wholly different persona. Puppets can model utopia, or defend a “realistic” set of social practices.

Statues are a subset of puppets who, at least at first, do not move, and provide an opening for understanding things held outside of ourselves, bringing into consideration our conceptions of self, standpoints on things, reification, and the animation of objects. Objects lead to fantasies of bringing those objects to life, the translation of ideas into objects that can be manipulated and used. They also lead to tool use and technologies, since, once we have a thing, we can use that thing. Furthermore, they lead to the juxtaposition of life with inanimate non-life, perhaps the awareness of impermanence and the inevitability of death. Psychoanalytic theories, often useful in curriculum studies, take advantage of the ways that the conscious and unconscious can be modeled through object relations and the animation of such virtual objects, or statues. Moreover, puppets and statues are themselves stories about the history and education of desire, about our relation to what we have made or unmade, about our encounters with the dead, and our negotiations with what we call authority and tradition.

I became interested in puppets while working in classrooms with teachers and students -- graphs or base-ten blocks in mathematics classrooms, paraphernalia in science labs, records and symbols of accomplishment used to indicate mastery of skills. Puppets might be present in educational spaces in another sense as well, as each of us performs our roles – teacher, student, bad student, and so on. We put on masks and then improvise the particular playing out of the provided scenario. Before the classroom encounter, the students and teacher are ossified, so to speak, awaiting animation off-stage. The educational encounter is a fantasy of animation, bringing the actors and the curriculum to life. Terms such as motivation are stand-ins for the magic of animation, of the bringing to life of sleeping or not-yet-born “learners”



and “teachers.” Puppets and statues further help us recognize that knowledge is sometimes mistakenly theorized as technology. It can become a prosthesis. Attached to a human being, knowledge gives him or her super powers beyond what could be done without it. More nuanced theories understand humans as co-emerging with their technologies. Cyborgs, mixtures of the biological and the machine, digital and organic, are caught in webs of signification and complexification. Yet in either case, prosthetic super-powers or cyborg mutation, we are stuck unable to understand the tensions and paradoxes among the individual and the group, structure and agency, signifier and signification. Whether we imagine strapping on prostheses or transforming with our technologies, we are always also using puppets, communicating through and with puppets and sculptures, interacting with our puppets and sculptures, creating puppets and sculptures that are “real”, imagined, still and moving, things in themselves *and* representations. Puppets and sculptures, if we pay attention to them, offer a chance to think about the plurality of semiotic signifieds at all times. This is qualitatively different from wielding tools and weapons: instead of “use” we are looking at acts of concealment, revelation, substantiation, and evocation. Puppets and animated statues help us understand our dreams of a moving, non-static curriculum.

This, we might say, implies a specific form of relationship between cause and effect, or intention and consequence. Like classical theater, for example Molière or Voltaire, curriculum scholarship might be taken to function like a magnifying glass, inviting spectators to view behaviors, virtues, and vices of their neighbors and others, in a truer-than-reality fiction. The logic of mimesis, Rancière (2010) has suggested, consists in conferring on artwork the power of the effects it is supposed to elicit on the behavior of spectators. As long ago as Rousseau, this assumption was challenged via reader-response ambiguities. The claim can be made that the puppet show should be more modest. Or that it should as art avoid representation, as proposed, for example, by Susan Sontag. In the end, though, we do have to accept the split between the puppet show and its audience; the physical distinction between the artist and the art; and the distance across the chasm between the people and their statues. To use these distinctions and distances as representations of time, though, we learn from Žižek, tossing them into a theater of history, masks in a kind of meta-puppet-show the theater of our theology. In this sense, theology of curriculum (representation, metaphor, metonymy, modeling – the dwarf in the inner void of our field of scholarship) is like a hegemony on steroids: unless we are willing to sacrifice our addiction to representation, I fear we will merely be cracking open one more chocolate egg after another, for the worthless plastic surprise inside.

“Other” Puppets and Statues

It is the particular historical context of the puppet show that concerns me. Taking a step back from puppets and *Bildung*, this period of history in which they emerged together, the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was the height of colonization, imperialism, the raping of non-European lands for physical resources, and the establishment of the slave trade as a massive, commercial enterprise. By association, there is potentially greater, shared evil in the assumptions of *Bildung* and the practices of imperialism than we might think. After all, if we can manipulate the environment that our children experience so that they might take risks and in the process integrate their critiques of society into a conservative outlook on autonomy and independence, treating people in the world as our puppets, then we can just as easily turn



humans into commodities and buy and sell them in another theater, on another continent. In a puppet theater, a scissors can become a flying dragon; in Africa, a person can become a “slave”.³

In contrast, as a detached, touchable object, a statue points to the manner in which human knowledge is predicated on acts of separation, distancing and expulsion; on our making alien some part of the chaotic, formless continuum of physical and perceptual life; converting it into something readable and accusable; it is a process that makes a thing into a cause. Here we see the intrinsic link between knowledge and the act of othering: the act of separation essential to consciousness, it seems, is at once also the prehistory of our presumption of strangers, gods and monsters; and this expectation that those things separate from us, strange as they are in the creation of them as separate, seem co-requisite with knowledge itself, which comes to be comprehended as knowledge of “things.” Kenneth Gross (2006, 2011) ties together the dream of the moving statue with its centrality in the co-creation of knowledge:

If the statue is a corpse, it is also a corpus of knowledge; the idol gives birth to our ideas, our words, our very breath, even as it reminds us of their catastrophic origin. The statue indeed represents a paradoxical gift, a form of knowledge and mastery stolen from the dead. (Gross 2006, p. 22)

“It is the abstraction of sculpture from the muddled world of bodily and historical life,” writes Michael North (1985, p.27), that “remains, as it were, part of that life; it is something the sculptor can both struggle against and use. Nevertheless, the fact that a statue can be said to draw back from time, to stand or defend against time – this is part of what makes statues such perfect homes for those ideals, virtues, aspirations, and accomplishments that we might wish to transcend time, survive history and physical contingency.”

North is writing about how the very distance is part of what makes statues appeal to us as resonant images of serious ideas, as things with the look of something meaningful – literally, as worthy of a pedestal; he is also describing the ways that statues are comforting in their generality as well as non-referential. They are at once things and images. The very lack of obvious meaning might be what draws us to them. Curriculum as statue carries with it all of these cultural and psychoanalytic elements: The exteriority of statues is what lets them serve as persuasive figures of an *idea*, and at the same time as powerful images of literal things, images of calcified thought and fantasy. Yet, their exteriority attracts us to them as the foci of troubled bearers of an interior life that is at once their own and not their own. We see this in our fantasies of the statue coming to life: If a statue is now moving, alive as it were, perhaps it was beforehand merely asleep, waiting to wake? The trope of release from death, as if the statue were a person turned to stone by an angry god, evokes connections with a fall from the grace of sleep itself. A redemptive gift or resurrection can just as easily reveal a kind of theft of peace, as if something already autonomous was forced to yield to the demands of a life not proper to it (Gross 2006, p. 9). The separations that statues establish just as simply manifest a lack of identification, and so a recovery of lost objects experienced in the fantasy of bringing a curriculum to life is also an awakening of the self to its lost, murdered or abandoned objects, and a return of those objects from their alienation. The basic point is that the animation of a statue is not a purely liberating metamorphosis; it is both a transcendence and a descent into the murky world of “life.” This recovery fantasy can take political form as well, overturning



the fixity of statuesque forms and mystifications of tyrannical authority (“a kind of substitution for iconoclasm,” Gross, 2006, p. 10); yet, even in these apparently revolutionary circumstances, the awakening of a statue can become a trial, at times even an occasion for paranoia. Statues come to life can be elusive or threatening, calling into question our naively benign assumptions about animation, or about what the nature of life itself entails. A recovery can be reframed as a violation. It can perpetuate rather than salvage the lack or loss; the dream can become a nightmare; rebirth can be into something other than life, a death-in-life, a zombie. The voice-over in Cocteau’s *Le Sûr d’un Poète* (1930) murmurs, “It is already dangerous to brush up against the furniture; is it not then mad to awaken statues so suddenly after their age-long sleep?” ... Might we ask the same of our students whom we seek to “educate?”

The legacy of *bildung* might be characterized because of its puppetry as “just not a good idea:” it separates us from “things” we “play with” ... it establishes the primacy of puppetry and it is not immediately clear that the pros outweigh the cons of this separation of things and puppetry. Playing with things and representations of things is revered in a fundamental sense for almost every common philosophy of education, reducing those things to mere objects of manipulation. The reverse, turning people into objects that can be manipulated, as commodities or ideas, is a simple extension of puppetry. Nel Noddings (2003) and others have worked through a solid critique of this fundamental reverence, offering “caring” as a significantly different “order of things”. Yet the dominant discourse perpetuates long-standing epistemologies of ignorance.

The Red Blush of Embarrassment and Violation

The statue in its paradoxical fixity, anonymity and substitutability resembles those entities that fill and constitute the hypothetical unconscious mind. Internal statues, as the products or relics of an archaic process of internalization, an “introjection of images, persons, gestures, and relations derived from our early experiences of the external world” (Gross, 2006, p.33), mirror those external statues we find so compelling, those sites of “projection.” We could say that the actual statues allow us to restore to things inside us something of their original exteriority, even as they keep the coloring of the interior, and it is in this way that curriculum as statue makes its affect apparent. “If statues can be mirrors of our internal objects, they can also become the places where such objects are captured, deformed, and reassembled, as it were, by the very “gravitational pull” of such statues.” (Gross, p. 33) William Blake once argued differently. Instead of creating idols that need to be smashed, statues that are projections of our internal unconscious, which are inevitably accompanied by limitations and constraints -- that is, forever sharing that world with our constructed terrors, self-defeat, and self-abasing imagination -- we should instead acknowledge these fears themselves as false idols, foreshadowing much of psychoanalysis. Such a critique depends on the risk of a counter invention, a fiction that bears the burden of our resistance, even if doing so brings forth yet another idol.

In coming to life, a statue always bears a trace of its existence. Instead of a radical change of state, some residue or un-gluable tie to its origins as a statue remains. The fiction of its life troubles the categories by which we attempt to mask differences between the living and the dead. This is the essential failure of school curriculum, which always fails us because it is always both the living experience and the trace of a dead, rigid plan. Worse than this, bringing



a statue to life is often a wound to the statue itself. Pygmalion's kiss turns to a red blush of embarrassment and violation. Life for an animated object is often torture, as in many versions of the Golem story. Coming to life triggers, finally, those buried fears and fears of things buried; the inhuman, the irrational, the solid unmoving statue; coming to life brings forth a ghost, a zombie, a monster. Often, in our stories about statues, bringing a statue to life leads to another life turning to stone, as if there is a careful economy of life in the universe. The literary pattern suggests that statues are a response to the crisis of fantasy and knowledge that has produced the fantasy of animation itself. Curriculum as animated statue keeps alive a tension between life and death, which are tropes for wish and frustration, which in turn signify object and human. Roman Jakobsen (1937) wrote that transferring the life of the signified onto the dead signifier achieves a figurative cancellation of the gap between the human world of the sign and the world of inanimate objects. If closing the gap brings the inanimate object to life, it also shows us a living creature that has lost its independence of the artistic sign. That is, the semiotic opposition that constitutes the lure of the statue is resilient enough to survive the fiction that projects its disappearance or collapse. The opposition in this way not only survives but is reborn and projected into a story in which a living statue kills a human being, or at least drives him or her out of his or her humanity. Here is yet one more fundamental quagmire: Our critique of curriculum as statue is nothing other than a furthering of the fantasy itself. If we bring curriculum to life, it perpetuates the tension between signifier and signified in ways that make the experience of curriculum deadly. As long as we say that attempting to bring curriculum to life is destroying something human we are just as much stuck in the muck of curriculum as statue.

Lines of Flight in the Marionette Theater

Puppets may be our alternative as much as the originating nightmare of curriculum theory. Our quagmire may be that it is only a European, colonialist puppetry that we have so far performed. Puppetry as a global phenomenon may help us rethink statues as much as puppetry, curriculum as much as colonialism, knowledge and authority as much as the objectification of people. In *Two Regimes of Madness*, Gilles Deleuze (2007) reminds us of Heinrich von Kleist's essay, "On the Marionette Theater," describing how puppets manifest at least three lines of movement. In doing so, Deleuze offers a conception of dynamic agency that is coexistent with our ages-old quagmire of structure and agency, yet opens up potentially different "lines of flight." A puppeteer doesn't actually move the puppets as they appear to move. Instead, he or she works with a different line (a trope for agency?), and that one, combined with gravity (a trope for structure?), leads to the actual movement of the puppet as part of the story of the puppet play and its interaction with other puppets in the context of the play (a trope for action?). Kleist had similarly described dancers who use their bodies in comparable ways; in that context, one can see the "soul" of the dancer in the curving line that would be the puppeteer, while the rest of his or her limbs are mere pendula, like the arms and legs of a marionette. What might once have been of interest as the puppeteer's agency, somehow manifested in the complex interaction of these lines of movement, is replaced in this way of thinking by his or her affect on the puppet and on the play of the play. At the same time, we have shifted from the quagmire of the representation aspect of the puppet, the ways we might describe the puppet or the ways the puppet might describe other things, to the things that the puppet can do and the ways that the puppet acts. When we work with statues, a similar



transition can occur, from the ways that the statue is a particular kind of puppet to the things the statue can and does do.

And so I offer a new field of curriculum studies scholarship; a global, post-colonial immersion in puppetry and its metaphorical instantiations. Here the undercurrent for the dream of the moving statue is the story of the puppet who dreams itself of coming to life, as in Collodi's (1883) *Pinocchio* or the more recent *The Collector Collector* by Tibor Fischer (1998). In the first, the puppet Pinocchio is a projection of the complexity of ethical and moral behavior; in the second, our narrator, an ancient bowl, is a sage with perfect memory. In both we also see the fascinating potential of the puppet and statue as audience: like pets, our puppets and statues know more about our secrets and desires than anyone else. Yet we might further appreciate what puppets and statues have to teach *us*, what they demand of us, and what they desire as things in themselves. What affects do different puppets have in different cultural contexts, and how might curriculum as puppetry and curriculum as a dream of the moving statue be re-conceptualized in these contexts?

Albrecht-Crane and Slacker (2003) write of the three lines of movement in the context of pedagogy as molar, molecular and flight lines; each type has comparative, potential affects. Molar lines express binary affects, and cut up bodies into categories, identifying bodies and making them identifiable within rigidly molar structures. Molecular lines distribute territorial and lineal segmentations, securing segmentarity at the capillary, micropolitical level. Lines of flight mutate encodings, unmaking and modifying the molarities and categories. This theory does not define individuals or position them within social structures. It instead describes potential affects that they can have. (Instead of asking, "what is a body?" it asks, "what can this body do?", or "of what affects is a body capable?" Albrecht-Crane & Slacker, p. 192) The term "affect" articulates what happens during the educational events with larger cultural and social struggles, yet at the same time, seems to avoid the reduction of those struggles to questions of identity. Bodies are instead individuated by particular affective thresholds and in this way enact variable investments in social spaces (Albrecht-Crane & Slacker, pp.200-201). The "line of flight" manifested by a pedagogy of affect coexists with the molar binary lines, but is no longer hostage to them.

Molar lines fix a self as much as ideas by establishing the exhibit of statues in the unconscious as the core "self." Molecular lines describe the curation of that exhibit, the details of social reproduction. "Learning" in this shifted conception is a line of flight, an opening of desire, desire's machines, and the organization of a social field of desire; as Deleuze writes in *Negotiations* (1995, p.19), "... it is not a matter of escaping 'personally' from oneself, but of allowing something to escape, like bursting a pipe or a boil." While *bildung* in its colonial sense reinforces the binaries that allow a flip from one representation to another, from a scissors to a dragon, a pile of ping-pong balls to an ocean above which the dragon flies, from a human being to a commodity, lines of flight that do not flip a person into a slave to be bought and sold, or that do not *only* flip from one representation to another, break up the reductive, molar ways of working that social organizations reproduce. Lines of mutation and decoding break up points of fixity, and realize as an affect those desires that are associated with movement instead of static categories.

The dream of the statue coming to life might in this way be a warm touch that works with the statue, as if with molten wax, becoming usable through the use itself. The test to see if one can bring a statue to life, kissing it or touching it in a certain way, for example, would



itself be in this sense the bringing forth of the desire to bring that statue to life. The test is an enunciation of the idea of turning *an* idea into a molar line that constructs the demarcation between life and death. To restate this in terms of puppets, a line-of-flight epistemology makes puppets into something other than a bifurcation. We think about what a puppet can do. First, in the colonialist sense, that is, in the molar line, it defines representations as distinct categories, and it places things into one of these categories at a time. Second, it unites the two categories, defining a relationship. This second affect is more like a zipper than a wall or boundary – it unites at the same time as dividing. Now this unification, the bifurcation as a reified idea, follows its own line. Where does it go?

Reconceptualization as Conceptual Art

The South African artist William Kentridge has written,

I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid, but the drawings and films are certainly spawned by and feed off the brutalized society left in its wake. I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures, and certain endings; an art (and a politics) in which optimism is kept in check and nihilism at bay. - William Kentridge (Goldby 1993, pp. 20-23)

Here we see the artwork as a zipper, binding the optimism and nihilism of apartheid, its legacies, antiapartheid efforts, and post-apartheid fantasies in the coexistence and avoidance of apartheid, molar categories. Similarly, the lines of movement in curriculum theory and classroom practice might share topological structures with this sort of artistic endeavor. In the case of teachers and students working with blocks to represent place value or with metaphors for justice in a poem, the teachers and students trace particular lines of affects, things they can do and make happen with blocks or metaphors – they focus attention, ignore, interpret, conceal information, make the use of the blocks or metaphors into the primary tool of a mindless task, suggest links to other representations as relevant to thinking, and so on. The blocks and metaphors move in ways that are affected by the teachers and students, but they move also in the gravitational context of their social, cultural, political and semiotic histories, so that the line that is traced is a combination of affects. In the play of the classroom, school, families, and broader cultural communities that create the social milieu, yet another line is traced, one that might only be describable after it has already been traced. We can compare this with much of Kentridge's work in animated film, where he works on a single sheet of paper, drawing and erasing, instead of adding a series of images one after the other in sequence; an effect of ahistorical "reality" is replaced in Kentridge's animations with a line of density, history and sedimenting memories.

If we consider in turn the affects of this "third" line of movement, and the idea that curriculum and pedagogy can have specific affects on the "outcome," as well as the ongoing layering of history and memory, we can see the concern of artists and educators regarding what Ranci re (2009) called the problematic "pedagogical stance." One affect of a pedagogy designed to influence the desires and future actions of an audience is to inadvertently perpetuate the passivity of that audience, and the need to be taught. Social movements expecting educational campaigns to change the world are usually disappointing in this way. Similarly, manipulative materials and curriculum content can be understood as inculcating



passivity and the need to be taught rather than seemingly positive goals of autonomy and the disposition to question received information or act on one's critique of the status quo. Base-ten blocks or poetic metaphors in a classroom coexist with, and are also independent of, specific learning outcomes and goals for transforming individual desires and social relationships. They both *can* be traced back to making a difference and not necessarily identifiable as a cause of transformation. It is only the dream of the moving statue that evokes our fantasies of the trace while maintaining the likelihood of the non-present cause.

The Brazilian artist Vik Muniz (1996) writes, "Knowledge is the painful longing for transparency and representation is its analgesic." In the documentary *Wasteland* (Walker, Harley & Jardim 2010) we learn of Muniz's collaboration with *catadores* -- self-designated pickers of recyclable materials in the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Muniz's initial objective was to "paint" the *catadores* with collected garbage. However, his collaboration as they together recreated photographic images of themselves out of garbage revealed both the dignity and despair of the *catadores* as they began to re-imagine their lives. Muniz's art commanded large sums at auction, brought back into the lives of the subjects. In this work, the garbage, the collectors, the paintings with garbage, the photographs, and the documentary, did not function as colonial puppets or statues, but as post-colonial zippers that weave together while dividing more than two categories at any given time. As an educational encounter for the artist, garbage collectors and film-makers, and now for us as viewers of the documentary, the story of his work addresses Muniz's idea that "Varnish is to philosophy what formica is to politics: the isolating of surface into a manageable representational meta-structure of belief" (Muniz 1996).

What I take from Muniz here to the tropological study of curriculum is how puppets and statues as rhetoric tend to simplify dichotomies in form, content and substance into dichotomies of representation. We might say, with Muniz, that puppets and statues simplify such dichotomies by reducing them to an even simpler binary of surface and form, "flattening complexity into a diagrammatic dimension." He writes further,

The fabrication of complex representational surfaces acts as a believable *trompe l'oeil* for depth and substance. If we consider the rhetoric of power as a quest for surface control, we will find in art - especially in painting - the ultimate simulacrum of this quest. Art as a twisted branch of politics is simply better equipped to generate such models because time for the artist is invariably in sync with the models she or he produces. The artist is the link between the surface and the promise of the surface's own depth.⁴

An earlier project, "Sugar Children" (Magill 2000) demonstrates how Muniz can become a "link between the surface and the promise of the surface's own depth." Visiting the Caribbean he observed sugarcane workers' children.

They were wonderful. But their parents were so sad, really hard people. I realized they take the sweetness out of the children by making them work in the fields. It's very hard work. All the sweetness from them ends up in our coffee. So I made drawings of them from sugar. I'm interested in that kind of transformation. (Magill 2000)



By making the images of the children out of the sugar that sucks the happiness out of their lives, Muniz evokes a new gradient of representation, in which the children and sweetness are not reduced to the sugar itself, despite the literal, surface reduction to a flat drawing made out of sugar.

A comparable contribution to curriculum re-conceptualization as conceptual art takes the work of Sara Felder, a solo theater artist, playwright and juggler, and applies it analogously to the performance of curriculum theorizing. While the themes of her plays and performances are serious, her form is comic, engaging, and vaudevillian. In this respect, she might be emblematic of Sontag's parody and satire. Her own description of her work claims a striving to integrate personal experiences with the urgency of a given moment in history. Out of that mix she creates funny and provocative theater. Drawing on her sharp wit and insightful eye, Felder performs virtuosic juggling, vivid monologues, sacred clowning and evocative poems (sometimes written collectively with the audience). Her performances include the tossing of balls, knives, scarves, cigar boxes, Barbie dolls, rubber chickens, feathers, a crystal ball, a bowling ball and a cassette player, puppet versions of a woman's womb, and so on. Often, a poem is recited in combination with an impressive feat of juggling, in a particular context of stories that set up the audience to be thinking about connections and juxtapositions at the same time, so that the combination cannot be simply teased apart in any way. In *Some Antics/Semantics*, props such as balls or a cassette player become puppets while puppets become props for comic routines or serious poetic statements. In *Out of Sight*, a nearly blind mother and her lesbian daughter see each other and the world differently, using circus tricks, shadow puppets and a Jewish queer sensibility to question the silences created by new frameworks for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Other work explores the social complexities of melancholia, and the relationships among personal life history, art, and social change.

What does it mean to say one is a "queer juggler"? To suggest that one can be defined in such a way? As a juggler, she keeps things in motion, moving in space, and moving in the development of her performance. As a *queer* juggler, we might say there is nothing specifically queer about her technique with the props: they fly through the air, doing things that should not be possible to do, just as the props of any juggler, queer or not. Perhaps her uniqueness in making the juggling part of a solo performance piece that incorporates juggling unusual objects, for symbolic purposes, in the larger context of her stories and humor, is queer, in the sense of non-normative, defying norms, that is, as lines of flight that co-exist with molar categories and molecular systems of ascription and constraint. A curriculum theorist pondering the character of her or his work – noting how the a-historical and a-theoretical character of traditional curriculum studies disabled teachers from understanding the history of their present contexts (Kliebard 1986; Pinar 2004); understanding the classed, gendered, raced, theologically influenced, nationed, and colonialist failures of this work; worrying about the fetishization of newness in scholarship – might take solace in the queer aspects of scholarship that do not meet the expectations of tradition, and which muddle the categories of scholarship itself (Appelbaum 2002).

Muniz speaks proudly of his work in Salvador, Brazil, with children who know that people visiting museums are those who produce and show these children what they cannot have. Their images, holding invisible items, inspired by a Giacometti sculpture, combined with the placement of those items in a black bag, deprive these people of the knowledge of

what each child is holding. “They turned the tables for once and learned to be the ones producing desire” (Magill 2000). That is a lot accomplished with invisible puppets, held by children turned to statues and frozen in photographs.

Zippers: Metonymy can Trump Metaphor

Felder’s satire and parody, and Muniz’s “turning the tables” might be said to avoid the ossified statues of curriculum and the anything-goes, colonialist patriarchy of puppets. Unlike the statue that demands suspension by the viewer of free thoughts or reason in order to interact with the unapproachable⁵, for the promise of a new world that cannot be possessed, carrying the spectator into a new world of utopist or dystopist imagination, these collaborations that confuse audience and performer, purpose and method, strategy and meaning, are less about the melancholic failure of the conceptual art and more about the experiences themselves. Kentridge and Muniz incorporate materials and tools in such a way that the material is also the carrier of symbolic meaning – the signifier and signified are the same thing. Puppets and Statues, tropes that define the rhetorical landscape of curriculum studies even as they themselves emerge symbiotically with curriculum studies, exist as molar entities that have (colonialist) affects and consequences; at the same time, they are lines of flight that coexist with, undermine, or ignore such affects. What would it take for us to adopt this language of curriculum? Well, in a sense, we already have. Some theorize that a Renaissance fixation on rhetoric and the teaching of rhetoric led to a cultural dominance of metaphor over other rhetorical forms. In this way, we might see curriculum as puppetry and curriculum as statues in metaphorical terms. Flipping from one representation to another carries qualities of one domain to another. The zipper notion attempts to turn a categorical border into a liminal terrain. There may be alternatives to metaphor, of course. One is metonymy, where a direct connection between two terms leads to the use of one to stand for the other (Hollywood for US Cinema, Crown for the Prince). We can imagine that a puppet would only be used to create a character metonymically if there was something about the material from which it was made that suggested a direct connection. It would be hard to imagine a sweet potato being used as a scissors in a puppet show.

Curriculum theorizing carries with it the legacy of Renaissance teaching of rhetoric, which emphasized tactics of metaphor over metonymy and other rhetorical moves; this led to both a narrowed epistemology mutually generative of racist and colonialist practices and the accompanying presumption that language itself is a neutral technology, separable from oppressive forms of social practice. Even contemporary discourse of difference and multiculturalism perpetuate this epistemological crisis. Knowledge in this conception is reduced to translation from one category to another, via the metaphor, and the isometric mapping of such colonialist practices as slavery and curriculum.

It is a challenge for us to work in ways that do not perpetuate harmful assumptions of *Bildung* and the enactment of the *Bildungsroman*. Puppets and statues play key functions in this work, as tropes for representation, the fantasy of bringing people and curriculum to life, and the psychoanalytic perseveration with social reproduction. Delleuzian lines of flight further extend the fantasy of the puppet, enacting movements that solidify categories, place things into the categories so as to substantiate them, and in maintaining the dream of the moving statue, the lines of flight that maintain hope. Curriculum might be the puppet masters behind the scenes, or the statue come to life, or tracing the ghosts of death in the fantasy come



true. In any case, flipping base-ten blocks into place value, or poetic metaphors onto justice, is epistemologically equivalent to flipping a person into a slave to be bought and sold. Teaching practices that promote study of the child and surveillance of the learner make people into objects of study rather than members of communities. The ethics are seriously in crisis! Yet, if puppets and statues can be understood as zippers, bringing together two sides of borderlands even as they separate them, rather than as walls of distinction, we can imagine gradients with no boundaries in borderland pedagogies, something that can be further developed through a study of metonymy (Appelbaum 2011).

Rancière writes, “I think we can distance ourselves from the current mood if we understand that the ‘end of art’ is not ‘modernity’s mischievous destiny but the reverse side of the life of art.” (Rancière 2010, p. 132) What I take from this statement, translated into curriculum studies, is that we can understand the extent that the aesthetic ties our curriculum scholarship to non-scholarship in particular ways from the start. Rather than imposing upon us a polarity of scholarship becoming “mere recipes for practice” – whether the practice of pedagogy in educational contexts of the practice of theorizing in post-colonial times – or scholarship becoming some notion of “only theory,” each end of such a polarity would carry with it its own turmoil and withering soul of curriculum theorizing. Life in curriculum is, to use Rancière’s words, a “shuttling back and forth between a *different* polarity of autonomy versus heteronomy and heteronomy versus autonomy, which, fundamentally, requires playing one linkage between art and non-art against another linkage – that is, one representation of representation against another representation of representation. But to do so merely locks us in the box of puppets once more, repeating again and again the same perseveration. Each possibility is a tale in a meta-political puppet show. Which is why Rancière believes artists cannot successfully isolate art from politics, and why those who want art to fulfill its political promise are condemned to melancholy. The implication would be that we cannot distinguish our work from practices in schools nor from colonialist epistemicides (Paraskeva 2011); and that most of us are condemned to melancholic nostalgia for those moments in our early professional development when theories promised ways out of hell into nirvana.

Even seemingly more sophisticated or generative theoretical orientations reproduce insidious Eurocentric and colonialist assumptions that educators would want to avoid. The more critical question has to do with what fantasies and fears we maintain with our perseveration on social and cultural reproduction through our work in multiculturalism, interculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and other “orientations” which, in themselves, fetishize the notion of perspective itself. Perspective is a trope for puppeteer. The puppeteer brings two arbitrary things into unity via the puppet. The dream of pedagogy as the design of the design, the storyboard for the puppet theater, is both the possibility and the paradox. To place oneself in a position to resolve paradoxes of *Bildung* in post-colonial times, or to create a new discourse that writes a new world, is to compose the script for new puppets, that is, to merely reproduce the crisis of reproduction itself. Whether this new puppet show sells a project, plans and predicts, or dreams of a new fantasy, it is nothing more than a puppet show. Puppet shows can incite revolution, but, we should note, “the more things change, the more things stay the same.” A puppeteer is condemned to these dualities. To be human, seems, too, to be subject to the same melancholic and joyous dualities – as long as one continues to play with puppets.

What happens when we change the puppet show, so that the boundary between the audience and the puppeteers does not exist? What happens when the audience creates the



puppet show for yet another audience, whose participation disrupts conceptions of boundaries and differences between audience and performer? These situations seem to offer new understandings not only of the puppet show but of the puppet show as metaphor and model for representation and theorizing. They might be a dose of Žižek, who, in typical Lacanian fashion, characterizes perverts, not as we would expect, as dangerous rebels, but as covert, closeted conservatives, secretly wedded to the prohibitive authority they loudly claim to heedlessly defy. For curriculum studies, our pleasures have taken on a captivating, beguiling spirit only for as long as the transgressions of the critiques are grounded in a belief in the existence of big, social systems, and symbolic “others” against which one is acting out. Can we speak back to these systems, these “others”? Or do they exist on some plane of eternally unapproachable power and authority? In *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek (2003) writes of God as the name, not for the divinity so much as for the gap between the human and the divine. The Christian notion would be that Christ offered a bridge across the chasm between God and humanity; the Žižek-ian turn is to name the gap itself, so that there can be a discussion of the divine in humanity and the human within divinity. Analogously, in curriculum studies, we have held onto our beliefs in puppet and statue tropes in a misty haze of *Bildung*. Curriculum as the interdisciplinary study of experience, and as complicated conversations, might more aptly name the chasm between us and our puppets and statues. Rather than manipulate our models, metaphors, and designs for educational encounters, we might find more rewarding the notion that our models, metaphors, and designs are names for the chasm they themselves construct, between our imagination and those externalized fetishes we call systems of reproduction and regimes of truth. Life – in curriculum, in schools, and so on – has come to feel worthwhile only as long as we hold onto our desires to play with our puppets and statues; that is, only as long as our so-called desire to transgress those systems and regimes is never fulfilled, since to satisfy our desire is to end the fantasy. Puppets and statues are both the things that make our work real to us and at the same time the very things that distort our relationship with that work, bringing us further from our goals even as we come closer to them. Puppets and statues are both the resistance to innovation and the resources for relating to this resistance.

Notes

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³ The link is more than coincidence. Many have written on the joint and mutually buttressing histories of the *Bildung* culture and the fascist objectification of “others.” Cultural theorist Klaus Theweleit (1987) notes how the fascist ego forms itself around the image of a statuesque, purified self-hood that is further formed through threat from both inside and outside; it is a hardened, collective ego always in danger of contamination or self-corruption by its own ambivalence.



⁵ See Friedrich Schiller's (1909-14) fifteenth letter, placing his readers in front of a Greek statue. The statue is self-contained, and dwells in itself. She is free of care, duty, purpose...and also carries with her the properties of the goddess she depicts, paradoxically figuring what has *not* been made, what was never an object of will. Meanwhile, the spectator experiences the statue must suspend random free thoughts or reason to interact with the unapproachable, non-interacting statue, and is promised in return a new world that he or she cannot possess. The goddess and the spectator are caught in a joint free play and free appearance, cancelling the oppositions of activity and passivity, will and resistance. The conclusion is that the autonomy that is present is the autonomy of the experience, not of the work of art. On the one hand, the artwork participates in the experience of autonomy only so far as it is not a work of art. And the implication is that the autonomy of art and the promise of politics are not counter posed in this relation. Instead, the statue calls forth an imaginary "new world" of art as not art, that is, the appearance of a form of life in which art is not art. Or, in our case, curriculum theorizing, in which theorizing is not theorizing. Or, cosmopolitanism that is not cosmopolitanism. Or intercultural imperialism that is not the opposition of epistemicide versus hypostasizing of cultural traditions.

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