

## Performing [Auto] Ethnography Politically

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My abhorrence of neoliberalism helps to explain my legitimate anger when I speak of the injustices to which the ragpickers among humanity are condemned. It also explains my total lack of interest in any pretension of impartiality, I am not impartial, or objective . . . [this] does not prevent me from holding always a rigorously ethical position. (Freire, 1998, p. 22)

It started before 9/11/01, but nowadays, to paraphrase C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 3) men, women, and children everywhere feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They feel a loss of control over what is important, including family, loved ones, sanity itself. The dividing line between private troubles and public issues slips away. People feel caught up in a swirl of world events, from the Middle East to Afghanistan, and Iraq. These events and their histories seem out of control. Life in the private sphere has become a public nightmare.

We live in dark and bitter times. Democratic public life is under siege. A culture of fear has spread around the world. In the United States reactionaries and neoliberals have all but overtaken the languages and politics of daily life, locating Americans in a permanent, open-ended war against faceless, nameless terrorists. We are embroiled in yet another war. Pre-emptive strikes, assassinations, and regime changes have become part of our new Bush-led foreign policy. Patriotism has become the national watchword.

The economy is slumping, unemployment is at a record high. Crony capitalism reigns. Conservative politicians tied to global capitalism advocate free markets defined by the languages of commercialism and commodified social relations (Giroux, 2003, p. 2). Neoliberals contend that what is good for the economy is good for democracy. The gap between rich and poor widens. Social injustices extending from “class oppression to racial violence to the ongoing destruction of public life and the environment”

(Giroux, 2003, p. 2) have become commonplace. The ideological relationship between capitalism and neoliberal democracy must be broken.

We live in a new garrison state. Since 9/11/01 America's public spaces have become increasingly militarized. Armed guards and openly visible security cameras are now in airports, pedestrian malls, outside hospitals and schools, even on college campuses. The President has authorized war tribunals and detention camps for suspected terrorists. Civil liberties are disappearing. Racial profiling operates behind the guise of protecting national security. A five-level civil-defense alarm system is in place.

Public education and civic, participatory social science are in jeopardy. Academics and pacifists critical of the war on terrorism are branded traitors. More and more restraints are being applied to qualitative, interpretive research, as conservative federal administrators redefine what is acceptable inquiry (Lincoln and Cannella, 2002; Shavelson and Towne, 2002). Right-wing politicians stifle criticism, while implementing a "resurgent racism . . . [involving] . . . punitive attacks on the poor, urban youth, and people of color" (Giroux, 2000a, p. 132).

These are the troubled spaces that radical performance ethnography must enter. A several-sided thesis, grounded in the seventh moment, has organized my arguments in this essay. With Lincoln (2000), I define the seven moments of inquiry, all of which operate in the present, as: the traditional (1900–1950), the modernist (1950–1970), blurred genres (1970–1986), the crisis of representation (1986–1990) postmodern, or experimental (1990–1995), post-experimental (1995–2000), and the future (2000–), the seventh moment.

The interpretive methods, democratic politics, and feminist comunitarian ethics of performance [auto] ethnography offer progressives a series of tools for countering reactionary political discourse. At stake is an "insurgent cultural politics" (Giroux, 2000a, p. 127) that challenges neo-fascist state apparatuses. This cultural politics encourages a critical race consciousness that flourishes within the free and open spaces of a "vibrant democratic public culture and society" (Giroux, 2000a, p. 127).

But more is involved, for performance ethnography is more than a tool of liberation. It is a way of being moral and political in the world. Performance ethnography is moral discourse. In the discursive spaces of performativity there is no distance between the performance and the politics that the performance enacts. The two are intertwined, each nourishing the other, opposite sides of the same coin, one and the same thing.

Within the spaces of this new performative cultural politics a radical democratic imagination redefines the concept of civic participation and public citizenship. This imagination turns the personal into the political. Struggle, resistance, and dialogue are key features of its pedagogy. The rights of democratic citizenship are extended to all segments of public and private life, from the political to the economic, from the cultural to the personal. This pedagogy seeks to regulate market and economic relations in the name of social justice and environmental causes.

A genuine democracy requires hope, dissent and criticism. Performance [auto] ethnography is a strategic means to these political ends. This project celebrates the ethnographer as a public intellectual who produces and engages in meaningful cultural criticism. Like Peter McLaren's (1997a, p. 151), postmodern *flaneur*, the performance ethnographer critically inspects everyday urban life under late capitalism. Through resistance, performance texts offer moral tales that help men and women endure and prevail in the frightening years of this new century. It is our obligation to make our voices heard, and we must do this for future generations. When we do so, we speak and perform as critical [auto] ethnographers.

Performance [auto] ethnography is the future of ethnography, and ethnography's future is the seventh moment. In the seventh moment the dividing line between [auto] ethnography and ethnography disappears. The reflexive ethnographer becomes the guiding presence in the ethnographic text. In the seventh moment critical social science comes of age and becomes a force to be reckoned with in political and cultural arenas.

It remains, then, to return to the beginning, to take up again the task of offering a critical framework for reading performance ethnography's place in a progressive discourse that advances a pedagogy of freedom and hope in this new century. It is not enough to just do ethnography, or qualitative inquiry. Of course we seek to understand the world, but we demand a performative politics that leads the way to radical social change.

It is necessary to join several discourses, including: critical pedagogy, cultural studies, the performative turn in [auto] ethnography, critical race, and radical democratic theory. Building on earlier arguments (Denzin, 1991, 2002, 2003b), I propose a civic, publicly responsible [auto] ethnography that addresses the central issues of self, race, gender, class, society, and democracy.

I begin with pedagogies of hope and the sociological and ethnographic imaginations. I turn then to the ethnographer and

cultural studies, reviewing several models of critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996, 1999; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000; McLaren, 1997a; Willis and Trondman, 2000). I next examine critical performance pedagogy, politics, and critical race theory, and conclude with a brief discussion of the practices of a performative cultural politics (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Parker, 1998; Parker, Dehyle, Villenas, and Nebeker, 1998).

#### THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION AND PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE

The need for a civic, participatory social science, a critical ethnography that moves back and forth between biography, history, and politics has never been greater. Such a performative discourse, grounded in the sociological and ethnographic imagination (Mills, 1959; Willis, 2000) helps persons grasp how the fascist structures of the neoliberal world order, the new global empire relate to one another. These discourses help persons locate this new form of fascism within recent world history, including its previous European and American formations during and after World War II.

Following C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 7) the critical ethnographer seeks to identify the varieties of men, women, and children that prevail in this current historical moment, including war widows and orphans, Afghan tribal lords, filthy rich CEOs, the homeless, Texas politicians, Palestinian refugees, militant Islamics, right-wing Christians, white supremacists, skin heads, bisexuals, transgendered persons, gays and lesbians, African-American feminists, Latinos, First Nation persons, twice-hyphenated Americans—from Asian-American-Japanese to Hispanic-American-Bolivians. The ethnographer connects these varieties of personhood to the experiences of racism, violence, oppression, and injustice. The critical imagination dramatically moves back and forth between the personal troubles experienced under global, terrorist capitalism and the public responses to this terrorism and these private troubles.

Today though, as Bauman (1999, p. 4) and Giroux (2001a, p. 4) observe, the connections between the public and the private are being dismantled. This means that in neoliberal societies like the United States it is becoming increasingly more difficult, except under the most superficial of conditions, to translate private troubles into public issues. Indeed, today public issues trump private troubles. For example, there were wide-scale social responses to the loss of lives after the attacks of 9/11, from newspaper stories to the outpouring of

financial aid. But these humane responses were quickly enveloped in patriotic flag-waving, and the display of the American flag in automobiles, homes, and school rooms across America. The loss of lives was used as an excuse for gearing up the American war machine.

When there is a disconnect between the public and the private, notions of the good society and the public good are eroded, or turned into political capital. The pursuit of private satisfaction and the consumption of consumer goods become ends as well as goals for the good life. Human tragedies fall by the wayside.

The critical imagination is radically democratic, pedagogical, and interventionist. Building on Freire (1998, p. 91) this imagination dialogically inserts itself into the world, provoking conflict, curiosity, criticism, and reflection. It advocates a "rigorous 'ethical grounding' in a commitment to combat 'racial, sexual and class discrimination'" (Aronowitz, 1996, p. 12). It aspires to radical social change in such areas as "economics, human relations, property, the right to employment, to land, to education, and to health" (Freire, 1998, p. 99). Its ethics challenge the ethics of the marketplace, it seeks utopian transformations committed to radical democratic ideals.

These ideals embrace a democratic-socialist-feminist agenda. This agenda queers straight heterosexual democracy (Butler, 1997). It is always relational, temporary, and historically specific. It is founded on its own conditions of hope and impossibility (Fraser, 1993; Laclau, 1990; McLaren, 1997b, pp. 250, 279). This agenda asserts capitalism's fundamental incompatibility with democracy, while thinking its way into a model of critical citizenship that attempts to unthink whiteness, and the cultural logics of white supremacy (McLaren, 1997b, pp. 237, 259; Roediger, 2002; West, 1993). It seeks a revolutionary multiculturalism which is grounded in the relentless resistance to the structures of neoliberalism. It critiques the ways in which the media are used to manufacture consent (Chomsky and Herman, 2002). It sets as its goal transformations of global capital, so that persons may begin to "truly live as liberated subjects of history" (McLaren, 1997b, p. 290).

### *A Moral Crisis*

Indigenous discourse thickens the argument, for the central tensions in the world today go beyond the crises in capitalism and neoliberalism's version of democracy. The central crisis, as defined by American Indian pedagogy, is spiritual, "rooted in the

increasingly virulent relationship between human beings and the rest of nature” (Grand, 2000, p. 354). Smith (1999, pp. 13, 74), writing as an indigenous Maori woman from New Zealand, discusses the concept of spirituality within indigenous discourse, giving added meaning to the crisis at hand,

the essence of a person has a genealogy which could be traced back to an earth parent. . . . A human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate beings relationships based on a shared ‘essence’ of life . . . [including] the significance of place, of land, of landscape, of other things in the universe . . . Concepts of spirituality which Christianity attempted to destroy, and then to appropriate, and then to claim, are critical sites of resistance for indigenous peoples. The value, attitudes, concepts and language embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent . . . the clearest contrast and mark of difference between indigenous peoples and the West. It is one of the few parts of ourselves which the West cannot decipher, cannot understand and cannot control . . . yet (p. 74).

A respectful, radical performance pedagogy must honor these views of spirituality. It works to construct a vision of the person, ecology, and the environment that is compatible with these principles. This pedagogy demands a politics of hope, of loving, of caring nonviolence grounded in inclusive moral and spiritual terms (see also West, 1993).

#### PERFORMANCE [AUTO] ETHNOGRAPHY AS A PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM

Within this framework, extending Freire (1998), and elaborating Glass (2001, p. 17) performance autoethnography contributes to a conception of education and democracy as pedagogies of freedom. As praxis, performance ethnography is a way of acting on the world in order to change it. Dialogic performances, enacting a performance-centered ethic, provide materials for critical reflection on radical democratic educational practices. In so doing, performance ethnography enacts a theory of selfhood and being. This is an ethical, relational, and moral theory. The purpose of “the particular type of relationality we call research ought to be enhancing . . . moral agency” (Christians, 2002, p. 409), moral discernment, critical consciousness, and a radical politics of resistance.

Following Freire (1998), Marx (1988/1983), Mead (1938), Dewey (1930), and Glass (2001), praxis is a defining feature of human life and a “necessary condition of freedom” (Glass, 2001, p. 16). Human nature is expressed through intentional, meaningful conduct that is anchored in historically specific situations.

The desire for freedom is basic. People make history and culture through their performative acts, and these acts enable the “realization of freedom” (Glass, 2001, p. 16), the opening up of choices, often in the face of oppression and resistance. Freedom is never given. Race, class, and gender oppressions limit human agency and the freedom to act in a given way. Freedom is always a contingent; contingent on a pledge to struggle and resist, on a willingness to accept the consequence of one’s actions. The practice of democratic freedom requires a condition of permanent struggle, the promise to transform the world in the name of freedom itself.

A position of militant nonviolence is paramount. The struggle for freedom, and for democracy, must honor human life. The “certitude of death demands that those who take life possess a level of certitude . . . that is perhaps beyond reach, especially in the case of death on the scale of war” (Glass, 2001, p. 23). Violence is not justified. A commitment to nonviolence structures struggles of liberation, and these struggles always occur within contested terrains. In turn, the permanent struggle for freedom and liberation gives to “all equally the power to seek self-determined hopes and dreams” (Glass, 2001, p. 23). Performance ethnography performs these struggles, and becomes, in the process, the practice of freedom itself.

Indeed, performance ethnography enters the service of freedom by showing how, in concrete situations, persons produce history and culture, “even as history and culture produce them” (Glass, 2001, p. 17). Performance texts provide the grounds for liberation practice by opening up concrete situations which are being transformed through acts of resistance. In this way, performance ethnography advances the causes of liberation.

#### HOPE, PEDAGOGY, AND THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION

As an interventionist ideology the critical imagination is hopeful of change. It seeks and promotes an ideology of hope that challenges and confronts hopelessness (Freire, 1999, p. 8). It understands that hope, like freedom, is “an ontological need” (Freire, 1999, p. 8). Hope is the desire to dream, the desire to change, the desire to improve human existence. Hopelessness is “but hope that has lost its bearings” (Freire, 1999, p. 8).

Hope is ethical. Hope is moral. Hope is peaceful and non-violent. Hope seeks the truth of life’s sufferings. Hope gives meaning to the struggles to change the world. Hope is grounded in concrete performative practices, in struggles and interventions that espouse the sacred values of love, care, community, trust

and well-being (Freire, 1999, p. 9). Hope, as a form of pedagogy, confronts and interrogates cynicism, the belief that change is not possible, or is too costly. Hope works from rage to love. It articulates a progressive politics that rejects “conservative, neoliberal postmodernity” (Freire, 1999; p. 10). Hope rejects terrorism. Hope rejects the claim that peace comes at any cost.

The critical democratic imagination is pedagogical in four ways. First, as a form of instruction, it helps persons think critically, historically, sociologically. Second, as critical pedagogy, it exposes the pedagogies of oppression that produce and reproduce oppression and injustice (see Freire, 2001, p. 54). Thirdly, it contributes to an ethical self-consciousness that is critical and reflexive. It gives people a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, doubt into trust. Fourth, in turn, this self-consciousness shapes a critical racial self-awareness. This awareness contributes to utopian dreams of racial equality and racial justice.

The use of this imagination by persons who have previously lost their way in this complex world is akin to being “suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar (Mills, 1959, p. 8). They now feel that they can provide themselves with critical understandings that undermine and challenge “older decisions that once appeared sound” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). Their critical imagination enlivened, persons “acquire a new way of thinking . . . in a word by their reflection and their sensibility, they realize the cultural meaning of the social sciences” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). They realize how to make and perform changes in their own lives, to become active agents in shaping the history that shapes them.

#### A PERFORMATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES

Following Conquergood (1998), Pollock (1998b), Madison (1998), and Giroux (2000a, p. 127), I am attempting to retheorize the grounds of cultural studies, redefining the political and the cultural in performative and pedagogical terms. On this point Diawara (1996) is instructive, arguing that the new black public sphere “needs both an economic base for young people and definitions and discussions of the culture it is producing daily” (p. 306). Diawara suggests that these discussions will take place from within a cultural studies model that uses performance “as a mode of interpolating people in the black cultural sphere, positioning the people of the black good life society as its ‘ideal read-



ers” (p. 306). For Diawara the cultural is always performative and pedagogical, and hence always political, and too frequently racist and sexist. The performative practices that enact pedagogy are the very practices that bring meaning and power into play. They shape the “performative character . . . of identity” (Diawara, 1996, p. 302) as it is socially constructed.

History is the unwritten term in Diawara’s argument. Today the cultures of millennial capitalism and neoliberalism hover like dark shadows over the pedagogical and performative features of a progressive cultural studies. It is culture in these forms that cultural studies resists. To repeat, Americans live under the Orwellian structures of a government whose motto seems to be “Perpetual war brings perpetual peace.” This self-same government brings new meanings to fascism. In fashioning free-market, state-supported millennial capitalism, neoliberalism makes the corporate marketplace primary (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001, p. 7). It encourages consumption by redefining citizens as consumers, and equating freedom with the choice to consume.

The concepts of multiple democratic public spheres, civic space, citizenship, and democratic discourse disappear in the pedagogical practices and spaces of millennial capitalism. In these deregulated corporate spaces a dismantling of the structures of public education, welfare, housing, and affirmative action occurs. Corporate and [ad]venture capitalists define the new public morality. They know no shame. This is a racist Darwinian morality. It celebrates the survival of the fittest. It refuses any commitment to the values of environmentalism, social justice, nonviolence, grassroots democracy, feminism, affirmative action, and the rights of First Nation persons.

These are the situations a performative cultural studies confronts. People in Diawara’s new black public sphere face almost insurmountable odds as they attempt to fashion democratic ideologies and identities in these racist spaces.

Of course culture and power are experienced in the pedagogical performances that occur in these spaces. Viewed thusly, culture is public pedagogy, a set of recurring interpretive practices that connect ethics, power, and politics (Giroux, 2000b, p. 25). Obviously cultural performances cannot be separated from power, politics, or identity. In cultural performances identities are forged and felt, agency is negotiated, citizenship rights are enacted, and the ideologies surrounding nation, civic culture, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are confronted.

Power and culture are opposite sides of the same coin. The conditions under which they are joined and connected are con-

stantly changing. Power (like culture) is always local, contextual, and performative, linking ideologies, representations, identities, meanings, texts, and contexts to “existing social formations [and] specific relations of power” (Giroux, 2000b, p. 169).

Pedagogy-as-performance is central “to the theory and practice of . . . radical cultural politics” (Giroux, 2000b, pp. 158–159). The performative side of culture shows how the pedagogical is always political. That is, through their performances persons represent, disrupt, interpret, “engage and transform . . . the ideological, and material circumstances that shape their lives” (Giroux, 2000b, p. 166).

Radical cultural critique and radical social change occur at the intersection of the pedagogical, the performative, and the political. Repression occurs in the same sites. In the spring, summer, and fall of 2002 the Bush administration placed the United States in a permanent state of war against terrorism. Many on the Left were critical, fearing that America was quickly becoming a neofascist state. Supporters of the administration argued that Bush’s critics were being unpatriotic, stating that in a time of war, it was every citizen’s duty to support the President. When those in power attempt to shut down the performances of those who question their power, they are engaging in power politics. Through these articulations, they are attempting to govern public culture, to set the terms around which discourse on war, peace, and terrorism will occur.

Critique and criticism begin in those places “where people actually live their lives . . . where meaning is produced . . . and contested” (Giroux, 2000b, p. 170). These meanings are filtered through the systems of representation that are produced by the media. Cultural criticism treats these texts as forms of public pedagogy. They shape and give meaning to lived experience within specific historical moments. The ethnographer works back and forth between the contexts and situations of lived experience and the representations of those experiences. The critical ethnographer criticizes the pedagogical structures of capitalism, using radical pedagogy to undermine the very authority of capitalism’s central ideological arguments.

Richard Rorty (2002) addresses Washington’s appetite for war against Iraq in America in late autumn 2002:

On some days Washington tells us that we need to go after Iraq for reasons that were present before 9/11, and are quite independent of that event. On others we are told that the plan to dispose Saddam Hussein is part of “the war on terrorism” that began on 9/11. This rapid alteration produces a blur. This blur helps conceal the fact that neither of the two

arguments for attacking Iraq has been laid out in terms that would justify the sort of resolution (the equivalent of a War Powers Act . . .) that a spineless Congress was, as of this writing, about to pass (p. 11).

Critically interrogating the administration's arguments, Rorty exposes the contradictions in its ideological position. This unraveling of official pedagogy creates the space for protest connecting the personal and the political in acts of resistance.

*New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd comments on political discourse in Washington, just after the House and the Senate voted to give the President war powers in Iraq. She notes that

This has always been the place where people say the opposite of what they mean. But last week the Capital soared to ominous new Orwellian heights . . . Mr Bush said he needed Congressional support to win at the U.N., but he wants to fail at the U.N. so he can install his own MacArthur as viceroy of Iraq . . . The Democrats were desperate to put the war behind them, so they put it front of them . . . Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton voted to let the president use force in Iraq because she didn't want the president to use force in Iraq . . . The C. I. A. says Saddam will use his nasty weapons against us only if he thinks he has nothing to lose. So the White House leaks its plans about the occupation of Iraq, leaving Saddam nothing to lose (2002, p. 13).

Extending Tyler (1986), Diawara (1986), and Conquergood (1998), I have suggested that the discourses of postmodern autoethnography provide a framework against which all other forms of writing about the politics of the popular under the regimes of global capitalism are judged (Denzin, 1997, p. 167; see also Tyler, 1986, p. 122). Within this model, a performative, pedagogical cultural studies becomes autoethnographic. The autoethnographer becomes a version of McLaren's (1997a) reflexive flaneur/flaneuse, and Kincheloe's (2002) critical bricoleur, the "primordial ethnographer" (McLaren, 1997a, p. 144), who lives "within postmodern, postorganized, late capitalist culture" (McLaren, 1997, p. 144), and functions as a critical theorist, an urban ethnographer, an ethnographic agent, a Marxist social theorist (McLaren, 1997a, pp. 164, 167; 2001, pp. 121–122).

Listen to McLaren (1997a, p. 172):

Thursday, May 9, 1996, Florianopolis, Brasil

Each time I give a speech here I realize how partial my knowledge is compared to the students or the workers. Today during my visit with Father Wilson, I was reminded of the terrible beauty among the people in the *favela* . . . Father Wilson made me a wonderful fish stew. The tires of his car have recently been slashed, the windows broken . . . Father Wilson is not popular with the *favela* drug dealers. (italics in original)

The radical, performance autoethnographer functions as a cultural critic, a version of the modern antihero “reflecting an extreme external situation through his [her] own extremity. His [her] . . . [autoethnography] becomes diagnosis, not just of him [her] self but of a phase of history” (Spender, 1984, p. ix). As a reflexive flaneur/flaneuse or bricoleur the critical autoethnographer’s conduct is justified because it is no longer just one individual’s case history or life story. Within the context of history the autoethnography becomes the “dial of the instrument that records the effects of a particular stage of civilization upon a civilized individual” (Spender, 1984, p. ix). The autoethnography is both dial and instrument.

The autoethnographer functions as a universal singular, a single instance of more universal social experiences. This subject is “summed up and for this reason universalized by his [her] epoch, he [she] resumes it by reproducing him [her] self in it as a singularity” (Sartre, 1963, p. ix). Every person is like every other person, but like no other person. The autoethnographer inscribes the experiences of a historical moment, universalizing these experiences in their singular effects on a particular life.

Using a critical imagination, the autoethnographer is theoretically informed in poststructural and postmodern ways. There is a commitment to connect critical ethnography to issues surrounding cultural policy, cultural politics, and procedural policy work.

The commitment, as McLaren argues, is to a theory of praxis that is purposeful, “guided by critical reflection and a commitment to revolutionary praxis” (1997b, p. 170). This commitment involves a rejection of the historical and cultural logics and narratives that exclude those who have been previously marginalized. This is a reflexive, performative ethnography. It privileges multiple subject positions, questions its own authority, and doubts those narratives that privilege one set of historical processes and sequences over another (McLaren, 1997b, p. 168).

#### A REFLEXIVE CRITIQUE OF REFLEXIVE CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Carspecken (1996), Kincheloe and McLaren (2000), Foley (2002), Willis (2000), Willis and Trondman (2000), Burawoy (1998, 2000), and Visweswaran (1994) speak favorably of a global, reflexive, critical ethnography. The concept of reflexivity is critical to this discourse. Foley (2002), Marcus (1998), and B. Tedlock (2000) distinguish at least

three types of reflexive ethnography. The first is a confessional reflexivity. The writer refuses to make a distinction between self and other, creating the space for autoethnography, for feminist, racial, indigenous, and borderland standpoint theories and inquiries (Foley, 2002, p. 475).

The second type of reflexivity is theoretical, and is associated with the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), who advocate an epistemologically reflexive sociology and ethnography grounded in everyday cultural practices. The sociologist works back and forth between field experience and theory, cultivating a theoretical reflexivity that produces a detached, objective, authoritative account of the world being studied (Foley, 2002, p. 476). This form of reflexivity 'questions the value of autoethnography, suggesting that it is shallow textuality (Foley, 2002, p. 475).

Burawoy wants an extended, reflexive case method that takes observers into the field for long periods of time, across multiple sites. In the process ethnographers learn how to move back and forth between macro and micro processes, while developing theory grounded in the data (Burawoy, 2000, p. 28). Willis and Trondman (2000), influenced by Bourdieu, call for a theoretically informed methodology for ethnography (TIME). Also grounded in ethnographic data, this reflexive approach insists on recording lived experience, while bringing that experience into a "productive but unfussy relation to 'theory'. . . the criterion for relevance is maximum power in relation to the data for purposes of illumination" (p. 12). Such illuminations produce an "AH HA" experience, and become the catalyst for "self-reflexivity and self-examination" (p. 14). The researcher maintains a self-reflexivity that emphasizes history and biography, while producing objective ethnographic accounts that are as rigorous as possible (Willis, 2000, pp. 113, 116).

Carspecken (1996) offers an elegant model for critical ethnography that deploys a critical, reflexive epistemology involving the collection of monological data, dialogical data generation, the discovery of systems relations, and using systems relations to explain findings. In Carspecken's model, truth is judged in terms of a set of regulative rules, including normative and intersubjective referenced claims, which must be met in order for a statement to be judged truthful.

A third type of reflexivity is anticipated by Visweswaran (1994) who complicates this picture by unsettling the notion of an objective, reflexive ethnographer. She criticizes the reflexive, normative ethnographic approach that presumes an observer and a subject with stable identities. She contrasts this stance with

deconstructive ethnography, where the observer refuses to presume a stable identity for self or other. If Carspecken's reflexive ethnography questions its own authority, Visweswaran's deconstructive ethnography "forfeits its authority" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000, p. 301). Deconstructive reflexivity is postmodern, confessional, critical, and intertextual.

Foley can be read as extending Visweswaran. He calls himself a reflexive, realist, critical ethnographer. Unlike Carspecken he has little interest in developing a foundational scientific method for his ethnography. He states, "I am much more interested in expanding the notion of cultural critique by tapping into the genres of autobiography, new journalism, travel writing and fiction. Appropriating epistemologies and textual practices from these genres will help us create more public, useful ethnographic storytelling forms" (Foley, 2002, p. 486).

Still, Foley is contained within a scientific frame. He states that his science would "still subscribe to extensive, systematic fieldwork. It would speak from a historically situated standpoint" (p. 486). This science "would be highly reflexive . . . continue to use a quasi-scientific abductive epistemology, or what Paul Willis now calls an 'ethnographic imagination.' . . . But I am also trying to tap into introspection and emotion the way that autoethnographers, and ethnic and indigenous scholars are" (p. 487). He is doing so because this "eclectic approach helps produce realist narratives that are much more accessible. . . . I feel a great need to communicate with ordinary people (p. 487).

It is not enough to want to communicate with ordinary people. This is no longer an option. The critical, performance ethnographer is committed to producing and performing texts that are grounded in and coconstructed in the politically and personally problematic worlds of everyday life. This ethnographer does not use words like data, or abduction, or objectivity. These words carry the traces of science, objectivism, and knowledge produced for disciplines, not everyday people. Bourdieu's theoretical reflexivity, coupled with Willis's ethnographic imagination may produce detached accounts that satisfy the social theorist, but such accounts have little place in the pedagogical practices of performance ethnography.

McLaren's postmodern ethnographer does not fall into these linguistic traps. McLaren's critical, reflexive ethnographer is thoroughly embedded in the world of praxis and acts as an agent of change. His ethnographer holds to a radical pedagogy, a militant utopian vision that is missing from the larger group of scientifically oriented, contemporary reflexive, critical ethnographers.

McLaren's is the kind of ethnography and pedagogy that cultural studies needs today.

#### CRITICAL PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY

A commitment to critical performance pedagogy and critical race theory (CRT) gives cultural studies a valuable lever for militant, utopian cultural criticism. In *Impure Acts*, Giroux (2000a) calls for a practical, performative view of pedagogy, politics, and cultural studies. He seeks an interdisciplinary project that would enable theorists and educators to form a progressive alliance "connected to a broader notion of cultural politics designed to further racial, economic, and political democracy" (p. 128). This project anchors itself in the worlds of pain and lived experience and is accountable to these worlds. It enacts an ethic of respect. It rejects the traditional denial by the West and Western scholars of respect, humanity, self-determination, citizenship, and human rights to indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999, p. 120).

#### *Critical Race Theory*

Such a project engages a militant utopianism, a provisional Marxism without guarantees, a cultural studies that is anticipatory, interventionist, and provisional. Such a project does not back away from the contemporary world, in its multiple global versions, including the West, the Third World, the moral, political and geographic spaces occupied by First Nations and Fourth World persons, persons in marginal, or liminal positions (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 263). Rather it strategically engages this world in those liminal spaces where lives are bent and changed by the repressive structures of the new conservatism. This project pays particular attention to the dramatic increases around the world in domestic violence, rape, child abuse, crimes of hate, and violence directed toward persons of color (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001, pp. 1–2; Finley, 2003; Grossberg, 2001).

Extending critical legal theory, critical race theory theorizes life in these liminal spaces, offering "pragmatic strategies for material and social transformation" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 264). Critical race theory assumes that racism and white supremacy are the norms in American society. Critical race scholars use performative, storytelling autoethnographic methods to uncover the ways in which racism operates in daily life. Critical race theory challenges those neoliberals who argue that civil rights have been

attained for persons of color. Those who argue that the civil rights crusade is a long, slow struggle are also criticized (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 264). Advocates of CRT argue that racism requires radical social change. Neoliberalism and liberalism lack the mechanisms and imaginations to achieve such change (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 264). Critical race theorists contend that whites have been the main beneficiaries of civil rights legislation.

Strategically, CRT examines the ways in which race is performed, including the cultural logics and performative acts that inscribe and create whiteness and nonwhiteness (McLaren, 1997b, p. 278; Roediger, 2002, p. 17). In an age of globalization, and diasporic, postnational identities, the color line should no longer be an issue, but sadly it is (McLaren, 1997b, p. 278).

#### *Participatory, Performance Action Inquiry*

Drawing on the complex traditions embedded in participatory action research (Fine et al., 2003; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000), as well as the critical turn in feminist discourse and the growing literature for and by indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999), critical performance pedagogy implements a commitment to participation and performance *with*, not *for*, community members. Amplifying Fine et al. (2003, pp. 176–177), this project builds on local knowledge and experience developed at the bottom of social hierarchies. Following Smith's (1999) lead, participatory, performance work honors and respects local knowledge and customs and practices and incorporates those values and beliefs into participatory, performance action inquiry (Fine et al., 2003, p. 176).

Work in this participatory, activist performance tradition gives back to the community, "creating a legacy of inquiry, a process of change, and material resources to enable transformations in social practices" (Fine et al., 2003, p. 177). Through performance and participation, the scholar develops a "participatory mode of consciousness" (Bishop, 1998, p. 208) and understanding. This helps shape the participant-driven nature of inquiry, and folds the researcher as performer into the narrative and moral accountability structures of the group.

This project works outward from the university and its classrooms, treating the spaces of the academy as critical public spheres, as sites of resistance and empowerment (Giroux, 2000a, p. 134). Critical pedagogy resists the increasing commercialization and commodification of higher education. It contests the penetration of neoliberal values into research parks, classrooms, and the curriculum. It is critical of Institutional Review Boards



who pass evermore restrictive judgment on human subject research.

A commitment to critical pedagogy in the classroom can be an empowering, dialogical experience. The instructional spaces become sacred spaces. In them students take risks and speak from the heart, using their own experiences as tools for forging critical race consciousness. The critical discourse created in this public sphere is then taken into other classrooms, into other pedagogical spaces, where a militant utopianism is imagined and experienced.

As a performative practice this project interrogates and criticizes those cultural narratives that make victims responsible for the cultural and interpersonal violence they experience. These narratives blame and victimize the victim. But performance narratives do more than celebrate the lives and struggles of persons who have lived through violence and abuse. These narratives must always be directed back to the structures that shape and produce the violence in question. Pedagogically, the performative is political and focused on power. Performances are located within their historical moment, with attention given to the play of power and ideology. The performative becomes a way of critiquing the political, a way of analyzing how culture operates pedagogically to produce and reproduce victims.

Pedagogically, and ideologically the performative becomes an act of doing (Giroux, 2000a, p. 135), a dialogical way of being in the world, a way of grounding performances in the concrete situations of the present. The performative becomes a way interrogating how "objects, discourses, and practices construct possibilities for and constraints on citizenship" (Nelson and Gaonkar, 1996, p. 7; also quoted in Giroux, 2000a, p. 134). This stance connects the biographical and the personal to the pedagogical and the performative. It casts the cultural critic in the identity of a critical citizen, a person who collaborates with others in participatory action projects that enact militant democratic visions of public life, community, and moral responsibility (Giroux, 2000a, p. 141). This public intellectual practices critical performance pedagogy. As a concerned citizen, working with others, he or she takes positions on the critical issues of the day, understanding that there can be no genuine democracy without genuine opposition and criticism (Giroux, 2000a, p. 136; see also Bourdieu, 1999, p. 8).

In turn, radical democratic pedagogy requires citizens and citizen-scholars committed to taking risks, persons willing to act in situations where the outcome cannot be predicted in advance.

In such situations, a politics of new possibilities can be imagined and made to happen. Yet in these pedagogical spaces there are not leaders and followers; there are only coparticipants, persons jointly working together to develop new lines of action, new stories, and new narratives in a collaborative effort (Bishop, 1998, p. 207).

Consider the following excerpts from the Susan Finley's poem "Dream Child" (2000). This poem is drawn from Finley's larger, life-history, arts-based research project on homeless youth. As a participatory, performance action project, Finley followed the practice of representing her understandings of homeless street life in stories and poems that she would share with participants, including performances in such public venues as schools, and meetings with street youth, and parents of missing children. The poem features snippets of interviews, descriptions of living situations, and a shorter, embedded poem "Is This My Life?" within the larger poem. Written by a female traveler, this poem expresses the experiences of a young homeless woman. In these lines Finley-as-poet and her fellow traveler forge a new narrative.

"Dream Child"

Hey, que pasa? I just got out of jail here in Austin  
Wrote a poem while I was in jail and decided to mail you a copy.  
A young girl writes a sad poem.

Is This My Life?

Once in a while I awaken, asking myself 'what am I  
doing?

Have the streets really become my home . . .

Spare change, leftovers, or just anything. . .

Alcohol's treating me good. Smile. Its good for you too."

Smile . . .

Bright morning light sneaks through slatted boards nailed loosely over  
glassless

window frames forming streaked patterns on stained dark floors. Stretches  
feline into

sun's warmth. . . .

Propped on one elbow she reaches for a bottle: "Alcohol's treating me  
good.

Smile. Its good for you too."

Performing ethnography politically means putting the critical sociological imagination to work. This work involves pedagogies of hope and freedom. A performative cultural studies reflexively enacts these pedagogies. These practices require a performance ethics, a topic for another day (see Denzin, 2003, Chapter 14).

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