Subterranean Echoes: Curriculum Theory as Cultural Studies.

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SUBTERRANEAN ECHOES: CURRICULUM THEORY AS CULTURAL STUDIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

Toby Daspit
B.A., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1988
M.Ed., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1993
December 1998

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Acknowledgments

Bill Pinar suggested in one of my first graduate seminars at Louisiana State University that the central question confronting us is not, "Who are we?" but, "Whose are we?" The writing of this dissertation revealed this in more ways than I thought imaginable. This is an attempt (with oversights that I apologize for in advance) to document those persons who essentially collaborated with me in this dissertation - and who continue to impact my thinking and writing.

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Abstract

Cultural studies has emerged in recent decades as a popular realm of academic inquiry (During, 1993). Giroux (1994), while noting the field’s increased acceptance, ponders why cultural studies has yet to permeate critical analyses of education and simultaneously questions cultural studies’ reticence in considering schools as an important site of cultural production. Edgerton (1996) concurs with Giroux and notes that cultural studies’ use in colleges of education is extremely rare. The realm of popular culture, one of the central foci of cultural studies, has especially been marginalized in academic discourses. My project is to explore the implications of curriculum theory as cultural studies, devoting special attention to the realm of popular culture.

I use post-modern notions of recombinant texts (Miller, 1996) to interrogate the possibilities of alternative sites/metaphors for curriculum theory which might be generated from popular cultural forms and practices. I pay particular attention to the modes of theoretical re-presentation that seem most prescient to the future of the curriculum theory field, and utilize multi-tiered textual strategies to elaborate the significance of such sites/metaphors.
In reconceptualizing curriculum as culture, and in utilizing the "antidisciplinary" (Edgerton, 1996) methodology of cultural studies, I believe we approach Pinar’s (1991) notion of curriculum study as a visionary search. The cultural forms that I study and re-present, namely museums, rap music, science fiction, Bruce Springsteen’s work, and vampire films, epitomize fluid spaces which point us toward new modes of knowing and new means of relating to the world.
Introduction
Ruptured “I/Eyes”, Anti-theory, and New Conversations

If one can stop looking at the past and start listening to it, one might hear echoes of a new conversation; then the task of the critic would be to lead speakers and listeners unaware of each other’s existence to talk to one another. The job of the critic would be to maintain the ability to be surprised how the conversation goes, and to communicate that sense of surprise to other people, because a life infused with surprise is better than a life that is not. (Greil Marcus, 1989, p. 23)

I suspect it is no coincidence that as I neared the completion of this dissertation I became obsessed, dredging up my adolescent fascination with vampires. Ostensibly I was doing research. This dissertation focuses on cultural studies and curriculum theory - and vampires seemed particularly relevant with the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer exceeding cult status and its star, Sarah Michelle Gellar, on the cover of Rolling Stone as I worked on final revisions. “One of the real special things here,” Gellar explains the show’s popularity, and part of its relation to my work, “is that all the horror comes from high school, and let me tell you, high school is a very horrific place” (Goods, 1997, p. 3).

Accompanying this obsession were weekly tapings and screenings of Buffy (research!), increasingly frequent runs to the video store (research has its price), and the
obligatory trip to my parents' house to search for memorabilia from my youth that might prove useful (genealogical and archaeological excavations). And conversations. I think I queried everyone I encountered about their relationship with vampires in film and literature. One of my former students actually claims to be a member of a vampire clan! He recently explained to me that he stakes this identity via a simulation game, but as Stone (1995/1996) and Turkle (1995) contend, such identity claims are indicative of the blurring of boundaries in post-modernity.

After all, vampires do relate to my academic work, even/e specially in our post-industrial, post-modern world. "Vampires," Gordon and Hollinger (1997) tell us, are "one of the most powerful archetypes bequeathed to us from the imagination of the nineteenth century" and are "a late twentieth-century cultural necessity" (p. 1). Hollinger (1997) continues by elucidating some of the ways "some vampire texts 'mirror' aspects of that peculiar human condition which has come to be termed 'postmodern,'" since post-modernism, she argues, "is one of the more productive - and challenging - paradigms through which contemporary Western reality is currently being conceptualized" (p. 199). Noting that "certain previously sacrosanct boundaries
- political, philosophical, conceptual, ethical, aesthetic
- have tended to become problematized” in post-modernity,

Hollinger explains that

(t)his deconstruction of boundaries helps to explain why the vampire is a monster-of-choice these days, since it is itself an inherently deconstructive figure: it is the monster that used to be human; it is the undead that used to be alive; it is the monster that looks like us. For this reason, the figure of the vampire always has the potential to jeopardize conventional distinctions between human and monster, between life and death, between ourselves and others. We look into the mirror it provides and we see a version of ourselves. Or, more accurately, keeping in mind the orthodoxy that vampires cast no mirror reflections, we look into the mirror and see nothing but ourselves. (p. 201, emphasis in original)

The vampire metaphor, Allucquere Rosanne Stone (1997) argues, illuminates the necessity of altering modes of perception in a shifting world. She writes:

If we are going to survive into the next century, we need to learn how to see properly - how to make meaning, in all senses - in a world that has already changed beyond recognition, and that we still think we recognize only because nostalgia is such a terrifically powerful force. (p. 61)

Survival, Stone contends, this need for a new vision, can be achieved in two ways. “One is by becoming aware that the control of the apparatus of meaning has slipped out from under us,” (p. 61) she says. The burgeoning age of cyberspace and information technology contributes to this slippage.
The other means to survival, and the wholly artificial starting point for the arguments I am about to present, is, Stone writes, “to accept the vampire’s kiss” (p. 61). What might happen, Golding (1997) asks, if we accept the multiple identities and subjectivities of post-modernity and see where they might lead us – if we stop “sterilizing the wounds” (p. xii) of epistemological and metaphysical fractures and ruptures:

What if it were to be admitted that the usual, empty phrases - like the so-called “deep and violent cut” of meaning, truth, death, indeed identity itself: the “who are we” and “what are we to become” of science and of life - have collapsed under their own bloodless, sexless weight of self-reflexive reason? For though the very cunning of dialectical logic (historical, metaphysical, or otherwise) has already produced many interesting political dalliances with empowerment, necessity and change, it has, more often than not, simply recast, or (worse) simply reproduced, the very practices it is seeking to overcome . . . (p. xii)

Munro (1998) offers possible answers to Stone and Golding, noting that rejecting “the unitary subject for a more complex, multiple, and contradictory notion of subjectivity results not in a lack of agency but in forms of agency not solely dependent on a universal subject” (p. 35) - a vampire of agency, or an agent of change touched by the complex identities of vampirism.
A Ruptured “I/Eye”

Delineating one of many possible trajectories that led to my own acceptance of this partiality of perception, of the ruptured “I/eye” with which I/we view the world, and with which I/we write/read, is essential to understanding the paths I have chosen in this dissertation, to understanding the myriad inspirations and junctures that lead me to contend that cultural studies is a meaningful means of rethinking curriculum theorizing. After all, I began my doctoral work with the intention of untangling the thorns I felt I had wrapped myself in during six years of high school teaching, particularly the last three years when I co-taught an African American Studies course with staff from Shadows-on-the-Teche, a National Trust for Historic Preservation museum property - a course that focused on oral histories - and something for which I had no formal “training” (see Chapter Two). And I wanted to do so without falling into what I perceived to be the elitist and exclusionary nature of some academic writing - a perception that had previously led me to proclaim, rather loudly I might add, that I would never pursue this terminal degree - that I would never leave the world of practice for the world of theory (false bifurcation acknowledged).
As I began my doctoral work, I thought going "home" to research the three years that I had worked with African American adolescents and two other white instructors was imperative. So I took to the highways, equipped with the critical neo-Marxist theory that I had been introduced to in my master's work and with the burgeoning post-modern qualitative and narrative theories doctoral work had introduced to me. I was chasing after new understandings in the guise of interviewing people I had worked with, interviewing people who occupied similar positions, and revisiting the geographical terrain that had become so familiar during my high school teaching.

I rode the highways again between Lafayette, Louisiana and New Iberia, Louisiana, the same route I had traveled during my six years of teaching high school, and then even drove to Beaumont, Texas to visit a co-founder of the African American Studies course. I was convinced that I was on the road to unraveling at least some of the quandaries I encountered, certainly at least laying the foundation for this dissertation.

But the focus of my "research" proved elusive to define. It became apparent, as I began bi-weekly visits to New Iberia, that my "research" was actually a "re-searching" - I was returning to the Shadows to seek...
out more than other white persons' reactions to working with African American youth - I was looking for something else. I was searching for my "eye," or some of my "eyes." And my "I"s.

Early meanderings in the "field" only reinforced initial skepticism about qualitative inquiry, one that Patai (1991) corroborates when she says "we cannot do truly ethical research" (p. 150). It is impossible, I feel, to ever transcend the inherently disparate power relations, and concomitant ethical dilemmas, involved in qualitative research. But transcendence and escape are problematical notions. If I accept that I cannot transcend issues of ethics and power (among many such issues in qualitative inquiry), if I accept the "reality" that research is contextual and situated, what am I really accepting? That it is alright to proceed, as Patai explains, because "no controversy attends the fact that too much ignorance exists in the world to allow us to await perfect research methods" (p. 150). Such a statement should not go unchallenged, however. If one genuinely concludes that ethical research is not possible, then how can one simply proceed?

It is not contextual/situational complexities that I think I want to transcend/escape, but the ethical dilemmas
surrounding power and exploitation. Of course, I might be seeking such escape simply for peace of mind, which similarly shouldn’t go unchallenged. By bifurcating what is ethical with what isn’t, am I implying that we can do things that are ethical? Patai says this is impossible because we live in “an unethical world” (p. 150). And yet, Patai continues, “Ultimately we have to make up our own minds whether our research is worth doing or not, and then determine how to go about it in ways that let it best serve our stated goals” (p. 150). I had no idea this would ultimately lead me to the embrace of vampires, to considering seriously the ramifications of accepting our partiality and subjectivity and the post-modern “reality” that everything we do is a fiction.

How do white researchers, how do I, transcend the apparently inherent oppressive realities of reifying discourses? If I speak, or write, as a white male born and raised in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century, how can I avoid reproducing the epistemological and metaphysical discourses of western, patriarchal thought - discourses, which by their very presence, because they were created and sustained from privileged positions, might serve to reproduce such privilege? Giroux (1997) comments that
(a)nalyzing Whiteness opens a theoretical space for teachers and students to articulate how their own racial identities have been shaped within broader racist culture and what responsibilities they might assume for living in a present in which Whites are accorded privileges and opportunities (though in complex and different ways) largely at the expense of other racial groups. Yet, as insightful as this strategy may prove to be, more theoretical work needs to be done to enable students to critically engage and appropriate the tools necessary for them to politicize Whiteness as a racial category without closing down their own sense of identity and political agency. (p. 314)

In the epistemological turn that recent qualitative inquiry has made from positivistic modes, what Clifford (1986) terms "'literary' approaches" have replaced previously valued "scientific" ones, "blur(ing) the boundary separating art from science" (p. 3). Riessman (1993) situates this "turn" more specifically in terms of "narrative," noting that "leading U.S. scholars from various disciplines are turning to narrative as the organizing principle for human action" (p. 1, emphasis mine).

Such a shift, however, does not avoid problematical research issues; it simply skirts them. The impulse in using literary models for research and writing it seems to me, is similar to previous models culled from positivism. Or worse, is it a drive toward a Hegelian mastery of something, or someone? As Lavine (1984) writes of Hegel's philosophy:
We are beings . . . who take mastery as our goal . . . such mastering actions (are) the examples of the principle of negation, at work in all human thought . . . the same principle of negation is at work in the human subject, producing the subject's relation to all objects through the will to mastery . . . the principle of negation and death is at work in the self's characteristic relation to objects, in its desire to negate them, to overcome them in some way, to destroy them, to incorporate them, to cancel them out of existence. (p. 220)

In spite of Hegel's metanarrative and its limitations, I wonder if the will to mastery, however much the researcher recognizes "the subjective, multiple, and partial nature of human experience" (Munro, 1993, p. 165), is altered in any way by shifting modes of inquiry. Are Hegel's underlying assertions, and their potentially dangerous dogmatism, rejected by post-modern inquiry? Why would we research, if not to "know," to "master" some-thing, some-one?

Much narrative work, drawing from literary models of "emplotment" (Polkinghorne, 1995), seem to reproduce positivistic assumptions and assertions. Clifford (1986), for example, when discussing the "poetic dimensions of ethnography," notes that "it can be historical, precise, objective" (p. 26). And Borland (1991) writes, "Oral personal narratives occur naturally" (p. 63, emphasis mine) and may produce, as she claims is the case with her work with her grandmother, "true exchange(s)" (p. 74, emphasis mine).
Baerwald and Klein (1990) write in the song “Liberty Lies,” that “phrases and faces keep coming on through/put 'em on a microscope try to see 'em through/spin 'em round this way spin 'em round that (way).” Indeed, we seem to continue, as Baerwald and Klein note, to examine things through a “microscope” culled from our modernist, positivistic legacies, even if they appear to us spasmodically, even if they are "phrases and faces." We "spin 'em round this way spin 'em round that" via various theoretical positions, via various lenses.

So, taking post-modernity’s “triple negation” of “utopianism, teleology, and totalization” (Leitch, 1992, pp. 153-154) seriously, where does this leave a ruptured "I/eye?" What is “research” in a post-modern context? What is the proper focus of a dissertation?

I am suggesting that in my efforts to "study" others, I must contend with a shifting sense of self as well as the fragmented nature of our perceptions - hence, the ruptured "I/eye." My conception of self, which is informed under the general post-modern rubric Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995) formulate when they discuss "multiple selves, multiple intelligences, multiple surfaces, (and) fragmentation," (p. 472) helps to explain why I do not relive or examine my life in a strictly linear fashion.

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leading to a definitive, cumulative self, but rather view my self as a spasmodic being, one that might lead to any number of possible selves, contingent ultimately upon various contexts. This notion introduces a complexity into academic (note the shift away from use of the term “qualitative”) inquiry that I do not feel has been adequately addressed. Awareness of the problem, waving what I call the "magic wand of post-modern positioning," is not a panacea to problems inherent in understanding or exploiting others. Simply claiming a post-modern framework functions in much the same manner that Patai (1991) observes "occurs . . . when feminists imagine that merely engaging in the discourse of feminism protects them from the possibility of exploiting other women, while their routine research practices are and continue to be embedded in a situation of material inequality" (p. 139).

If "I" am ruptured, then others are presumably similarly non-unitary. And yet these distinctions are undoubtedly linked to context and culture. How do "I," as re-searcher, as writer, claim interpretive privilege? And if I do not claim some form of interpretive privilege, how do "I" deal with writing about others, or as I do in the following pages, with writing about cultural forms that others engage in? And how do I write if I accept the
"paradoxical necessity" of "such totalizing operations as critical writing and codification" in a post-modern and poststructural context that "prefers fragmenting, differentiating, separating, specifying, randomizing, particularizing, and deconstituting" (Leitch, pp. 5-6)?

I am reminded of William Carlos Williams (1946/1958) who writes in Paterson, "we know nothing, pure and simple, beyond our own complexities" (p. 3). I contend that inquiry of any sort outside of the self is not genuinely possible. In fact, analysis of the self might ultimately be similarly dubious. Yet, I believe that it might be the only analysis capable of being non-exploitative, although this is certainly questionable. If I am a contextual being, then my being is, to some extent, always fashioned from extracting meanings from "others."

I agree with Tierney and Lincoln (1997) who write that contributors to Representation and the Text: Re-Framing the Narrative Voice begin with a basic premise: if we partake in the current debate that circles around postmodernists' interpretation of notions such as "reality" and "identity," then the development of qualitative texts . . . demand dramatic new reconfiguration, and to a large extent, new audiences . . . (W)e all agree that the manner in which we present data, how we construct the "author" and the "reader," demand serious investigation in ways that would have been unheard of fifty years ago. . . . (W)e are also joined by Schwandt's explication of the ethical dilemma of finding a "responsible way to compose a text that re-

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presents the postmodern wisdom of how and who we are. . . . (pp. viii, x)

**Anti-theory Moves Underground**

With the aforementioned acknowledged, I pinned myself into quite a corner, induced quite a quandary - how to develop an extended study that remains faithful to postmodernism, to vampires? What could I study, and how might I proceed?

And then, as often serendipitously happens in the inexplicable confluence of reading multiple texts simultaneously, I stumbled upon a possible path. While reading William F. Pinar's early essays (1994) one summer, I was struck by the sense of urgency, the directness of language, the emotional intensity. At the same time, I happened upon a collection of poems by Nicanor Parra (1985) - and as if often the case, I bought it on impulse, impressed by the title: Antipoems: New and Selected. While certainly respectful of Pinar's role in the reconceptualization of curriculum, and of his passionate arguments for the necessity of theory in the face of increasing bureaucratization and standardization in schools, I wondered if what I was desiring instead was actually "anti-theory."

I wondered if curriculum theorists had lost their nerve, lost their way. Theory seemed to me uncertain of
itself, perpetually adductive, and not always in an inter-disciplinary, generative sense - but often formulaically, forging the facade of rigorous academic work. Theorists prop up ideas with words culled from others - who perversely, and consciously or not, we attribute with "original" thoughts. Serres (1995b) says of this situation, "Don’t you laugh at learned articles in which each word is flanked by a number, whose corresponding footnote attributes that word to an owner, as though proper names were soon going to replace common nouns" (p. 81)?

I wondered if we had lost the "working from within" that Pinar (1994, pp. 7-11) articulated early in his writings - not the need for it, but the re-presentative powers of it.

Theory, which of course is potentially freeing, for all who encounter texts and their traces/lineages - we are "dreamt into existence by others" (Pinar 1994, pp. 235-252), right? - might also smother under its own pretenses - smother us. And all in the name of the ironic "progress" of post-modernity.

Even in the midst of unlayering, perhaps moving toward dismantling, historically oppressive notions like "rites of passage," we seem to enact them, to embody them. We theorize, we experiment, we move to undertake to expose the
"taken-for-granted" - all the while frequently oblivious to the "taken-for-grantedness" of our theorizing, our movement.

Chilean poet Parra recognized a similar malaise in the poetry of the 1950s, writing and, with the assistance of Pablo Neruda, publishing *Poems and Antipoems* in 1954, declaring that

> For the old folks
> Poetry was a luxury item
> But for us
> It’s an absolute necessity. (p. xi)

I need not extrapolate any conclusions. Anyone interested in the histories of ideas should find something in Parra that resonates (unless there are still those noblesse out there who honestly feel that we only exist to perpetuate an academic elite). Parra's "antipoetry was an open challenge to those who believed that poetry should be rhetorical, obscure, and dignified" (MacShane, 1985).

Time to confront ourselves, our writings. "Rhetorical?" "Obscure?" "Dignified?" Or hoping to achieve such status?

Edward Hirsch (1997), in his essay on post-war Polish poetry, "After the End of the World," contends that "Every major Polish poet shows an absolute distrust of any political creed or ideology," (9) opting instead to "keep human beings in full view" (10). In fact, Hirsch argues,
humans actually fall out of sight, out of existence, if the
violence of language, an epistemic exclusion, precludes
understanding. For post-war Polish poets, who witnessed or
in their writings bear witness to that ultimate of human
tragedies, genocide, "stylistic clarity is a form of ethics
. . . a response to ideological obfuscations" (10).

Serres again: "I don’t like jargon . . . Technical
vocabulary seems even immoral: it prevents the majority
from participating in the conversation, it eliminates
rather than welcomes, and, further, it lies in order to
express in a more complex way things that are often simple"
(p. 25, emphasis in original).

Poet Ruth Forman (1993) warns against “styrofoam
words,” wearily proclaiming in “I Will Speak Genius to
Myself,”

So tired of trying to prove myself
analyticalphilosophicalintellectually
know what I mean?
Those epistemologicaterminal terms dammit
clutter my mind . . .

Now
I must recite flawlessly
another’s vocabulary
before I can make sense in my own. (p. 47).

When we lose our nerve, when we hide behind the
grandiosity of theory – what are we obfuscating? I’m not
sure, and the longer I go on, the more I tangle myself in the thorns of theory, even if desiring anti-theory.

Pinar et al. (1995) note the "particularistic and balkanized" (p. 849) nature of the current curriculum field, and worry about the "apparent inability of the various sectors to speak to each other . . . and to develop a literature on curriculum at some distance from sources in other disciplines" (p. 863). In looking toward the next wave of curriculum theorizing, one where the grandiosity of multiple theories does not preclude conversation in an "independent 'middle,'" (p. 863), I realize that it is not anti-theory I am after. It is, instead, a search for subterranean visions and for theory to enable such perceptions.

I am interested in working toward understanding, however partial such understandings are, the active construction of multiple and non-unitary adolescent cultures." I am especially intrigued in interrogating, in taking seriously in the light of post-modern subjectivity, the possibilities of alternative sites and metaphors for curriculum theory which might be generated from such cultural forms and practices. However, in dealing with cultural forms that adolescents engage in, forms that are often marginalized in academic discourses, I believe new
metaphors are required. Hence my move underground, via traces of anti-theory which resonate throughout the anti-disciplinarity of cultural studies, toward the subterranean.

I believe that going beneath the surface involves examining a parallel world that exists concurrently with the dominant - but is not always simply reactive to it. Subterranean. Here, though often hidden beneath the official ideologies of schooling and curriculum, are cultures that students are actively constructing, often via popular cultural forms, that might shed light on the search for new curricular visions.

Couture and Dobson (1997) partially make such a move in their exploration of how students co-opt computer e-mail access in the classroom. They conclude that “student use of the Internet is a playfulness that is most meaningful when it is outside the gaze of the school’s sanctioned technology learning outcomes” (p. 35). Precisely. The meaning resides, I would extrapolate, beneath the official “gaze.” And in her excellent analysis of adolescent desire and identity in relation to horror fiction which I examine in more detail in the conclusion, Ruth Vinz (1996) concludes that she “want(s) to be more vigilant about what they (adolescents) are reading on the school bus or subway

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or in classrooms where they read away those periods between bells” (p. 23).

I draw the metaphor of the “subterranean” from at least two sources. Guillermo Del Toro’s (1997) film Mimic, which plays off the Frankenstein myth in post-modern terms, is one inspiration. In Mimic, a virus spread by cockroaches is threatening to destroy New York City’s children. An entomologist, Susan, teams with Peter, a Center for Disease Control scientist, to alter the DNA of select cockroaches – aptly called the Judas Breed – cockroaches who destroy other roaches but supposedly cannot breed themselves. Of course, in typical science fiction/horror fashion (see Chapter Four for curricular implications of science fiction), human tinkering with nature yields mayhem as these Judas roaches do breed, and grow large enough in the subway system of Manhattan to begin mimicking humans.

The specifics are not important here. What was important to my appropriation of the subterranean metaphor was Del Toro’s cinematography – illuminating, as it were, the new life form dwelling in the shadowy subway system. As I watched the film, or shortly thereafter, I realized that students in schools are often like these roaches (and
I mean this respectfully) - beneath the surface of official gazes/practices they thrive and develop multiple cultures.

Jack Kerouac’s (1958/1993) *The Subterraneans* served as second source of inspiration. Kerouac titled the novel based on Allen Ginsberg’s label for their group of Beat generation artists (Charters, 1992). At the risk of romanticizing youth cultures, I think that many of the cultural forms that I study in this dissertation (i.e., rap music, science fiction, vampire lore) serve as alternative constructions of identity and desire and challenge the mainstream (in this case, the official ideologies of schooling) in a similar manner to the Beat generations’ challenge of the stifling conformity they perceived in 1950s America. Moving underground without overly romanticizing youth cultures is something with which I struggle continuously, and such tension is evident throughout. In taking some of the cultural forms with which some youth engage seriously, perhaps we can explore “experimental representational practices that may well not enable us to discover new lands - as if they are out there, waiting to be found - but instead, help us to create new ways to see the world, and in doing so, broaden who we mean by ‘us’” (Tierney & Lincoln, p. xvi).
Chapter Outline

Chapter One explores the implications of conceptualizing curriculum theory as cultural studies, especially at this historical juncture termed post-modernity. In articulating a framework for the individual chapters that follow, I pay particular attention to the modes of theoretical re-presentation that seem most prescient to the future of the curriculum theory field. After articulating this framework, I offer rationale for the intended multi-tiered textual strategies that form the basis of this study. In conceiving of curriculum theorizing as cultural studies, it is my intention to embody, as Edgerton (1996) explains, “an act of cultural studies” (p. 5, emphasis in original).

Chapter Two begins by examining questions of place, memory, and time, focusing upon my individual relationship to the Shadows-on-the-Teche project mentioned earlier in this chapter. In working through the complex issues involved in a curricular project that exposes African American youth to an embodied site of historical oppression, I begin to explore the possibilities of utilizing a form of cultural studies to deconstruct these issues. Museums are frequently experienced by adolescents via schooling. It is not coincidental that I conclude this
chapter with an eye toward a "new" aesthetic - hip-hop - that was largely introduced to me by students in this course.

After establishing the significance of hip-hop aesthetics for not only museum culture but curriculum theorizing, Chapter Three focuses exclusively on the issue of hip-hop culture generally and rap music specifically. I initially contextualize the history of this incipient art form, exploring its multifarious manifestations and problematics. What has appealed to me most in thinking through the meanings of rap music for curriculum theorizing are the generative metaphors that I feel emerge from the practices of the cultures informed by rap music and its artistry.

Chapter Four analyzes a hybrid art form - SF (science fiction, or more accurately, speculative fiction) rap. After establishing the rationale for exploring SF as it intersects with curriculum, I examine in detail the rap group Public Enemy's (1994) album, Muse Sick-N-Hour Mess Age, and its recontextualization of post-modern issues of identity, time, and history, via the strategies of SF fiction. This work begins, I believe, to point to the possibilities that emerge when popular cultural forms are
conceived of as theoretical works that might inform curriculum theorizing.

Extending the arguments as they surround Public Enemy’s album, Chapter Five offers a textual strategy of pairing a popular culture icon, Bruce Springsteen, with a post-modern philosopher who in my estimation embodies the spirit of cultural studies, Michel Serres. I pair Springsteen’s ruminations on what it means to be an “American” at the end of the twentieth century with Serres’ musings on identity and knowledge in our information age.

Having established multiple contexts in which popular cultural forms might intersect with and inform curriculum theorizing, in the conclusion I return to the implications of taking seriously the ruptures and fragmentations of post-modernity. I follow Stone’s vampire “thought experiment” (1995/1996, pp. 179-183) and extend its consequences for curriculum and cultural studies. What does it mean, I conclude, to accept the “vampire gaze . . . of subjectivity” (p. 182) as a curriculum theorist in the post-modern era?

Notes

1. This is not to suggest that there is anything inherently post-modern about vampires, nor that there is a single conception of what vampirism is. Auerbach (1995) even argues, after commenting on recent cinematic portrayals of Dracula which celebrate the fragmentary nature of existence and perception, that "a postmodern
Dracula may be a contradiction in terms" (p. 209) in that it disrupts Dracula's 19th century legacy. Gordon and Hollinger (1997) counter, however, by explaining the relevance of vampires as metaphor in post-modernity. They trace vampires' cultural significance to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (published in 1818) which used the technique of "narrat(ing) . . . from the inside" and signaled a "shift from human to 'other' perspective(s)" (p. 2). This serves, they argue, to "diminish the terror generated by what remains outside our frame of the familiar and the knowable" (p. 2). Hollinger (1997) contends, utilizing Lyotard's analysis of the post-modern condition, that post-modernity does not seek to simply "explain nor to exclude those 'abnormal' features of contemporary existence" but rather to "incorporate the abnormal as it is within the field of analysis" (pp. 199-200). Gordon and Hollinger continue by noting that "our current anxieties about the dissolution of boundaries between the private and the public, the individual and society, one social group or nation and another, ourselves and our environment" are reflected in current vampire texts and that it is "apt (that the vampire) thrives in this postmodern milieu of dissolving borders . . . while a plague transmitted by the penetration of bodily boundaries -- and often through blood -- sweeps the world" (p. 7).

Zanger (1997) historicizes the nature of the vampire, distinguishing the "new" vampire from the "old" one represented by Bram Stoker's Dracula (first published in 1897). He notes that "the vampire myth appeared in literature in a variety of forms from the beginning of the nineteenth century" but it was "Stoker's vampire that caught and dominated the popular imagination" (p. 17). "In the last two decades, however," Zanger argues that we have seen the commercial proliferation of new vampire images in a variety of media . . . (and) each particular image of the vampire differentiate(s) itself . . . from previous images" (pp. 17-18). My interest in vampires, therefore, is situated in understanding not only why the metaphor proliferates in post-modernity but in how it might inform curriculum theorizing and cultural studies. The vampire is thus not post-modern -- but its uses might point us toward new modes of curriculum theorizing in the post-modern age (see Chapter One).

2. I use the terms "adolescent cultures" and "youth cultures" interchangeably. However, though I emphasize the plural, multiple, non-unitary natures of such cultures, it is necessary to remind the reader that youth cultures are

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not monolithic and that my use is primarily metaphorical and not ethnographic. Youth cultures have been explored in depth from a variety of theoretical perspectives in attempts to decenter such a monolithic conception. Willis (1981) and Hebdige (1979), for example, following the lead of much early British cultural studies scholarship and examine specific working class "subcultures." Roman (1988) argues that this "class essentialism . . . holds that subjectivity is unitary and homogenous, having been formed strictly out of a priori class interests" (p. 143). Instead, Roman examines the gender dynamics of "ideologies of feminine sexuality" (pp. 143-184), while Walkerdine (1997) examines the complex intersections of gender and class. Appelbaum (1995) examines the relationship between popular culture, educational discourse and gender (pp. 131-175). Hall (in Grossberg, 1996) "shifted the interests of cultural studies away from the meta-level of culture to the everyday level where certainty and ambiguity is replaced by ambiguity and uncertainty" (Weaver & Daspit, 1998) - and where the complex construction of identities is often enacted through popular cultural experiences.
I am thinking that the more I write, the more convinced I am that writing, be it about time, is time. Is change, rhythm. Those movements of time. Need writing be only one kind of time, linear time, that form called history? Need writing end? If history, that kind of time, does end, what kind or kinds of time will there be? Since such time wouldn’t be linear, it might be happening right now. If writing is time, as I suspect, what would writing look like outside of linear narrative or time? . . . I am thinking about the difference between history and myth. Or between expression and vision. The need for narrative and the simultaneous need to escape the prison-house of the story . . .

(Kathy Acker, 1997, p. ix-x)

One encounters various terms throughout the literature on post-modernity. Recombinant textuality, montage, collage, pastiche, assemblage, juxtaposition, blurred boundaries, fuzziness, and many other descriptors are often used to define not only the aesthetic sensibilities of post-modernity, but also the lived experiences of existing in a rapidly changing world. Post-modernity, is therefore, not simply a strategy one adopts, it is arguably the condition in which we work. Curriculum theorists, I suggest in this chapter, might find more appropriate manners of seeing and being in schools and classrooms in a post-modern world by reconceiving the work we do as cultural studies. A major premise undergirding much of
what I write is that many of the students we encounter have experienced this post-modern condition in manners that not only significantly shape their knowledges and perceptions. These experiences also offer, I suggest, generative metaphors for curriculum theorists.

I have argued elsewhere (Daspit, 1997) that educators often approach this condition of post-modernity with trepidation. Typically trained under some semblance of Tylerian rationale, teachers profess to, or are supposed to, know a lot about goals and objectives and standardized assessment. Doll (1998) effectively illustrates how these, and many other attempts by educators to "control," are in fact "historical artifact(s)" – deeply imbedded in our collective psyches, but nevertheless the "result of particular people operating in a particular culture with particular ideologies" (p. 314).

It is when these landscapes that seem so entrenched become slippery, begin shifting, that educators feel uneasy, begin retreating to, or remain firmly entrenched in, modernist tendencies. It is, in a sense, a denial of the condition which we find ourselves. Or as Douglas Rushkoff (1996) might say, it is a refusal to allow ourselves to be taught by youth cultures in this "age of chaos" – youth who have been nurtured within post-modern
contexts, and who, I contend, are attracted to cultural forms which embody decentered, ruptured identities.

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive descriptions of post-modernity comes from Terry Eagleton (1996). Although generally suspicious of what he terms the "illusions" of much post-modern discourse, Eagleton nevertheless offers a useful definition:

The word postmodernism generally refers to a form of contemporary culture, whereas the term postmodernity alludes to a specific historical period. Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these Enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the givenness of natures and the coherence of identities. This way of seeing, so some would claim, has real material conditions: it springs from an historic shift in the West to a new form of capitalism -- to the ephemeral, decentralized world of technology, consumerism and the culture industry... Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of this epochal change, in a depthless, decentered, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular culture, as well as between art and everyday experience. (p. vii)

While covering much ground, this definition is particularly germane to my central thesis that curriculum theory might be reconceived as cultural studies. Cultural studies, I argue, epitomizes the fluidity of post-modernity, challenging academic boundaries and challenging traditional
notions of academic work. Edgerton explains the importance of such challenges, noting

(Cultural studies) attempts to question at every turn the ways disciplinary boundaries are drawn. What kind of work is being done, and what effects are produced, when a department of literature seeks to distinguish and distance itself from a department of curriculum, for example, and vice versa? (Such a question is not unrelated to issues around cultural diversity. That is, what effects are produced when one group seeks to distinguish and distance itself from another?) (p. 2, parentheses in original)

Within this fluidity one might find what Harvey (1989) identifies as the "most startling fact about postmodernism: its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic that formed the one half of Baudelaire’s conception of modernity" (p. 44). Furthermore, post-modernity "does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the 'eternal and immutable' elements that might lie within it" (p. 44). Harvey concludes, "Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change . . . ." (p. 44). Cultural studies similarly resists codification, emphasizing that it is a "process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge. Codify it and you halt its reactions" (Hall, in Edgerton, p. 23).

Eagleton draws attention, as does Frederic Jameson (1984), to one of the dominant features of our emerging post-modern world. Jameson contends that post-modernity
contains "the effacement in it of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture" (p. 54). Kellner (1991) adds that a variety of post-modern thinkers, such as Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, "extend notions of reading, writing, and textuality to a variety of cultural texts, ranging from philosophical treatises to harlequin novels and films" (p. 62). Immersion in popular cultures is therefore representative of the post-modern condition and might help direct curriculum theorists toward Doll’s (1993) prediction that a “post-modern perspective” might yield “a new sense of educational order . . . as well as new relations between teachers and students, culminating in a new concept of curriculum” (p. 3).

Defining popular cultures (I prefer the plural, which as in Gore’s (1993) use of “pedagogies” is intended to disrupt the seemingly unitary use of such terms) is no easy task, and it is one that when dealing with cultural studies I essentially avoid for fear of limiting the term’s scope. As Berger (1995) observes, the “important part of the term is culture, not popular (a word that eludes easy definition)” (p. 162, emphasis in original). Again, if we are to take seriously the ramifications of post-modernity,
then the dissolution of previously entrenched boundaries between elite (high) cultures and popular (low, mass) culture must be considered. Slattery (in press) agrees that it is "meaningless to separate high culture from low culture" in post-modernity and contends that there "is an eclectic and fluid movement within diverse sites of cultural experiences, and delineation of absolute parameters is not only problematic but also perpetuates modern bifurcations" (p. 223). Berger (1992) adds, "Many critics and cultural theorists argue that except at the extremes (perhaps with avant-garde string quartets on one end of a continuum and professional wrestling at the other end), elite and popular culture are very similar, overlap to considerable degrees, or for all practical purposes, are the same" (p. 137).

I specifically look at cultural forms and practices in which I feel adolescents engage. Some, like museums, have origins in traditional elite cultural practices. Some are markedly popular. Rap music, for example, is currently considered the most popular musical form with adolescents (Hot Renaissance, 1998, p. 71). Most of the forms I examine occupy landscapes at various crossroads. Public Enemy's *Muse Sick-n-Hour Mess Age*, which I examine in Chapter Four for example, is a rap album, but was not
popular by marketing standards. Bruce Springsteen’s popularity certainly peaked in the mid-80s, but he remains an icon of American music. And vampires seem to be especially fluid, occupying the hallowed halls of academia (see Gordon & Hollinger, 1997), weekly television (Buffy the Vampire Slayer), and in the summer of 1998, the big screen (Blade).

Something is going on in contemporary, post-modern culture that I believe is vitally important for curriculum workers to study, especially since Doll implies that the “changes affecting art, literature, mathematics, philosophy, political theory, science, and theology” have yet to “play themselves out in education and curriculum” (p.3). At the multiple intersections of lived experiences, information technologies, arts, cultures, theories, fictions, etc. - post-modernity is a condition of contemporary existence - one whose implications are still not clearly understood, if they ever can be considering the fragmented nature of the post-modern condition. One of its central features, Stone (1997) contends, is a struggle, a “war” she says, “to settle who controls how things mean” (p. 60). She continues,

Not what things mean, but how. The difference is crucial. “How” refers to the structure of meaning itself . . . to how we make the apparatus of meaning
by which individual things and acts come to make sense. (p. 60, emphasis mine)

Part and parcel to this struggle, Turkle (1995) contends, is exploring "how a nascent culture of simulation is affecting our ideas about mind, body, self, and machine" (p. 10). Furthermore, and with profound implications for the "war" over how things mean that Stone refers to, Turkle argues, "Indeed, in much of this, it is our children who are leading the way, and adults who are anxiously trailing behind" (p. 10).

Paley (1995) explains how children/youth have customarily been situated in "passive cultural roles" (p. 3) and how in the "economies of cultural production, the years of childhood are only a bridge to a future time" (p. 4). Paley then allows that these "essentialized notions about the construction of cultural meanings" are being challenged, but only by a "small number of unrelated, non-school projects" (p. 4). I believe that such challenges are becoming increasingly pervasive.

In fact, this dissertation research begins with the assumption that something exists in the cultures that youth are not only attuned to but are also actively constructing that can be generative for curriculum theorists. Another assumption follows Turkle's lead again. She writes,
“Postmodern theorists have suggested that the search for depth and mechanism is futile, and that it is more realistic to explore the world of shifting surfaces than to embark on a search for origins and structure” (p. 36). Paley, building on Deleuze and Guattari’s critical use of the rhizome, contends:

Although Deleuze and Guattari’s analytic was originally constructed for specific readings of the work of Franz Kafka, it is worth the effort, I think, to experiment with folding this criticality across conceptual realms and to explore its parallel applications. . . . Deleuze and Guattari’s analytic provides a tactical methodology that undermines compartmentalized systems of educational study, unlocking discussion of the nominal subject from the hold of top-down reasoning and categorizing practice. (p. 12)

Thus, although any of the general cultural forms that I study could be explored in greater depth, I believe it is more appropriate and more generative to “hop-scotch” across the slippery surfaces of multiple cultural forms.

Sherry Turkle, Professor of the Sociology of Science at MIT and a clinical psychologist, explains in Life On the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet, that her studies in the late 60s and early 70s of the “Paris intellectual culture whose gurus included Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari . . . remained merely abstract exercises” in the lessons that “each of us is a multiplicity of parts, fragments and
desiring connections” (pp. 14-15). That is until her immersion in cyberculture. In her encounters in cyberspace, where she surfs “(a)nonymously . . . create(s) several characters, some not of my biological gender, who are able to have social and sexual encounters with other characters” she claims that “more than twenty years after meeting the ideas of Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, I am meeting them again in my new life on the screen” (p. 15). “But,” she continues, this time the Gallic abstractions are more concrete. In my computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid, and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and transformed by language; sexual congress is an exchange of signifiers; and understanding follows from navigation and tinkering rather than analysis. And . . . I meet characters who put me in a new relationship with my own identity. (p. 15)

She contends, like Rushkoff (1996) and McRae (1996), that many youth are growing up in such a simulacra, where post-structural philosophies become lived experiences in an incipient apparatus of meaning - cyberspace and internet culture being some of the more concrete embodiments. I agree. It is difficult to find many of my colleagues who have explored the realms of cyberspace identity construction (at least few who admit it), but many of the students I have worked with are intimately familiar with such new technologies.
In a rapidly emerging hypertextual, non-linear world of information technology (Landow, 1992/1997), I believe, like Marcus (1989), that it is productive to promote conversations between seemingly disparate cultural forms (i.e., rap music and Springsteen's "folk" albums). Following Turkle's analysis of the differences in her old "modernist" Apple II computer with her "postmodern" Macintosh (pp. 30-41), I offer the following "strategy" for reading this dissertation. Although one can read, and perceive, it linearly, each chapter flowing into the other as I outline in the introduction, this would be analogous to a flat, MS-DOS command line on a computer. Such a reading implies that each "linear, textual command" entered at a "'prompt' mark" (Turkle, p. 35) will lead the reader one step closer to an application, in academic work a viable conclusion. Any error along the way is of course disastrous.

I propose instead that the reader examine this work from an aerial view (as it were). Meaning (such that is) in post-modern contexts is always relational - and the visual apparatuses of the Macintosh computer, with its "simulation aesthetic" (Turkle, p. 41) - and perceptions of recombinant textuality - is more analogous to "how" things might mean in this dissertation than MS-DOS prompts.
Perhaps the following from Stone's (1995/1996) *The War of Desire and Technology* is helpful:

The clashing styles of this book, shifts of mood and voice . . . are deliberate strategies. The subtext is that, in this brief time of upheaval and promise that always accompanies the transition between modes of experience and thought, before the long night sets in and such strategies are no longer possible, there is a window of opportunity to transform the way academic discourse in the humanities and social sciences works. In some ways this . . . is a sampler of possible approaches. (p. 166)

Before moving to examine specifically the possibilities of envisioning curriculum theory as cultural studies, two interrelated issues of post-modernity demand exploration. First, although I resist defining the term explicitly, the significance of popular cultures will be argued. Second, and in many ways emerging from popular cultures, the importance of aesthetic components of recombinant textuality will be examined.

The relationship between academic work/educational theory, and popular culture has been an uneasy one at best (Daspit, in press). Much of the work on popular culture in curriculum was/is generated by critical pedagogues, those who view curriculum as a political text (Giroux and Simon, 1989; Pinar, et al., 1995). In the Giroux and Simon volume, for example, Aronowitz (1989) argues that identity is constructed via the intersection of three factors:
1. the biologically given characteristics which we bring to every social interaction; 2. givens that are often covered over by social relations, family, school; and 3. the technological sensorium that we call mass or popular culture. (p. 197)

Acknowledging the significance of the popular, Grossberg (1989) writes that “(u)nless one begins where people live their lives, one will be unable to engage with the struggles over larger and more explicit ideological positions” (p. 92). Janet Miller (1996) places this interest in lived experiences within the history of curriculum reconceptualizing, noting, “our research and writing has taken as major concerns the daily lives, the lived curriculum of students and teachers” (p. 7). And yet popular cultures are still frequently marginalized in curricular discourses.

Even when included in critical pedagogy, for example, researchers often fail to decenter their own practices (Weaver and Daspit, in press). That is, they frequently privilege their own readings, or only see possibilities in popular cultures when they are filtered through the theoretical lenses of critical theory or more recently cultural studies. It is my contention that many possibilities exist within popular cultures (as well as many perilous elements) - that is, there is much that we can explore without necessarily believing that we are...
bringing something to popular cultures. If anything, we need to see (and hear) what these cultures can bring to us.

Rich and De Los Reyes (1996), while admitting that the study of popular culture is "at an awkward stage" (p. 29), note that "(p)opular culture has a global and ecumenizing mission, with the potential to help give proper due to the growing pluralism and ethnocultural mixing of the world" (p. 33). McCarthy (1998) envisions the use of popular cultures within the context of canon formation, and contends that "it is in literature and in popular culture that the dynamism and contradictions of identity, community, and so forth are restored and foregrounded" (p. 254). Although McCarthy focuses on post-colonial literature, his comments on the significance of such cultural forms extend into the popular realm:

(T)his essay seeks to critique the gratuitous opposition of Western canonical literature and traditions to the literary traditions of the Third World. It looks specifically at examples of radical cultural hybridity foregrounded in postcolonial literature. And I argue that the latter constitute a space for the exploration of difference, not simply as a problem, but as an opportunity for a conversation over curriculum reform and the radically diverse communities we now serve in the university and in schools. (p. 254)

It is ironic, and not in a positive sense, as Constas (1998) notes, that much writing in post-modern educational theory is still mired in classical, western canonical
references (p. 29). I believe McCarthy's insistence on the significance of post-colonial literature and popular culture is, as he argues, and as I argue throughout, one of the essential "uses of culture" in a post-modern world. As Nelson (1997) contends, "people with ingrained contempt for popular culture can never fully understand the cultural studies project . . . no properly historicized cultural studies can cut itself off from . . . 'the popular'" (p. 64).

The artist Debra Wilbur (1998) explains her fascination with the popular, and why it is important for us to attend to it:

I am inspired by popular culture not only of our time but from various periods throughout history . . . I look at popular movies, magazines, literature, advertisements, and music. I think this is where the pulse of the current and future can be found . . . I find the endeavor fascinating . . . the creation of a great hall of mirrors. This is the best that curating and art making can hope to be right now - and I mean that in the most positive way. (p. 17)

Paglia (1994), in elucidating her theory of how paganism was never defeated by Christianity but in fact was "driven underground," sees popular cultures, what she calls the "Age of Hollywood," as the third major "eruption of paganism" in the Western world (p. 81). Hollywood, one of the most pervasive of popular cultural forms, she contends,
"is the great thing that America has done and given the world" (p. 81).

Block (1998) traces post-modern interest in popular cultures to developments in modern art, particularly "the collages of Picasso, Braque, and Miro, the work of the surrealists and the dadaists, the affichistes, the collages of Robert Rauschenberg and Richard Hamilton and the graffiti artists of the 1980s," (p. 336). These provide, he argues, more useful metaphors for curriculum than modernist, classical approaches. Block contends that such art forms "entered into a relationship with society at large and used public material in the construction of private languages" (p. 337). Looking toward the ephemeral, as Marcus (1989) does in his analysis of the relations between punk music and the Left Bank situationists of the 1950s, Block notes curricular implications:

This is the stuff of popular culture. The affichiste artists of the 1940s and 1950s conjured up the look of daily life and the streets by using mass-produced ephemera in altered ways . . . Art becomes production by consumption . . . This process of making do ought to be the stuff of curriculum. It is the stuff from which art and life are made. (p. 338)

The advantage of using the popular, the everyday "stuff" that surrounds us, "offers us a model of curriculum as it produces knowledge in the active consumption of the everyday materials the world makes available . . . it is a
work which instructs in its process, indeed, by its process” (p. 339).

By emphasizing the primacy of the popular, culture and history become slippery in post-modernity. Marcus (1995) suspects “that we are living out history, making it and unmaking it . . . all of the time in far more ways than we have really learned” (p. 3). Emphasizing the relational nature of culture, Adams, Shea, Liston and Deever (1998) observe that “culture is produced in the interchange between self and the world. . . . (and) is continually in a dynamic state of reiteration and redefinition” (p. xi).

Robert Cantwell (in Marcus, 1995) punctuates the dynamic possibilities of post-modern conceptions of culture/history, commenting, “Where orders of meaning have vanished entirely, and the sign erupts in its incandescence onto the cultural surface, we begin history anew and call our epoch by new names. . . . We are all doctors and fortune tellers” (pp. 3-4).

I believe it is appropriate to utilize a metaphor from popular culture here to underscore the significance of the relational possibilities of viewing curriculum as recombinant textuality. In arguing for the power of DJ culture Paul Miller (1995) writes:
DJ culture - urban youth culture - is all about recombinant potential. It has as a central feature a eugenics of the imagination. Each and every source is fragmented and bereft of prior meaning - kind of like a future without a past. The samples are given meaning only when re-presented in the assemblage of the mix. (p. 7)

Hebdige (1987) notes that "hip hoppers 'stole' music off the air and cut it up . .. and remixed it on tape" (p. 141). "The cut 'n' mix attitude was that no one owns a rhythm or a sound," he continues. "You just borrow it, use it and give it back . .. you just version it" (p. 141, emphasis in original). Like the cyberpunks that I analyze in depth in Chapter Four, such recombination exhibits a "postmodernist spirit of free play (jouissance) . .. (and) delight in creating cut-ups and collages . .. in which familiar objects and motifs are placed in startling, unfamiliar contexts" (McCaffery, 1991, p. 15).

Is this not a better way to think of curriculum - the "stuff" of schooling, or education, which is bereft of meaning in modernist, static concepts? Motion breathes life into curriculum as meaning is assembled. Many popular cultures practice this form of curriculum theorizing daily. "The previous meanings," Miller (1995) writes, are "corralled into a space where the differences in time, place, and culture, are collapsed to create a recombinant text or autonomous zone of expression" (p. 14). Curriculum
is such a “zone” of hybrid selves, hybrid cultures, and hybrid conversations which is recombined continually through collisions with cultures, histories, and technologies.

And such a model of assemblage, I argue, is the stuff of cultural studies – an academic discipline with the intellectual courage to proclaim itself an “anti-discipline.”

**Toward Curriculum Theory as Cultural Studies**

What I am looking for in my academic life/work is certainly, in cultural studies’ terminology, “anti-disciplinary” (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler, 1992, p. 2). And yet "(i)nformed use of the term 'cultural studies,'” Edgerton (1996) contends, "is still a rare event in colleges of education" (18). Even Giroux (1994), who ponders why cultural studies is slow to permeate critical analyses of education while advocating the study of popular culture, in practice refuses to meet popular culture on its "own terms," "privileging (his) reading while ignoring the ways individuals use their localizing powers to interpret popular culture texts to construct multiple readings" (Weaver and Daspit, in press). My "project" is to explore the implications of a "curricular" cultural studies informed by popular cultures. Edgerton's focus on a
"currere of marginality" (pp. 37-48) where "(m)arginality is viewed as a complex and dynamic interaction among social and individual subjectivities" and where "(i)t is insufficient to view it in simple opposition to centrality or dominance" (p. 8) seems particularly relevant to my study of popular cultures.

Cultural studies is typically reported to have originated as a "field" in the 1950s in Great Britain and become "institutionalized" with the founding of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1968 by Richard Hoggart (Davies, 1995; During, 1993; Edgerton, 1996; Storey, 1993; 1996). Emerging out of the literary studies of F. R. Leaviss (who advocated a moral canon culled from the "great tradition" of literature which would supplant the vulgar pleasures of mass culture), cultural studies' early advocates included Hoggart and Raymond Williams, both with working class origins, who sought to reconcile the appreciation of canonical literature (which they felt did offer deeper experiences than mass culture) with the "communal forms of life into which they had been born" (During, 1993). Another early advocate of cultural studies was E. P. Thompson, whose The Making of the English Working Class repudiated prevailing deterministic explanations of how the working class is "made," and
instead stressed the active role of individuals as they intersect with in their cultural and political construction (During, p. 4; Edgerton, p. 19).

Cultural studies' roots are in Marxist analyses, particularly in attempts to uncover the "social and historical conditions of production and consumption," and the insights Marxism offers into social inequities (Storey, 1996, 3-4). Explanations of inequalities based on class, gender, race, etc., which were articulated by the likes of Gramsci and Althusser in terms of hegemony and ideology respectively, were utilized and elaborated by cultural theorists in the recognition that "culture is a terrain on which there takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups" (4). Hall (1992) articulates what he finds "the enormously productive metaphor of hegemony" (280) in the dialectic between production and consumption. That is, consumers necessarily confront texts that are mass-produced (in the case of popular culture), and thus pre-determined to some extent, but a variety of interpretations/meanings/uses are possible as these texts are (potentially) actively engaged, not passively consumed.
But hegemonic and ideological analyses of culture typically cast individuals as re-actors, subject to the vicissitudes of the culture "industry." At their best, many cultural theorists seem to say, individuals may enact a "resistance postmodernism" which may or may not be sympathetic to "academic formulations" of culture and post-modernity (Potter, 1995). Some, like Paul Gilroy (1993) in The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness, attempt to trace the development of cultural forms that are not merely re-active, but indeed, under the shadow of dominance, "defiantly reconstrcut (their) own critical, intellectual, and moral genealogy in a partially hidden public sphere of its own" (p. 38).

Cultural studies, in its movement, in its anti-disciplinarity, and in its theoretical perspectives, undertakes to disrupt traditional, and highly policed, academic boundaries. Specifically for the purposes of this essay, it serves to reconfigure that which lurks, as Pinar (1997) notes, in "all our scholarship" (p. 87) -- namely reason. Regimes of reason are of course entrenched throughout the Western world and its institutions -- it is as Foucault (1972) contends, the Western episteme, its "gaze" regulating each of us in complex ways. Cultural studies attempts to make use of reason in new ways (or make

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a new reason), ways that work within its institutional regimes to destabilize the center -- the white, heterosexual, male world that for too long was considered "natural." Popular cultures frequently epitomize the fluid spaces that might point us toward new modes of knowing, new means of relating to the world.

Michel Serres (1983/1991) uses the metaphor of the "termitarium" to address the manners that "reason" has been narrowly construed, noting that reason is actually tripartite. The reason he invokes is "harmony" and "noise," as well as the "amalgam" of the two (p. 6). Working within his metaphor of the colony of termites, Serres notes how what initially appears to be the random placement of clay balls eventually begins to take the shape of the "termitarium." That is, the "effect of attraction" (p. 2) serves to order the termite activity -- many still seem to randomly sow their clay balls, away from the center, but the attraction produces an increasingly larger (and powerful) pile. Thus, a regime of truth is established -- the center appearing natural and progressive, the "others" marginal. The "dream of our reason," Serres writes, is to "weave together the stochastic sowing and the law of harmony, murky chance and clear necessity, order and dissemination" (p. 2).
But in spite of what may seem a tyranny of order, of attraction, of a naturalized center (a reason), there are possibilities. Serres notes:

I am sure that here and there, all around, several individuals always continue to deposit their balls on the ground, while the Tower of Babel rises. These termites are the guardians of the possible. They sow a time of waiting, while the crystal next to them solidifies law and repetition. (p. 3)

Reason has been narrowly conceived and appropriated for a multitude of hegemonic purposes. Serres writes, "A certain rationalism . . . took pleasure in eliminating or filtering multiplicity and confusion, holding onto a little less than a third of what it called the truth" (p. 6). It is time, Public Enemy (1988) tells us, to "bring the noise" so that we might witness the emergent knowledges of the "other" two-thirds of Serres' equation. Cultural studies, I believe, does this.

Cultural studies epitomizes Serres' vision of the cross-breeding of intellectual disciplines which he views as a more appropriate mode of existing in and relating to the world. As such, it "possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields of investigation" (During, 1993, 1), except, of course, for "culture understood as the texts and practices of everyday life" (Storey, 1996, 2).
One particularly generative approach to cultural studies is Edgerton's "notion of a cross-cultural 'conversation' that neither reduces one culture to the concerns of another, nor proliferates into infinity the 'multiplicities' or 'pluralities' of human concerns" (15) -- generative because it acknowledges both the "political" nature of cultural studies (also see Storey, 1996) and the "hybrid" nature of some popular culture. Rap music, for example, is an excellent example of not only a post-colonial sense of "creolization" (see Brathwaite, in Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin, 1995) in its aesthetics but also in its peculiar dialectic of performer and audience. Largely consumed by white suburbanites, rap is certainly appropriated, but it is also transformative -- the very nature of engagement and "conversation" leaves text and audience altered. As Edgerton notes, "encounters between cultures shape and transform those cultures . . . neither exists as pure and unmediated -- outside a conversation" (15-16).

Pinar (1994) elucidates some of the curricular implications for a new "architecture of self" that are quite germane to cultural studies. For educational theorizing, we must imagine the
realities and possibilities of language and relationality, that, at first blush are unimaginable. These might include, for instance, the meditative rather than the calculative, the intuitive rather than the rationalistic, the imagistic rather than the conceptual. . . . The excluded and marginalized elements become central, and the discursive formation that is the political present is perverted. (p. 214)

Rap/hip-hop aesthetics might nudge us toward such possibilities. In fact, hip-hop (which is in large measure revealed through its physicality, its gestures, its non-verbal postures) is especially concerned with the "horizontal plane" of the body as a site of discursive practices (Pinar, et al., 1995, p. 463). But placing such practices under the panoptic gaze of Western, logocentrism ignores and debases the localizing powers exerted in the development of such cultures. Additionally, one might question how the privileging of language discounts sound and aesthetic sensibilities as possible discursive sites, thus re-centering language.

Potter (1995) locates as a site of possibility much of rap music's "attitude towards the police," noting the resistance evident in the "postcolonial urban landscapes described by KRS-ONE, Paris, or Ice Cube" (p. 87). Rose (1996), elaborates in her essay, "Hidden Politics: Discursive and Institutional Policing of Rap Music," that the "struggle over access to public space, community
resources (etc.)" is "policed" institutionally in a "complex and interactive process," and that this struggle has "profound potential as a basis for a language of liberation" (253). Although I agree that rap's counterdiscourses are significant to political action, I believe that the real issue at hand is indeed a struggle over modes of knowing. When N.W.A. (1988) snarls "Fuck Tha Police;" when Paris (1994) explores his fantasy of destroying the "ghetto Gestapo;" when Boogie Down Productions (1989) asks "Who Protects Us From You?" of the police -- we are witnessing more than simply a resistance/rebellion against the physical presence and racist practices of urban police officers. We are seeing, and maybe more importantly hearing, a challenge to the Western episteme that cannot simply be formulated in terms of rationalized resistance. It is the splendid cacophony that Serres says has always been fundamental to knowledge, but that has often been silenced or filtered elsewhere. The other cultural forms I examine hold, I believe, similar possibility.

Cultural studies thus provides possibilities for movement in the "currere of marginality" of which Edgerton speaks. The gaze of reason, Pinar (1997) reminds us, subjugates in complex manners. But by identifying and
exploring the marginal spaces, or more appropriately, the subterranean caverns where cultural forms like rap music dwell, in all of their thunderous, pulsing intensity, we might find "passages out of the center toward the margins and from the margins toward the center" where we might "be" in the "body" as "breathing, desiring bodies moving with others through lived space" (Pinar, 1994, p. 105).

It might sound, as Boogie Down Productions (1988) says, a little "unrational" -- its timbre unrecognizable, or "noisy" to the Western ear. And it might move us to understand that it is not merely the "study" of popular culture that needs to be incorporated into curriculum theorizing, but also its aesthetic components. As Willis and Schubert (1991) note in Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry, "Inquiry may be the making explicit or bringing to the consciousness of this essence; asking 'What about art is educative?' and 'What about education is artful?' is really asking the same question. Inquiry itself - simply asking the most fundamental questions - is really the basic form of teaching or curriculum development" (p. 11).

I propose that we take seriously the use of popular culture in curriculum inquiry, that we take seriously those post-modern assertions that previous (i.e., pre-modern and
modern) distinctions between “high” art/culture and “popular” art/culture are no longer valid or useful.
Inquiring into the “heart” of popular cultural forms that students engage in involves, I suggest, more than simply speaking “about” popular culture forms, but dwelling within them, in evoking *jouissance*.

The challenge is, Pinar (1991) says, to “write of this maelstrom of experience” (p. 248) – and to do so, I add, without romanticizing either youth cultures or popular art. Similar to Stone’s (1995/1996) reminders that technology is not a panacea, I understand that theorizing with popular art is not an ends in itself. It is what we do with such theorizing that ultimately counts. Therefore I join Kathy Acker (1997) in her assertion that “(t)here is no more right-wing versus working class; there is only appearance and disappearance, those people who appear in the media and those who have disappeared” (p. 5). She adds

> In such a society as ours the only possible chance for change, for mobility, for political, economic, and moral flow lies in the tactics of guerilla warfare, in the use of fictions, of language. Postmodernism, then, for the moment, is a useful perspective and tactic. If we don’t live for and in the, this moment, we do not live. (p. 5)

What curriculum theorists, then, write about, write from, is of immeasurable importance. It is always a
re-membering (of the academy, of the world, of the word),
even as we head underground to see what might be ahead.

Notes

1. Much has been written regarding the inclusion or lack thereof of the hyphen in "post-modern." Doll (1993), for example, uses the term "to show connection with and transcendence of modernity" (p. 16), whereas Slattery (1995a) eliminates the hyphen, noting "that some authors omit a hyphen in postmodern to emphasize the end of modernity; others use the hyphen to emphasize a continuity from the modern to the post-modern or the doubly-coded irony of the post-modern movement" (pp. 21-22). Slattery continues, noting that "the hyphen may represent a variety of symbolic, ironic, and/or playful intentions" (p. 22). Within a post-modern spirit of jouissance, then, I utilize the hyphen for the visual effect of drawing attention to the deliberate use of the term and its implications of connection and transcendence, but simultaneously share some scepticism as to the term’s signification of an epochal shift. I will maintain an author’s inclusion or exclusion of the hyphen when quoting directly.
Chapter Two
Museums, Ghosts, and Hip-Hop:
Toward Overcoming the Addictions of Time and History

Shadows-On-The Teche: It has everything a southern plantation house should. Big white pillars. Beautiful furnishings. Live oaks dripping Spanish moss. But there's something special here. Something more important. The magic lies in forty old trunks, discovered upstairs in the attic... The past will amaze you.

(Shadows-on-the-Teche promotional flyer)

On its last leg from up north to the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River makes its way through historic, scenic and diverse landscape. It was the lifeline of commerce in the early days of the territory and the availability of a means to transport goods led to the evolution of the wealthy plantation society which thrived upon the fertile soils of the river valley... the plantation country of the Great River Road offers a wealth of contrasts and discoveries for the intrepid explorer. The small roads that traverse the countryside from Natchez to New Orleans offer access to small town America,... charming towns and villages which still celebrate a style of life that has become increasing elusive for many of us... So whatever you seek, the escape from the everyday is never very far out of reach. Therein lies the mystique that Country Roads endeavors to bring you.

(Country Roads, p. 51)

What I don't understand is why is the... House so special? What is the point of giving a tour of someone's old house, spending money on a house that is so old when the money could be used to help out... (the) homeless or less fortunate children... What has (the family who owned the house) done for (this city). Spending money to go tour the museum is not something I want to do. (M)oney can be spent better and wiser. Also taking up my English time to try and get me and my peers to go tour and spend three dollars is a
waste. How is this going to help me graduate? In my eyes very few white people ever do anything else!
(Anonymous high school student’s written evaluation)

**Toward New Understandings of Museums and Memories**

This study begins, as I’ve noted earlier, with my initial attempts to return “home” to “re-search.” The African American Studies course in New Iberia, Louisiana that served as the initial impetus for this study fueled my explorations in the intersections of curriculum inquiry and cultural studies. The course, officially titled “African American Studies: Oral Traditions of the African American Community in Iberia Parish,” was authorized in 1992 by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and is offered to high school junior and seniors who nominate themselves.

A guiding principle of the course is articulated by Slattery (1995b) who writes, “(T)he curriculum must be an interdisciplinary experience that unites learning with the community in a process of growth. Total community involvement is not a peripheral issue. It is necessary for learning environments to exist” (p. 31). Students in the course had weekly exposure outside the four walls of the classroom, traveling weekly to the Shadows-on-the-Teche to explore primary documents and hone oral history skills.
Students were required to conduct multiple interviews throughout the year, actively involving them in the construction of knowledge.

Additionally, the notion of place (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) is central to the course. Kincheloe, Pinar, and Slattery (1994) argue that the Shadow's project "is a concrete example of using a social psychoanalytic theory of place to address repressed memory" (p. 431). By fusing current trends in museum education to "personalizing the past" (Silverman, 1997) with emerging views of curriculum as social psychoanalysis, the Shadow's course attempted to overcome a prevalent attitude among students that "'history' (is) something remote and distant from themselves" (Silverman, p. 3).

Focusing on more relevant museum experiences is consistent with national trends. There has recently been an explosion in the creation of, and interest in, museums (see Weaver, Slattery & Daspit, in press). Accompanying this surge in the popularity of museums have been alterations in the perceived functions and nature of museums which challenge traditional conceptions. Some have gone so far as to suggest that in our post-modern, technological age, the "conventional museum structure is rapidly moving towards a state of desuetude" (Miller, 1995,
p. 11). Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1992) summarizes these changes in *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*:

The last few years have seen a major shifting and reorganization of museums. Change has been extreme and rapid, and, to many people who loved museums as they were, this change has seemed unprecedented, unexpected, and unacceptable. It has thrown previous assumptions about the nature of museums into disarray. The recent changes have shocked most those who felt that they knew what museums were, how they should be, and what they should be doing. (p. 1)

In responding to and articulating these changes, major museum and museum education organizations have published collections of essays designed to interrogate a "clearly more ethnically diverse and culturally challenging age" (*Different Voices*, 1992, p. 5) and to assist those in the museum field to "reexamine (their) goals, (their) attitudes, (their) work and (their) audiences" (*Patterns in Practice*, 1992, p. xi).

In the wake of this potential paradigmatic shift in museum culture, and considering challenges to the very usefulness of museums while they nevertheless seem to become more popular, it appears to be a generative time to evaluate some theoretical issues in museum education as it relates to my central question. In post-modernity, central issues that intersect with museum education and cultural studies include concerns with how memories are constructed as well as the nature and role of time and history.
The necessity of an alternative reading of memory is crucial in post-modernity (Weaver, Slattery & Daspit, in press). Post-modernity is not a condition that necessarily erases memories, but rather creates a more dynamic system, and understanding, of how memories are constructed, struggled over, and re-constituted in the cultural realms of life. Memory is merely an invention used to apply contemporary meaning to the past. Collective memories are thus a creation of the present used to understand the past and comprehend the present.

Since meaning is not discovered or uncovered from the past, and memories are not progressive in nature (a modernist view of time; see Slattery, 1995a) the past, like the present and future, is constantly being created. Memory creation is based on an anti-foundational assumption that the past is yet to be (re)made. Thus, memories are always multiple.

Memories are constantly being struggled over, however, and a more precise term (rather than amnesia or repression, which are couched in modernist assumptions that there is a rememberable past) to explain the process by which certain people, things, and events are erased is “anti-memory.” If memory creation is about deciding who and what will be remembered and how, and who and what will be relegated to
anti-memory, then those people who discursively control the parameters of what is significant to remember not only control the present but the past.

If we begin to see memory as an invention rather than as a mechanical process of re-calling, then a simultaneous sense of urgency and hope emerges. To preserve certain visions of the past is indeed a political act because who and what is remembered is never settled. The possibilities of anti-memory offers us hope in creating a society in which all voices strive to be heard since we cannot assume that such voices will be heard in the future. The future, to quote the cliché, is now.

Museums, as Hooper-Greenhill (1993) notes, are actively involved in the construction of knowledges and memories. Of particular interest to this study are the possibilities for memory creation produced when alternative museum practices are enacted. What follows are pedagogical and reflective perspectives on these issues.

**An Opening Tail Tale**

Constructed between 1831 and 1834 on the banks of the Bayou Teche at the highest elevation in New Iberia, Louisiana, the Shadows-on-the-Teche was the centerpiece of the Weeks family's sugar fortune. It remains a focal point of this town of slightly over 30,000, situated on the
town's busy Main Street. But in spite of the weekly wine and cheese parties that accompany tour groups, the Shadows is of course more than a social spot. After visiting the Shadows' last private owner, Weeks Hall, a great-grandson of the first owner, novelist Henry Miller (1940) wrote:

In America, as Weeks Hall puts it, the great houses followed the great crops: in Virginia tobacco, in South Carolina rice, in Mississippi cotton, in Louisiana sugar. Supporting it all, a living foundation, like a great column of blood, was the labor of the slaves. (p. 158)

While touring the Shadows with students in a high school African-American Studies class, the docent pointed to a painting in the 2nd floor boy's bedroom which depicted the Shadows' backyard sometime in the latter part of the 19th century. The painting showed members of the Weeks family, descendants of slave owners, playing croquet on the lawn. The family pet was present, a medium, solid black dog. The guide pointed to the dog and said, "Weeks Hall researched the family records and discovered that this dog's name was 'Spot.'" I looked at the picture again, focusing exclusively on "Spot," the solid black dog. The guide proceeded, "And so Weeks Hall named his dog 'Spot,' in honor of the dog depicted in this painting." As we left the room, the Shadows' Director of Interpretation and
Collections leaned over and whispered, "I don't know where the guides get stories like that -- it's not even true!"

After I shared the apparently apocryphal nature of this tale, the students and I discussed at length the nature of historical interpretation and representation. Some of the students argued that if "real" tour guides could "lie," they should be afforded a certain amount of leeway and license in the tour of the property that they were preparing. While attending a practice tour, C. Richard Cotton (1995) recorded the following exchange in the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate:

Fabian Joseph and Alonzo Gilliam guided the group of students, Kahle (Director of Interpretation and Collections) and teacher Toby Daspit behind the Shadows, down to the banks of murky Bayou Teche. Joseph and Gilliam explained how slaves washed clothes in the bayou. "I don't think they washed clothes in the bayou," Kahle countered. "The bayou was cleaner back then so they probably washed their clothes in it," the students argued. They pointed out the water of Bayou Teche was blue in a period painting of the Shadows hanging in the house so the slaves could have washed clothes in the bayou. (p. 1B)

And so this bayou washing theory became part of the "official" story that these students created and recounted during their public tours.

As I write this I wonder what we should consider "true" or relevant in our attempts to name and overcome historical erasures and oppressions. This chapter, and
much of my work nowadays, might be considered a Search for "Spot:" What is Spot's legacy? How was this tale codified and re-presented as "truth"? Who benefits from such codification and re-presentation? How can we name the "error?" What/who should we construct in "Spot's" place? Who benefits from re-constructing history? And what about those clothes in the bayou, for which no documented evidence exists? Although a major premise undergirding my involvement with this African American Studies course was an attempt, as Paulo Freire (1978) argues, to offer students "the right to make their own history" (p. 20), I wonder now what this really means. I don't believe it is as simple as replacing "Spot" with washing clothes in the bayou.

**Museums, Immortality, and the Past as Possibility**

They flutter behind you your possible pasts. 
(Roger Waters, 1983)

Confession time.

Growing up, I liked museums about as much as I liked school. What I especially disliked about both was what I perceived were attempts to brainwash my mind already saturated with dis-eased information from home, from churches, from the government, etc. Three years after one of my students was killed in a freak accident, I dedicated
the following poem to her. She was my only ninth grade English student during my first year of teaching, and we were supposed to read The Great Gatsby together. Like so many other things, I never got around to it. She died the summer after I taught her:

Gatsby
(for Mandy)

even now
i have an aversion
to it.

i never
read the classics anyway
because i figure
if they allow you to read them
there must not be much in there of importance.

i prefer the gaps

the spaces they refuse to discuss.

This poem was written only three years ago, and it clearly displays the "us" versus "them" mentality that still resonates somewhere within me -- museums and schools as carcinogens, me just trying to survive intact. Perhaps this is why I latched on to underworld poet Charles Bukowski (1984), who in "upon first reading the immortal
literature of the world," writes, "there is nothing so/boring/as/immortality" (p. 129).

Museum curators, Wilson (1993) notes, "really create how you are to view and think about . . . objects" (p. 3), and such manipulation is undoubtedly one of the reasons I've been suspicious of such institutions. In fact, when I was first approached with the idea of working with an African American Studies program that had weekly contact with a plantation home, I balked. Better to burn such places down I thought, in the eerily ironic mentality with which Sherman marched to the sea, scorched earth behind him.

It took some prodding for me to see the political dimensions and possibilities of working with African American youth on a former plantation site. I had to come to understand that my perceptions of museums were in fact grounded in certain assumptions. In discussing art museums Karp (1993) contends:

The process of making, appreciating, and exhibiting art, particularly in the kind of institutions we call museums, is itself an intensely political process. This is not necessarily a process which is learned time and again when people visit museums, but is in fact understood and appreciated in terms of the accumulated knowledge and received wisdom about what museums are, and what exhibits are, and what exhibits mean. (p. 6)

So, while understanding that many view museums as vanguards...
of "high" culture and history, I neglected to see that my own apprehensions simply inverted such thinking (I wanted nothing to do with such conservation, such curatorship, I reasoned in my supposedly revolutionary mentality). In reproducing the binary between "high" (them) and "low" (me), I failed to notice, or even look for, the junctures in-between (or around, or wherever).

One such counter-hegemonic opening into which I leapt was the belief that "(m)useums are places in which not just politics is enforced, but in which politics, in the sense of the process by which people make decisions about how they are and who they will be, is played out" (Karp 1993, p. 7). It is here, Hooper-Greenhill (1992) contends, that the transformative power of museums resides. She writes:

Meanings are not constant, and the construction of meaning can always be undertaken again, in new contexts and with new functions. The radical potential of museums lies in precisely this. As long as museums and galleries remain the repositories of artifacts and specimens, new relationships can always be built, new meanings can always be discovered, new interpretations with new relevances can be found . . . (p. 215)

In spite of the relatively hermetic vision of the "Old South" that pervades southern plantation settings -- for example, an ad for "Highpoint" Victorian Country Manor promises to "take you back to the turn of the century where the charm of the Old South lives in decor and spirit
(Country Roads, Summer 1996, p. 26), the Shadows project offers opportunities to disrupt this halcyon narrative. If nothing else, opening up such a setting to African American youth and asking them to critically confront the legacy of slavery offers a temporal and physical juxtaposition that potentially produces alternate readings and re-constructions of southern cultures and histories. Thus, other "possible pasts" can be imagined that challenge dominant discourses and story lines in ways that might not emerge without such exposure.

Museums and Infinity: A Curious Addiction

Inside the museums, Infinity goes up on trial. (Bob Dylan, 1966)

Acknowledging that museums are sites of cultural production and that they possibly offer points of re-construction and agency does not detract from their inherently conservative nature. Museums, even in more post-modern contexts, are still "keepers and preservers" (Franco, 1992, p. 9). While what is preserved may be in flux and constantly challenged and/or disrupted, museums continually test, as Bob Dylan notes, "infinity" -- as partial or incomplete as such conceptions of posterity might be.
Why, I still ask myself, are we invested in the fundamental concept of a museum? What kinds of cultures do we have that require repositories, that require preservation? Are we simply replacing one vanguard with another by envisioning alternative museum spaces?

I believe that Dylan's "Visions of Johanna" offers some insight into these questions, revealing that museums are in fact a sort of addiction/obsession — a weakness, perhaps, and a vestige, I believe, of modernist attempts at control and mastery.

Dylan begins this surrealistic excursion into the depths of obsession with the cryptic question, "Ain't it just like the night to play tricks when you're tryin' to be so quiet?" The song quickly descends into the hallucinatory realm of heroin use with the narrator's current paramour, Louise, simultaneously offering the drug and beckoning resistance: "And Louise holds a handful of rain, temptin' you to defy it."

It is the narrator's obsession with the absent Johanna, however, that the song spasmodically circulates around. Johanna is omnipresent in her absence; she is an addiction -- heroin is simply a symbol Dylan uses to unravel the perilous nature of such obsessive behavior -- and she replaces not only the physical presence of Louise
but also the mental state of the narrator: "these visions of Johanna that conquer my mind . . . these visions of Johanna have now taken my place . . . these visions of Johanna are now all that remain." As Tim Riley (1992) observes, "the lovers' chemical addiction works as a metaphor for a compulsive emotional bond . . . With all conscious thought overtaken by the absence of Johanna, his obsession has overwhelmed his perception of what is real" (pp. 134-135).

In verse four Dylan makes his oft quoted comments on museums and the nature of their artifacts and "visitors" that seem initially to be simply a spastic rumination with little connection to the narrative of our listless couple and the missing Johanna:

Inside the museums, Infinity goes up on trial
Voices echo this is what salvation must be like after a while
But Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues
You can tell by the way she smiles
See the primitive wallflower freeze
When the jelly-faced women all sneeze
Hear the one with the mustache say, "Jeeze I can't find my knees"
Oh, jewels and binoculars hang from the head of the mule
But these visions of Johanna, they make it all seem so cruel

Riley sees the verse as "out-and-out self parody," but adds that it:
works as a platform for two key statements about the overidealism of romanticism, and modernism's response. "Inside the museums, Infinity goes up on trial" joins Dylan's ambitious self-worth as a durable songwriter (must art be defined by its eternal merits alone?) with a punch line about the transparency of art's supposedly redemptive effects. "Salvation" goes stale in a culture that miscomprehends and thus underrated these cross-contextual leaps . . . Museums were a favorite target in Dylan's 1965 Playboy interview, where he mocked them as "sexless" . . . The closing couplet (where jewels and binoculars hang from a mule) arches back towards the narrative, turning this verse into the vindictive joke that modernism makes of its subjects . . . How would a trip to a museum help these lovers? It's romantic estrangement parading (with a knowing smirk) as the inadequacy of art. (pp. 135-137)

What of our addictions, our obsessions? How adequate are even post-modern conceptions of museums? What "mules" are we now hanging useless artifacts on? What can increasingly changing museum spaces do not simply to rectify or offer retribution for past erasures but actually serve to reconfigure our relationships to the world?

The particular poignancy of "Visions of Johanna" to Riley is that Louise both offers the addictive narcotic and "tempts" him not to indulge. In dissenting from traditional conceptions of museums, are we merely reaffirming potentially oppressive epistemologies that accompany exhibits and displays? Are we trapped in a quandary of over reliance on extant institutions to participate in the forging of possibilities? Has our
dependence on museums been so extensive that we are only able to think in terms of alternatives to how museums function, not alternatives to museums themselves?

The Ghosts of Time And History: A Hip-Hoppin' Alternative

In New Orleans the ghosts
They all live above the ground.
(Bill Davis, 1987)

The first plantation home I visited outside of the Shadows was haunted. Well, that's what they told me. There was even a room that could be rented (like many southern plantation homes, this site had been converted into a bed and breakfast) to provide the optimum possibility of encountering a ghost. In fact, according to Shadows' docents, the most frequent question asked by guests is if the house is haunted (it isn't to our knowledge).

Specters, of course, riddle the South. As pseudo-physical representations of the past in the present, they serve as an appropriate metaphor for the types of museum places and spaces I envision -- like Johanna, even in their absence they are present.

If we choose not to abandon museums as sites of possibilities, then we must confront some of the major abstractions that they concretize, namely time and history. Museums function in specific geographical, temporal,
spatial and visual contexts, even as post-modern alternatives begin to decenter traditional designations of subject/object, center/margins, majority/minority, etc. Museums, according to Clifford (1992), now function in the "borderlands . . . (which) can be places of enrichment and cross-fertilization or of inequality, dominance, and war" (p. 120). To attempt avoiding the latter possibilities, museums must continue to participate in the re-thinking of the modernist notions of time and history.

Michel Serres offers a conception of time that might prove useful in continuing the re-conceptualization of museums. As Egea-Kuehne (1996) notes, Serres' feels time is "'extraordinarily complex,' unexpected, non-linear and chaotic" and requires us to re-think "notions of progress, knowledge, and multidisciplinarity" (p. 1). Serres employs several metaphors to illustrate his perception of time. For example, in discussing the concept of contemporaneity in which he makes unusual connections across history that challenge traditional notions of progress and the linear flow of time, Serres utilizes the metaphor of the car:

(The car) is a composite of scientific and technical concepts and of parts. Each part could be given a different date, from the wheel whose concept appeared during the neolithic times, to the Carnot cycle over 200 years ago, to the latest aerodynamic body design and the high-tech publicity campaigns. (in Egea-Kuehne, p. 2)
Another metaphor Serres uses is that of the "creased and torn handkerchief" which Egea-Kuehne explains:

When a handkerchief is creased, two points previously far apart are brought close or even superimposed . . . Serres believes that "creased" time is a much better paradigm than the traditional time-line to represent the multidimensionality of any historical event, referring simultaneously to the past, the present, and the future. (p. 8)

Two examples from my involvement with the Shadows' program illustrate this notion of time. First, students often bought colas while we were on the plantation site. The material presence of these cola cans served as a metaphor for continuing discussions about the nature of the Shadows as a sugar plantation and the contemporaneity of such issues. To satisfy the European sweet tooth, sugar production became one of the prime forces sustaining slavery in Louisiana and the West Indies. A simple, taken-for-granted cola in fact embodies the ghosts of slavery (and sugar plantations were considered the most heinous form of enslavement in the Americas). To punctuate the fact that one cannot escape the present on the path to the past, the cola machine is located in a reconstructed slave quarters. Museums can thus never simply interpret the past as if it is detached from the present.

Another disturbing image of contemporaneity challenges many deeply held assumptions about liberatory pedagogy in
general. While returning to New Iberia to do ethnographic research with students in the African American Studies course that I helped found but left to pursue my doctorate, I wrote the following in my field notes:

I am struck again by the feeling of outsider. I will be presenting myself to these twelve students, presumably all descendents of persons who were considered property, as a descendent of ancestors who carry the stigma of slaveholder and overseer... What's the difference between an overseer and a teacher?

Rapper KRS-ONE (a moniker for "Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone") makes a similar connection when he finds little difference between the word "officer" and "overseer" in his song, "The Sound of the Police."

And what of history? What if we abandoned it as a concept? What if we let go of the feeling that it is ours to possess, to lose, to reclaim? Poet Nathaniel Mackey (1993) explores this question in "Degree Four: 'mu' seventh part," which he bases on an actual, but unnamed African society. Mackey writes:

Rolled a joint with gunpowder inside, struck a match, whispered, "This is what history does."
Said, "Above sits atop its Below, each undoing the other even though they embrace."
Went up in smoke, lit by feathers of light, debris falling for ages...
This as they thought, what was known as history, this the loaded gun carried under their coats...
"Wooed by fish under shallow water..." This too their sense of what history was.
Fleeting glimpse of what, reached for, faded, fickle sense of what, read with small sticks, caved in (p. 33)

Mackey is traversing the same territory as Serres (1983/1991) when the latter warns, using Rome as his metaphor, "(W)ritten history kills lived history..." The empire of signs is more terrifying than the empire of Rome. It invented immortality. Rome exists no longer, or almost; but Livy is still here" (p. 140).

Museums function textually in a similar manner to written histories (Mackey's "small sticks" of words), inscribing some stories while excluding others. The society Mackey alludes to finds the entire notion of history so dangerous it simply bans it -- just like when I
wanted to raze the museums and the schools in my youth (and I still harbor such fantasies at times). The caveat here is significant: as soon as we reach for history, for time, they elude us. Books, exhibits, displays, lectures -- can only reach toward lived histories, lived time. As soon as we actually attempt to grasp what seems so desirable (Mackey's "fish under shallow water"), it "fade(s)" or "cave(s) in."

So what alternative spaces, places, histories, times, memories might museums echo in the process of confronting the ineffable? Perhaps a generative model may be drawn from Hip-Hop music, particularly its reliance on the disc jockey (DJ) as s/he constructs "new" music from samples of previous aural expressions. Paul D. Miller (1995), A.K.A. DJ Spooky, the self-proclaimed Spatial Engineer of the Invisible City, explains how DJs utilize sampling to transcend traditional binaries:

In DJ culture music is carried by shards of time -- records, CD's, and most popular amongst the initiate -- the "Mixed Tape." All of the previously listed objects are activated by various electronic appliances, thus the kinetic potential -- the movement of a static object into a relation of dynamic movement with regards to a social function of electricity -- that lies at the center of my ouvre . . . The mix of found objects or self generated music that a DJ records to tape, is representative of a style that s/he uses to evoke emotive responses in the listener, thus involving the spectator and creator in a
situation where the boundaries dividing the two blur.  
(p. 12)

Perhaps in creative juxtapositions of objects, images,  
spectators, etc. we can "sample" the past, transforming it  
as well as the present/future. Fred Wilson's (1993) 1992  
exhibit at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore  
entitled, "Mining the Museum," evidences such a sampling  
technique. Wilson describes the exhibit:

... I called the installation "Mining the Museum"  
because it could mean "mining" as in gold mine,  
digging up something, or it could mean blowing up  
something, or it could mean making it mine. So I just  
looked at every object, and tried to pull from the  
objects what they were about, what they told me about  
the institution and about the museum ... So on  
either side of this vitrine (with a silver globe from  
the 1870s with the word "TRUTH" etched into it) are  
two sets of pedestals, one set with busts and another  
set with no busts. The three busts are ones I found  
in the Historical Society of people who apparently had  
a great impact on Maryland -- none of them from  
Maryland, by the way -- Napoleon, Henry Clay, and  
Andrew Jackson. The pedestals without busts were  
labeled Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Banneker, and  
Frederick Douglass -- three very important people from  
Maryland, and there's nothing in the Historical  
Society collection about them at all. (pp. 4-5)

Such exhibits do more than challenge the manner in  
which we "read" museums -- they offer insights into how  
sampling strategies might reconfigure institutions and  
propel notions of process and flux into frequently static  
representations.

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Miller (1995) places sampling within post-modern configurations of space, time, and memory:

Memory and temporal structure are the new spaces of art to me. Deleuze and Guattari arrive at a similar point in their critique of late capital and schizophrenia with the rhizome structure, a decentered and non-hierarchical form that perfectly illustrates their metaphor for counter culture. . . .(p. 14)

Such a recombinant text might be created by inviting previously excluded individuals (i.e., African Americans) to contribute to a museum culture mired in the erased stories and idyllic inscriptions of plantation re-presentations. Minimally, it challenges the manners in which museums have typically helped inscribe notions of self, agency, history, temporality, etc.

Maybe dwelling with ghosts is the closest I'll get to torching the whole scene.
Chapter Three
Rap Music:
“Bring(in) the Noise” of “Knowledge Born on the Microphone” to Curriculum Theory

The Great Books won't save us . . . but rap may because it might finally allow us to recognize that the world is no longer white and one might say no longer bookish.
(Houston Baker, in Castenel & Pinar, 1993, p. 8)

Each rhyme’s a dissertation.
(Kool Moe Dee, 1993)

Long before my interest in rap music took an academic turn, I knew, to paraphrase Bob Dylan’s (1965) “Ballad of a Thin Man,” that something was happening - but I know that I didn’t know exactly what. Reflecting on my initial encounters with rap I realize that I was ambivalent at best, even somewhat antagonistic. It took years for me to adjust my vision to begin to attempt to understand the cultural significance of rap music and Hip-Hop culture.

In spite of the acknowledged artificialities of beginnings, I remember a defining moment the week before I began my first high school teaching assignment. While meeting with each student I taught and her/his parent(s) or guardian(s), the mother of one young African American warned me, "I don't know what you're going to do with Scott. All he's interested in is his rap." Even though Scott transferred out of class after a couple of months, he periodically visited. Typically, he loaned me another rap
tape, saying, "You've got to hear this." Reluctantly I began to pop these tapes into my cassette player during my half-hour commutes to and from school, but rarely did I listen to them for more than a few minutes. Returning the tapes to Scott I would simply smile and say, "Interesting."

It was around this time that a good friend from high school that I hadn't seen in years stopped by for a visit. During late night discussions he revealed his "conversion" to hip hop music. I responded apathetically, smiling and nodding a lot but not understanding his enthusiasm. Before heading back home he left me with my first sampler tape of rap music. I politely accepted but didn't listen to it for several months.

Three years later, in the Shadows-on-the-Teche project, each student chose a topic and had one class period to conduct a "seminar" in any fashion she/he decides. Charles selected the genres of rap music and opened his seminar with a "pop quiz." Questions that I was forced to guess at include, "Who titled his album, Compton's Most Wanted?," "How many albums has Too Short made?," and "In your own opinion who was the 'realest' brother of N.W.A. (Niggers With Attitude)?" I thought of Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr.'s (1987) What Do Our
17-Year-Oids Know? Obviously, some of them knew plenty of things that I didn’t.

Several of the artists on the sampler tape did eventually catch my attention - Kool Moe Dee, Queen Latifah, Boogie Down Productions, Jungle Brothers, Sir Mix-a-Lot, Paris. I even included some of the songs into my final project for a graduate seminar in educational foundations.

I decided to incorporate my newfound interest into the classroom. On the first day of African American Studies I handed out lyrics that I transcribed to the Jungle Brothers' "Acknowledge Your Own History" and played the song. Several of the students looked at each other quizzically. One student asked, "Mr. D., where did you find this? This sounds like 'Old School' stuff."

Rap's Historical And Cultural Context: The "Noise" of Liberation?

Listen for lessons I'm saying inside music that the critics are blasting me for . . .
Turn it up! Bring the noise
(Public Enemy, 1988)

(T)he power of pop lies not in it meaning but its noise, not in its import but its force.
(Simon Reynolds, in M. Jarrett, 1991, p. 816)

The rhythm is the rebel.
(Public Enemy, 1988)
On the cover of Sir Mix-a-Lot's (1989) album *Seminar* he sits at a table with three members of his "posse" -- all are wearing togas. This "classical" scene is disrupted by more than just African American males in togas. They are also adorned with gold chains, cellular phones, and their reflections off of the clearly contemporary table reveal them in modern garb. Sir Mix-a-Lot describes the significance of this album cover in the title song, which in accordance with rap's aesthetics "mixes" and recombines seemingly disparate elements:

Sitting at a table looking like we're gods  
We're dressed in white photographed so tight  
Serious men with the strength of ten  
Coming through like animals looking for a fight . . .  
This album is a demonstration of various styles of hip hop art . . .  
Let the seminar start

On the cover Sir Mix-a-Lot is poised, mallet and chisel in his hands, over a stone tablet in which he has already inscribed the word "seminar." With a fierce look on his face, one wonders what he is writing next (he has already chiseled the letters "n" and "a"), or if he is prepared to shatter the tablet. Inscription, reinscription, disruption, invitation, intertextuality, - *Seminar'*s cover models the aesthetic powers of rap music.

Rap music minimally offers the "lessons of lived experiences" (Kelley, in Lusane, 1993, p. 49). I believe

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it offers much more. Rap is big business, generating more than $700 million a year (Lusane, p. 44) with nearly 60 percent of Americans under the age of 20 responding that they "strongly like rap music" (SounData, 1996). And although rap is an important articulation of African American culture (KRS-ONE of Boogie Down Productions(1990) says it is the "last voice of black people in America"), nearly three-quarters of rap music is purchased by white consumers (Lusane, 1993).

Lipsitz (1994) contends that rap, among other popular music forms, "offers a way of starting to understand the social world that we are losing - and a key to the one that is being built. Anxieties aired through popular music illumine important aspects of the cultural and political conflicts that lie ahead for us all" (p. 3). And Kun (1994) argues that "rap is literacy, that literacy is rap, that literacy is a system of rapping and that rap is a system of literacy" (p. 1). He continues, "(l)iteracy must stop being viewed as simply the ability to read and write the printed word and must be opened up and expanded" (p. 5). "It follows," he continues, and of particular importance to curricular workers, "that not listening to or not reading rap music can constitute illiteracy. ...(i)t is now not listening to the margin that is illiteracy" (p. 8).
It is important to note, however, that rap is not only an African American artistic form, and its history cannot be essentialized. Walcott (1997) warns against what he perceives is such essentializing when cultural critics analyze rap “through an urban African American narrative” (p. 35). Following Paul Gilroy’s (1993) lead, Walcott argues for the significance of locating the conflictual, contested, and messy aspects of nation-centered discourses in an era when capital accumulation, globalization, and the export of particular erosions of youth culture from America are the basis from which much of the world understands both the rebelliousness of youth and the desire to morally regulate it. In this sense a cross-national analysis is needed to excavate the profound impact of (rap music). (p. 36)

Although I do agree with Walcott’s analysis, such global analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will discuss rap within particular theoretical formulations, primarily as I see the cultural form intersecting with curriculum scholarship.

Rap is a "hybrid" (Baker, 1993, p. 89) in more than simply aesthetic terms. It moves from urban landscapes where it typically originates as part of the "larger context of what is termed Hip-Hop culture" (Ransby and Matthews, 1993, p. 57) into white suburban culture, as well as other global cultures, producing hybrid cultures that blend urban realities, myths, and narratives with other
cultural articulations. bell hooks (1994a) contends, at least within an American context, that rap music is "one of the spaces where black vernacular speech is used in a manner that invites dominant mainstream culture to listen -- to hear -- and, to some extent, be transformed" (p. 171).

I wish to use rap music in a similar fashion to Miklitsch's (1994) appropriation of punk music as a transformative pedagogy. Rap is representative of a distinct "subculture," albeit a hybrid one, and such cultures by definition "ostensibly 'contain' an element of resistance to the dominant hegemony" (p. 67). The dynamics of a hybrid culture that mixes Hip-Hop's actions under the shadow of dominance with the suburban culture that casts a large part of that shadow offers intriguing possibilities in the development of a "critical multiculturalism" which "need(s) multiple languages of resistance" (McLaren, in Estranda and McLaren, 1993, p. 29).

As one of the more intriguing critiques of the "pre-millennium tension" (Tricky, 1996) we exist in, rap is, as I've noted, sometimes seen as simply an extension of a traditional "African American/African diasporic aesthetic" (Bartlett, 1994, p. 639). Others see it in distinctly post-modern terms (Baker, 1993; Miller, 1995;
Roberts, 1991), emphasizing the medium's "nonauthoritative collaging or archiving of sound and styles that bespeaks a deconstructive hybridity (where) (l)inearity and progress yield to a dizzying synchronicity" (Baker, 1993, p. 89). Rose (1994) contends that both "postmodern and premodern interpretive frames fail to do justice to (rap's) complexities," and that it must instead be understood within the "context of deindustrialization . . . (which) simultaneously reflect(s) and contest(s) the social roles open to urban inner-city youths at the end of the twentieth century" (p. 22). However one defines the medium, it seems to occupy a significant position in our cultural milieu, one worthy of more serious attention than it has heretofore received (Brennan, 1994).

Before progressing to the cultural and historical contexts of rap music, I would like to draw attention to another aspect of the art form. While I agree with Ross (1991) that words are inadequate in analyzing song lyrics, they seem especially deficient in dealing with the other "half" of the equation -- the music, the beat, the sonic barrage, the rhythm, the "noise." Rose (1994) summarizes the power and force of this fundamental component of rap:

"Noise" on the one hand and communal countermemory on the other, rap music conjures and razes in one stroke. Rap's rhythms . . . are its most powerful effect.
Rap's primary focus is sonic . . . Rap music centers on the quality and nature of rhythm and sound, the lowest, "fattest beats" being the most significant and emotionally charged . . . The arrangement and selection of sounds rap musicians have invented via samples, turntables, tape machines, and sound systems are at once deconstructive (in that they actually take apart recorded musical compositions) and recuperative (because they recontextualize these elements creating new meanings for cultural sounds that have been relegated to commercial wastebins) . . . (pp. 64-65)

So, what is rap music, especially acknowledging that the written word cannot approximate the dynamism of its history, form, and content? The genesis and evolution of rap has been the subject of lengthy narratives (Fernando, 1994 and Toop, 1992; 1984) as well as more compact analyses (Keyes, 1984; Lusane, 1993; Zook, 1992). Zook (1992) observes that rap music emerged in the late 1970s in the black and Puerto Rican male communities of the South Bronx in New York City. He identifies rap as "an extension of African expressive forms such as 'signifying,' 'playing the dozens,' and creating praisesongs in the tradition of the griot, or African storyteller (p. 257). Hebdige disrupts this linear history (straight from Africa to New York) by identifying the connections between the emergence of rap music in the South Bronx and Caribbean musical practices of "talk over and toasted reggae" (p. 136). Many of rap's early pioneers had Caribbean ancestry, and "the process
leading to the production of DJ reggae and rap is basically the same” (p. 136).

Several have defined rap by distilling dominant trends. Baker (1993) comments on the technological nature of rap which involves:

- **Scratching**: Rapidly moving the 'wheels of steel' (i.e., turntables) back and forth with the disc cued, creating a deconstructed sound.
- **Sampling**: Taking a portion (phrase, riff, percussive vamp, etc.) of a known or unknown record (or a video game squawk, a touch-tone telephone medley, verbal tag from Malcolm X or Martin Luther King) and combining it in the overall mix.

And Rose (1994), who gives credit for identifying the following elements to film maker and critic Arthur Jafa, elaborates on the "stylistic continuities" between rap and other aspects of Hip-Hop culture:

- **Breaking**, graffiti style, rapping, and musical construction seem to center around three concepts: flow, layering, and ruptures in line. In hip hop, visual, physical, musical, and lyrical lines are set in motion, broken abruptly with sharp angular breaks, yet they sustain motion and energy through fluidity and flow. One can argue that they create and sustain rhythmic motion, continuity, and circularity via flow; accumulate, reinforce, and embellish this continuity through layering; and manage threats to these narratives by building in ruptures that highlight the continuity as it momentarily challenges it. These effects at the level of style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena. (pp. 38-39)

Lusane (1993) believes that rap music is shaped by "material conditions of black life" (p. 42). He argues that
the economic blight that plagued black urban life in the Reagan and Bush eras fueled this incipient art form.

Lusane notes that it was perfectly logical that Hip Hop culture should initially emerge most strongly in those cities hardest hit by Reagonomics with large minority youth populations -- New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and Oakland . . . In a period when black labor was in low demand, if one could not shoot a basketball like Michael Jordan, then the entertainment industry was one of the few legal avenues available for the get-rich consciousness that dominated the social ethos of the 1980s. (p. 43)

Lusane contends that rap paradoxically thrived in the very market economy that was destroying African American communities.

The rage resulting from such urban realities was expressed in rap lyrics like the following from Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (1982, cited in Fernando, 1994):

Broken glass everywhere
People pissing on the stairs
You know that they just don't care
I can't take the smell can't take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat . . .

Hence is evidenced one of rap's contradictory dimensions. Such social commentary is responsible in some measure for the medium's success, but it is also commentary contingent upon oppressive economic realities. Without the social
crisis engulfing African American urban communities, one must question whether rap would have succeeded at all.

The issue of commodification is frequently addressed in rap songs. The question is whether "a dominant community (is) repeatedly co-opting the cultural forms of oppressed communities, stripping them of their vitality and form . . ." (Van Der Meer, cited in Blair, 1993, p. 21). As I mentioned previously rap is a lucrative industry, and one which has tremendous cross-over appeal into white suburban culture.6 But in spite of success stories of black rap stars and record producers highlighted by the media, the situation is possibly more closely akin to Chuck D's (1996b) observation that "... between ownership and creativity in the entertainment and music industry blacks are not presented the options of how they can participate in it besides singing, rapping, dancing, telling jokes, or acting." The magnitude of white economic, social, and political profiteering at the expense of black cultural forms is expressed when Chuck D (1996b) raps that "entertaining is today's way of pickin cotton."

Gangsta rap, illuminating the "strength of street knowledge," arrived on the national scene most notably with N.W.A.'s Straight Outta Compton. Gangsta rappers confront "material misery with a battery of blunts and forty ounces,
guns and gangs, 'bitches' and hood-rats (and) rudely depart from the aesthetics and ideology of their more politically conscious kin" (Dyson, 1996, p. 168). Gangsta rap also illustrates the tension between negotiation with and co-option by capitalism.

The success of N.W.A. and other gangsta rappers led to a flood of imitators, and in turn, intriguing internal rap discourse policing by artists like Paris (1994) and Public Enemy (1994). Paris simultaneously levels criticism at rappers who follow the market's direction and record companies who simply seek to maximize profit in "One Time Fo' Ya Mind:"

Bandwagon niggas want to be the new gangsta of the week on the street but ain't got a clue
Damn it's a trip how them devil ass labels put everything they got to that shit
But they never push anything real for the good of the community
It should be plain to see fucking over you and me

And Public Enemy, in "So Whatcha Gone Do Now?," attack the "moral bankruptcy and racial betrayal of gangsta rap" (Dyson, 1996, p. 168-69), criticizing the genre's glorification of black on black violence which profits others:

Rap, guns, drugs, and money
Talkin dat drive by shit
Everybody talkin dat gansta shit . . .
A gun iz a gun iz
A muther fuckin gun . . .
The white law set you up raw
When you have his trust in killing us

Where you tryin to go wit dat
Don't even go dere wit dat rap . . .

Rap has also been criticized for its phallo-centrism (Lusane, 1993; Ransby and Matthews, 1993). As Ransby and Matthews observe, in spite of "an oppositional edge which offers respite from the oppressive realities of daily life in a hostile dominant culture," rap music also "represents a very male-centered definition of the problems confronting the Black community and proposes pseudo-solutions which further marginalize and denigrate Black women" (p. 57). A graphic example is the following from "Hoes" by Too Short (cited in Fernando, 1994, p. 113) which reinforces stereotypical categories of "pimp," "whore (hoe)," and "bitch:"

If I ever go broke I just break hoes
'Cause hoes were made to be broken
It happens every day in Oakland
I need a bitch, that's one thing I know
Put my money where my mouth is and break them hoes
To a foe, they like to run in pairs
Hit small towns and sell pussy everywhere
I ain't givin' bitches no kinda slack

Thus, in spite of the seemingly dissident nature of some rap music, it is tempered by

a political vision which uncritically accepts and internalizes the dominant society's narrow and patriarchal definitions of manhood, and then defines liberation as the extent to which
Black men meet those criteria: the acquisition of money, violent military conquest and the successful subjugation of women as domestic and sexual servants. (Ransby and Matthews, p. 66)

But one shouldn't conclude that rap music is monolithically misogynistic. Such stereotyping is openly challenged by rappers like Queen Latifah, Monie Love, Salt 'N' Papa, and MC Late who espouse feminist ideals in their music and videos (Roberts, 1994; Rose, 1994). Queen Latifah (1989) even challenges the idea that rap is a male domain in her song "Ladies First:"

Some think that we can't flow (can't flow)  
Stereotypes they got to go (got to go)  
I'm gonna mess around and flip the scene into reverse  
With what?  
With a little bit of ladies first

And female rappers like Boss (1993) invert gender norms and appropriate the violence of gangsta rap to direct it toward questioning the genre's rampant sexual braggadocio.

Davis (1995) sees the entire issue of misogyny in rap in more complex terms, explaining her choice to buy gangsta rapper Snoop Doggy Dog's Doggy style instead of Queen Latifah Black Reign with her last $15:

... I don't fit into a puritanical, dualistic feminism that recognizes only indignant innocence (buying Black Reign) or unenlightened guilt (buying into Doggy style). I don't have to choose...  
... the actual dilemma I was experiencing was how to explain that I don't feel oppressed by Snoop or defined by his conception of women -- without denying that in Snoop's world, he is defining me and all women...
There are no excuses for lyrical sexism... Yet I still feel virtually untouched by this verbal and visual violence toward women, and I believe this feeling springs from an increased sense of freedom rather than from apathetic resignation. (pp. 131-33)

She continues by identifying the ironic position black male rappers are in:

Male hip-hop artists recognize that they are hunted; they flesh out all of white America's fears by carrying out, lyrically, unthinkable acts of psychopathic destruction. The fantastical crime setting of gangsta and horrorcore rap, starring protagonists who drip with testosterone, features a masculinity that defines itself by an ability to annihilate any challenger, female or male. When this protagonist commits sexual and violent crimes, he satisfies a specifically black male yet generic desire for total power... Misogyny here becomes a reactionary act with a subversive gloss. (p. 134)

hooks (1994b) adds that it is essential to remember that "gangsta rap does not appear in a cultural vacuum... but is rather expressive of the cultural crossing, mixings, and engagement of black youth culture with the values, attitudes, and concerns of the white majority" (p. 116). Thus, much of the consternation directed toward rap are actually reflective of the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving... created and sustained by the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 116).

Rap music thus oscillates in a form of limbo, somewhere between tradition and post-modernity, replete with the contradictions and paradoxes that accompany any
cultural form trying to negotiate its place in the world. The dynamic nature of this negotiation is what we need to consider as we consider rap's implications for curriculum theory, for finding "strategies to make the process of learning a democratic act -- an act which refuses to be satisfied with dominant definitions of knowledge, intelligence, and school success" (Kincheloe, 1992, p. 3).

**Infusing Curriculum Theory with Hip Hop Aesthetics**

Rap is teaching white kids what it means to be black, and that causes a problem for the infrastructure.

(Chuck D, 1996a, p. 694)

Rap is rhythm and poetry I thought you knew it
But who would have ever thought
That we would use it the way we be using it?
Spitting facts to my peers and your fear's showing
'Cause now the black is knowing things
You thought we shouldn't know

(Paris, 1992)

You know the rhythm, the rhyme plus the beat is designed
So I can enter your mind

(Public Enemy, 1988)

Charles, the high school student who stumped me with his quiz on rap music that I alluded to earlier, wrote the following to accompany his presentation:

Rap is a form of music that has been around for generations, or as long as I can remember. You can't find this topic in books or the real meaning of the word "rap" in the dictionary . . . today rap has emerged into categories or forms that have different deliveries and different messages . . . Take for
instance Public Enemy. They want us to fight the powers that be. We could fight or we could speak but the point is we will be heard. . . . (M)y personal favorite is the gansta rap. . . . Yes it has been in the media and everywhere else. . . . If you can't relate to this music don't try to listen to it. If you say you don't like some of the lyrics no one is forcing you to listen to it. Nobody tells you it is mandatory to get Scarface's album, Snoop's CD, Ice Cube's cassette, etc. Yes, they talk about guns, they rap on violence . . . if you can't relate to it you will have something to say. This music is not influential, but it will be only if you let . . . So don't open your mouth and say negative thoughts about this black, legal business . . .

Charles, rather forcefully I feel, reveals the high levels of affective intensity that students frequently invest in rap music. It is, in every sense of the word, his music, and it produces a sense of shared meaning and a common ground for discourse. In other words, students like the music and because it speaks to them in terms they understand, it offers some degree of empowerment, an example of the "everyday conversation" that bell hooks (1994a) believes is essential for theories that can "educate the public" (p. 64). Progressive theories already exist in rap music. It's just a matter of how much we, in Charles' word, can "relate" to it and allow it to transform our classrooms and our theorizing.

One of the most transformative possibilities of rap, or more accurately of hip hop aesthetic sensibilities, is the model it offers as a mixing, sampling, recombinant
text. Paul Miller (1995) explains one of the fundamental components of rap music:

It is in this singularly improvisational role of "recombiner" that the DJ creates what I like to call a "post symbolic mood sculpture," or the mix; a disembodied and transient text . . . The implications of this style of creating art are three fold: 1) by its very nature it critiques the entire idea of intellectual property and copyright law, 2) it reifies a communal art value structure in contrast to most forms of art in late capitalist social contexts, 3) it interfaces communications technology in a manner that anthropomorphizes it. (p. 12-13)

If we were to begin thinking of our classrooms as a "mix," as recombinant, fluid entities where the "copyrighting" privilege of authority in the guise of "teacher" is challenged, where the entire process of learning becomes more communal, and where technology and popular culture become "human" forces, we can see how hip hop aesthetics might be transformative. The classroom might become, in my favorite image of post-modern curriculum which Doll (1993) borrows from Milan Kundera and Richard Rorty, a "fascinating imaginative realm where no one owns the truth and everyone has the right to be understood" (p. 151).

After several shaky starts attempting to introduce rap music into high school classrooms, I realized that part of the problem was that I was trying to be the "copyrighter," trying to control the situation, trying to force my tastes (or lack thereof) on students. Once I allowed students to
help decide the tenor of the classroom mix, to decide which songs we would use as texts, their interest seemed to increase, and the classroom dynamics changed. Highly charged discussions emerged about sexism and violence in gangsta rap; intertextual comparisons were made between Henry David Thoreau and Rage Against The Machine, a group who fuses "rap, rock, and funk" (Lewis, 1996, p. 706); Paris (1989/1990; 1992; 1994), the self-proclaimed "black panther of hip hop," provided the texts for comparing revolutionary ideologies. Rap thus became both text and pedagogy -- a way of organizing, or better yet a way of understanding how the transient nature of the classroom might emerge as, recombinant teaching and learning.

Knowledge itself is even loosened from the stasis of modernity into flux, process, and rebirth through rap's aesthetics. As Paris (1989/1990) suggests, it becomes "knowledge born on the microphone." Dynamic, intertextual, and availing itself of technology, it is the "noise" of knowledge-in-process as Serres (1995a) envisions it in *Genesis*.

I am convinced that something, however ineffable that something is, about rap provides insights and attitudes that can inform curriculum theory. In seeking such theories, however, we must also acknowledge how these
discourses might function in contradictory, disempowering ways. "Revolution," as Paris (1989/1990) says, "ain't never been simple." But there is, I believe, revolutionary power in rap, and in allowing its aesthetics to reorient our ways of being in the classroom and the world.

Fernando (1994) perhaps best sums up the situation with the graphical dictum (p. xv):

WordSoUnd
is
power

Or as Laquan (1990) exhorts us in the opening of "Notes Of A Native Son," it might be as simple (and complex) as to:

Listen!
Listen!
Listen!

Coda

I never travel anywhere without a Paris or Public Enemy tape. I rarely write without the "noise" of rap somewhere in the background, or foreground.

And I am still exploring the medium, wondering what is considered "Old School," wondering how loud I should play Straight Outta Compton.

Very loud I think.
Very loud indeed.
Notes

   Enter into a new realm
   A new dimension
   And witness knowledge
   Born on the microphone

2. There are the more visible elements of popular culture evident in such things as modes of fashion. But even when officially "banned," technology offered students that I taught a variety of opportunities to "smuggle" popular culture into the classroom, primarily through small headphones and portable compact disc players hidden in book bags or purses. In fact, these are literal examples of what I mean by using the term "subterranean."

3. "Pleasure" is a deceptive term because it is often used to dismiss popular culture as a site of serious inquiry. But understanding the affective dimensions of student investment in popular culture does not trivialize its significance. In fact, it broadens attempts to conceptualize how resistance and agency might emerge from students' interaction with the terrain of the popular.

4. I am talking about more than simply "teaching" popular culture. The dialogical nature of curriculum theorizing requires that they constantly be in process, informed by the dynamic experiences of students and teachers, and not simply packaged as transformative "lesson plans" with pre-ordained objectives. It means striving toward "knowledge-in-action" instead of "knowledge of" (Applebee, 1996, pp. 101-18).

5. "Discovery" is used to imply the process by which popular culture can transform teaching. Discovery involves a receptive orientation on the part of the educator and classroom dynamics that allow ever evolving student cultural forms to be heard and seen on their own terms.

6. Rose (1994) notes that such appropriation of black music by whites is nothing new. The history of blues, jazz, and rock 'n' roll evidence this. Rose writes, "(W)hite America has always had an intense interest in black culture . . . Black culture in the United States has
always had elements that have been at least bifocal -- speaking to both a black audience and a larger predominantly white context" (p. 4-5). She continues that the attraction is because whites are "listening in on black culture, fascinated by its differences, drawn in by mainstream constructions of black culture as a forbidden narrative, as a symbol of rebellion" (p. 5).
Chapter Four
"Madd Rhymes for Madd Times:"¹
Speculative History in Public Enemy's
Muse Sick-n-Hour Mess Age

Dis poem shall speak of time
Time unlimited, time undefined . . .
Dis poem is time . . .
Dis poem is still not written

(Mutabaruka, 1996)

I remember sitting on a motel bed in Bloomington, Indiana, going over notes for my presentation on science fiction and rap music later that evening at the JCT Annual Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice. The TV was on, typically tuned in to Music Television (MTV). The VJ's (video jockey's) words caught my attention as she introduced a new video by the rap group Bone Thugs-n-harmony - a group with which until that moment I was not familiar. The video, she noted, was set in the post-apocalyptic future but provided commentary, the band claimed, on the state of affairs in certain contemporary cities - precisely one of the arguments I was planning on making in my presentation.

I thought when I discovered Public Enemy's (1994) fifth album², Muse Sick-n-Hour Mess Age (MSMA) where they "peek five years into the future, to 1999," that it was an anomaly. I remember telling my cousin, a science fiction fan, that I was intrigued by what I perceived to be a

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discursive shift in Public Enemy's music - speculation into
the very near future. "That's what cyberpunk does," he
said. As I explored the issue further, I discovered not
only cyberpunk, or SF (a more encompassing abbreviation,
Noel Gough [1991] points out, in that it can mean
"speculative fiction" or "science fantasy" as well as
"science fiction") themes within the album - which I
explore in detail below -- but similar strategies employed
throughout Public Enemy's oeuvre. And then, beginning with
that night in Bloomington, I began noticing such SF themes
increasingly in other rap songs and videos (L. L. Cool J.,
for example, sets one of his videos on New Year's Eve,
1999).

Russell Potter's (1995) comments on the significance
of time in post-modernism and African American culture come
as no surprise now, and provide one explanation for the
presence of SF strategies in rap music. Potter writes

Here we have a different kind of resistance - a
resistance to the very kind of history that would
anoint bearers of pre-, present, and post-. And there
is what I would identify as a central trait or trope
of the post-modern: its refusal of fixed or
progressive models of time . . . In one sense,
African-Americans have good reason not to give too
much credence to "progressive" time, since for four
hundred years most of the economic "progress" in the
United States has disproportionately benefitted its
white citizens. Yet at the same time, there has been
an unyielding hunger and thirst for the promise of the
future . . . coupled with a bitter awareness of the

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presence of “past” oppressions. This split in time, in turn, has potent connections to the inner-spatial “double-consciousness” articulated . . . by W.E.B. DuBois. (p. 3, emphasis in original)

Furthermore, this rupturing of traditional, linear, temporal perspectives is articulated, Potter argues, by the “kind of local interruption of time that takes place in a musical sample of previous recordings” (p. 3, emphasis in original) – one of rap music’s most prevalent aesthetic characteristics.

Public Enemy’s music falls squarely within these parameters. MSMA, organized as a “concept” album, is an excellent example of a what I view as a hybrid genre – “SF rap.” Set, as I’ve noted, in 1999, the album explores post-modern issues of time, history, and identity – and the need to recontextualize these abstractions. Curriculum theorists, I believe, will find Public Enemy’s post-apocalyptic musings generative, pointing us, even in the midst of dystopic visions, toward possible futures and futures of possibility.

SF Curricula

Before examining MSMA in more detail, I believe it is useful to explore the emerging interest in the intersection of SF and curriculum theory. Noel Gough’s (1993) Laboratories in Fiction: Science Education and Popular
Media is a pioneering work in this intersection. Gough contends that "SF is a conceptual territory in which we can explore ideas and issues that may be more important to us (learners and teachers) than those to be found in conventional science textbooks and classroom practices (p. 25). I believe, of course, that SF has meanings which resonate far beyond science education. Gough (1991) notes that "the stories of science fiction have helped (him) to realize the vast imaginative perspectives of space and time future. . . . it feels like a good and useful metaphor for what I hope I am being and becoming as I tell my own stories of curriculum, teaching, and learning with my own children, colleagues, and colearners." And most recently, Gough (1998) situates his interest in SF within narrative theories and a "postmodernist currere" (p. 110, emphasis in original) that "can function as a diffracting lens for the narrator's eye and thus help us to generate stories which move educational inquiry beyond reflection and reflexivity towards making a difference in the world" (pp. 93-94).

Such a perspective is consistent, I believe, with the motion and intent of cultural studies - and with the spirit of MSMA.

Peter Appelbaum's (1997) work moves curricular science fiction theory beyond the metaphorical. Appelbaum argues
that science fiction is in fact an “isomorphism.” That is, there are discursive practices and epistemologies within the set of relations that constitute science fiction writing that also appear within the discursive practices and relations of curriculum. Appelbaum says,

I take science fiction’s premise that the present is a history of possible futures. But this is as well a reasonable constructions for “curriculum:” the preset of a host of imagined potential futures. Curriculum theory and curriculum work is in my conception a play of signs shifting in meaning and enactive symbolic politics even as the context for curriculum is constructed in an ongoing contextualization of similar ambiguity and praxis. (p. 9)

In imagining curriculum as sets of possible futures within present relations we approach Ursula K. Le Guin’s (1985/1989) fascination with science fiction, and also her warnings. Le Guin criticizes the “imperialistic kind” of science fiction that “reduces technology to hi-tech” and equates “space and the future” as “a place we are going to get to, invade, colonize, exploit, and suburbanize” (p. 143). Stone’s (1995/1996) cautionary statements about information technology that I cite in Chapter One are germane here, especially since many see technology’s role as a panacea, often ignoring the imperialistic possibilities of such an “invasion” into curriculum. Instead of viewing science fiction as a physical place to “get to,” Le Guin argues, we should follow the lead of the
"Quechua-speaking people of the Andes" (p. 142). Le Guin explains:

They figure that because the past is what you know, you can see it - it’s in front of you, under your nose. This is a mode of perception rather than action, of awareness rather than progress. Since they’re quite as logical as we are, they say the future lies behind - behind your back, over your shoulder. The future is what you can’t see, unless you turn around and kind of snatch a glimpse. . . . As a science-fiction writer I personally prefer to stand still for long periods, like the Quechua, and look at what is, in fact, in front of me: the earth; my fellow beings on it; and the stars. (pp. 142-143, emphasis in original)

Public Enemy perches on such a precipice, as I intend to show, especially in their explorations of the significance of race, which Donna Haraway (1997) says is a “fracturing trauma in the body politic of the nation -- and in the moral bodies of its people” (p. 213). And such a perspective is particularly important for curriculum theorizing, since while envisioning that which isn’t, but might become, we must always work from within the relationships and problematics in which we live.

Science fiction is also useful to curriculum, John Weaver and I (in press) argue, because of the significance of feminist science fiction, and its reconfiguration of sexist and racist discourses. Paula Graham (1994) notes that even mainstream science fiction, especially in its “question(ing) of the ‘lawfulness’ of the ‘natural’ order”
serves to "vitiate gender categories as the essence of 'the human'" (p. 198). Robin Roberts' (1993) landmark study, *A New Species: Gender and Science in Science Fiction*, explains the feminist force of science fiction:

Science fiction is customarily thought of as a masculine genre, although some of its most highly regarded practitioners are women. On the surface, many of the conventions of science fiction appear to be unabashedly and irredeemably misogynistic, but science fiction by male writers often presents so extreme a version of misogyny that the reader can find a strong case for feminism in the texts. More than other genres, science fiction is obsessed with the figure of Woman: not only as potential sexual partner but, more interestingly, as alien, as ruler, and as mother. From these character types, women science fiction writers create an empowering portrayal of female strength. Women writers appropriate the female alien, utopias, and the woman ruler and transform them into feminist models. (p. 3)

Donna Haraway (1989) comments on the manners in which feminist science fiction, with its emphasis on the stories and myths of science and the blurring of gendered lines of identity, functions to provide "ways of understanding the production of origin narratives in a society that privileges science and technology in its constructions of what counts as nature and for regulating the traffic between what it divides as nature and culture" (p. 370). In her explanation of the "modest witness," Haraway (1997) demands an end to "the culture of no culture" in which the male scientist is seen as "objective . . . (and who)
guarantees the clarity and purity of objects” (p. 24). Curriculum theorists would be well served to follow the lead of feminist writers like Doris Lessing and Marge Piercy who “have turned to (the) seemingly uncongenial” science fiction genre as a means to “stress the visionary and collective nature of revising science” (Roberts, pp. 3-4). Science itself, which in this instance functions isomorphically with curriculum scholarship, is “partly decided by available social visions of these possible worlds” (Haraway, 1989, p. 80).

Gough (1997), quoting J. G. Ballard, asks us to take seriously the proposition that most effective manner of dealing with the world is to assume that everything is a fiction. Thus, in “practicing curriculum inquiry and teacher education as storytelling crafts” we should “situate (oursevles) in the world-as-fiction as a researcher-narrator whose subjectivity is author of (that is, authorizes) his [sic] methodology” (p. 118). SF writers have been leading this way for some time.

Finally, John Weaver, Karen Anijar, and I (1998) envision a “post-colonial, post-cyborgian travelogue” which charts “a terrain through the mind, the heart and the spirit.” For in spite of the marvelous work in reconceptualizing curriculum over the past two decades, it
does not, as Janet Miller (1996) admits, represent a “tidal wave of influence in elementary and secondary schools” (p. 7) - we are still immersed, as Karen would say, in a “terrifying topography.” SF might be one rhizomatous form that contributes to future waves of curriculum theorizing.

Post-Apocalyptic Musings in the “Race Against Time”

Although Gough (1993) gives a nod to popular music in his chapter, “Sound ideas and (en)light(en) entertainments,” he restricts his focus to how such music might be incorporated into the science classroom (i.e., through comparing textbook descriptions of the chemicals mentioned in Warren Zevon’s cyberpunk influenced “Run Straight Down” with the meanings connotated in the song). Additionally, he admits that popular music might not carry the label SF. As part of what I perceive to be a relatively prevalent phenomena in rap music, I believe that the appropriation of cyberpunk strategies of near-future speculation, among other SF strategies, deserves consideration.

“The future,” Public Enemy (1991) tells us (via James Earl Jones’ booming voice) on Apocalypse 91...The Enemy Strikes Black, “holds nothing else but confrontation.” Thus begins, under the sonic barrage of Hank Shocklee’s bomb squad production and DJ Terminator X’s thrashing,
turntable collage which slices, dices & reassembles previously recorded sounds, a portent of things to come.

Three years earlier, on It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (1988), the first notable thing we hear is a siren, omnipresent -- wailing and warning us of the "Countdown to Armageddon," and echoing the Last Poets' proclamation of the inevitable/subversive nature of revolution in a technological era: "this time around the revolution will not be televised."

So, apocalypse and Armageddon, the inevitability of conflict and cataclysm, have been the stuff of Public Enemy almost from their beginnings. Even a year before Apocalypse 91, Public Enemy (1990) peers toward the future in "Brothers Gonna Work It Out" from Fear of a Black Planet:

In 1995, you'll twist to this
As you raise your fist to the music
United we stand, yes divided we fall
Together we can stand tall
Brothers that try to work it out
They get mad, revolt, revise, realize
They're super bad
Small chance a brother's
Gonna be a victim of his own circumstance . . .

This excursion takes us into the mythos of U.S. history via dominant slogans and addresses the thorny question of origins (when do we situate an epochal moment's beginnings?). Public Enemy then rebounds into the focus of this chapter, the future of nothing but confrontation, and

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MSMA's exploration in 1999 of what Michael Dyson calls their "message of racial apocalypse" (168). The "prediction" from 1990,

Brothers that try to work it out
They get mad, revolt, revise, realize
. . . Small chance a smart brother's
Gonna be a victim of his own circumstance . . .

is revised, rethought, and reassembled in the age of "gangsta rap." Instead of prediction, Public Enemy enters the realm of science fiction, which Philip A. Pecorino (1983) says involves "speculation" and is "an extrapolation from the present reality," (p. 5).

Chuck D, Public Enemy's lead rapper and the self-proclaimed "Doberman of Destruction" and "Rottweiler of Rhyme" (1996b) introduces MSMA in the album's liner notes:

What is going on? How do you make sense in an environment where sense is increasingly less common? Black people still don't have control over our economic, educational, and law enforcement situations. Though we often call our surroundings a "community," without the control, what you actually have is a plantation . . . Perhaps this is the unavoidable outcome of a racist blueprint, that Black America eat itself . . . People have the nerve to blame rap music for this process, when it may be our last cry for help. As, today wars are fought in the air, call these records air-strikes from the airwaves . . . Together we peek five years into the future, to 1999, as the masses of people continue to submit themselves to the programming of white supremacy. In this future, "ex" Klan leaders sway the public and become President, Europe and America join in brotherhood, and refine their racist grip over the so-called "third world." Jails are full of families . . . The planet's environment goes haywire with earthquakes,
floods, fires, and ice. Incurable diseases wipe out millions, while, at the same time, people continue to be brainwashed, thinking that things are better than ever, because white nostalgia has become an easily acquired mind drug. (pp. 2-3, emphasis in original)

The album begins by immediately conflating technological innovations, with the scratchiness that accompanies analog records as the needle touches vinyl the first thing heard, immediately followed by a narrator announcing, “If you don’t stand up for something, you’ll fall for anything.” Using typical sampling strategies, multiple voices from various African American leaders are heard situating the album’s context within the myriad problems plaguing African American communities - “in order for us to make this thing work we’ve got to get rid of the pimps, pushers, and prostitutes and then start all over again” - “masses of our people are in the streets” - “if you’ll just stop shooting up your people” - “it’s the living dead” - “and if you don’t like this thing let’s get ready to change it” - and finally, just before the beat kicks in, “here we go again.”

The juxtaposition of images and platitudes serves to contextualize the remaining seventy-plus minutes of the album within the past/present/future continuum, simultaneously gesturing toward each. Immediately after the beat kicks in, future speculation begins, and technological dystopia is indicated, with the cyborgian
image appropriated to indicate the imminent destruction of African American identity:

December 31st 1999
New Years Eve of the Year 2000
At the edge of the 21st century
President Duke
Of the United World States of Europe America
The new world order
Declares war on the
Last attempt
To unify African people
As one nation under a move . . .
But the programmed
Subcultures
Have wreaked havoc on the earth
Crackas and devils who are programmed
On a superiority complex
Aim to make game of the righteous
To turn them into niggatrons
In the niggatronic age . . .

The goal: crack da cracker
Level the devil
And deprogram the niggatrons

Immediately one notices dominant tendencies in rap music. Repetition, for example, as Public Enemy anchors their speculation three times in what Frank McConnell (1987) calls the “boring” date of 1999 and its use in the “apocalypse game” (p. 232). He notes, however, “Mind you, it is the numbers which are boring, and not by any means the texts those numbers inhabit” (pp. 232-233).

MSMA incorporates one of the central themes of SF, the secular apocalyptic, which as Kreuziger (1982) notes parallels biblical notions of apocalypse and prophecy. A
prophet, McConnell says in writing of William Blake, who he calls the first SF theorist, "does not tell you what is going to happen, he tells you that, if you go on the way you’re going, this is what you’re going to look like" (p. 233). Public Enemy openly appropriates this image, with Flavor Flav, lead rapper Chuck D’s sidekick, proclaiming Chuck D the “prophet of rap.” Michael Dyson (1996) distills the theme of prophecy on this album, writing:

In classic manner, (Public Enemy’s) insistent, uncompromising demands, their cantankerous assertions of truth, their whole-boiled quest for justice fit the portfolio of all prophets possessed of a vision that just won’t go away. Their discomfort rises from the irritating gift of sight laid on them, a burden that only increases when the times are inhospitable to their message. Like the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, if they don’t tell their story, it’s like a fire shut up in their bones. But when they do speak, agree with them or not, the flame burns us all. (pp. 170-171)

Many of the themes which repeat themselves throughout the album, drug and alcohol addiction and black on black violence, for example, serve to anchor the future within present afflictions. If we continue the way we’re going, Public Enemy is saying, then African Americans might as well be machines, with the only ghost inside the programming of white supremacy.

Their appropriation of cyborgian imagery - in “Bedlam 13:13,” for example, whose title motions toward the
Biblical, they proclaim “Cause I ain’t goin niggatronic/Smart e nuff to know I ain’t bionic” – is a fascinating twist, via the introduction of racial identity, on cyberpunk’s interest in information technology and hearkens back to the dystopic visions of William Gibson’s (one of the movement’s pioneers) early novels. The entire movement of cyberpunk,¹ which McHale (1991) sees as overlapping with the “poetics of mainstream post-modernism” (p. 320) to the extent that he uses the term “POSTcyberMODERNpunkISM” (pp. 308-323), deserves a closer look since it is within the narrative strategies of this movement that Public Enemy seems to comport in spirit. I will not argue that Public Enemy draws direct inspiration from cyberpunk writers, since I have encountered no evidence to suggest this. Their musings, however, are symptomatic of this “POSTcyberMODERNpunkISM” in that they are correlative responses to information technology and the concomitant cultural, political, and aesthetic shifts that are emerging.

Bruce Sterling’s (1986) preface to Mirrorshades offers cogent insights into the origins of cyberpunk. Sterling sees what was referred to as “the movement,” (p. ix) before the cyberpunk label, emerging from an identifiable group of writers (William Gibson, Rudy Rucker, Lewis Shiner, John

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Shirley, and himself) as "a product of the 1980s milieu" (p. x). The comparisons to punk rockers are appropriate, Sterling contends, since both groups revel in "their garage-band aesthetic" (p. x). That is, though cyberpunks are steeped in SF traditions, they overtly move to "disentangle SF from mainstream influence" (p. x).

Writing in the 1980s, Sterling says that the label cyberpunk carries a "certain justice," and in fact "captures . . . something crucial to the decade as a whole: a new kind of integration. The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground" (p. xi). It is easy to extend Sterling's comments into the present:

In another era this combination might have seemed far-fetched and artificial. Traditionally, there has been a yawning gulf between the sciences and the humanities: a gulf between literary culture, the formal world of art and politics, and the culture of science, the world of engineering and industry. But the gap is crumbling in unexpected fashion. Technological culture has gotten out of hand. The advances of the sciences are so deeply radical, so disturbing, upsetting, and revolutionary, that they can no longer be contained. They are surging into culture at large; they are invasive; they are everywhere. (p. xii)

Hence, cyberpunk writers are the first generation of SF writers, Sterling contends, to grow up "in a truly science fictional world" (p. xi).
Public Enemy grapples with this SF world where "the interface of the human and the machine" Hollinger (1991) says, "radically decenters the human body, the sacred icon of the essential self" (p. 207). The themes of cyberpunk, including "body invasion" and "mind invasion," Sterling notes, "radically redefine the nature of humanity, the nature of self" (p. 346). How such a redefinition impacts the rapid decimation of the African American community, the "race against time" according to Public Enemy, is central to MSMA.

Paradoxically, even as Public Enemy opines that such a body/mind invasion yields "niggintronics" programmed to the wishes of "white nostalgia," they utilize such technologies and such blurring of lines between human and machine to spread their message. Rap music, Rose (1994) notes, developed in a context of material deprivation but availed itself of the "most advanced technologies" (p. 79). Gilroy (1993) explains this complex relationship between technology and culture:

\[(H)n\)ip hop was not just the product of . . . different, though converging, black cultural traditions. The centrality of 'the break' within it, and the subsequent refinement of cutting and mixing techniques through digital sampling which took the form far beyond the competence of hands on turntables, mean that the aesthetic rules which govern it are premised on a dialectic of rescuing appropriation and recombination which creates special pleasures and is
not limited to the technological complex in which it originated. (pp. 103-104)

Cyberpunk narratives thrive on what Gibson (1986) calls LOTEK culture, where without the resources to actually own or decide how technology is disseminated, such cultures nevertheless hack their way into the system. In a free enterprise society, rap is the weapon of choice, appropriating increasingly decentralized technological innovations to generate a new techno-culture (Weaver and Daspit, 1998).

Public Enemy includes a track on the album titled "Harry Allen’s Interactive Super Highway Phone Call to Chuck D," which purports to be a phone call from journalist Harry Allen to Chuck, but is “actually” recorded at Sonic sound Studio in New York. On this track, Allen discusses how increasingly affordable technological advances are altering the way music is produced. Whereas rap’s origins reside in the use of turntables as instruments (Sterling, 1991, p. 347), and such music was communally shared through performances and cassette tapes, the decreasing cost of compact discs and compact disc production is altering the nature of music consumption and distribution. Anyone, Allen says, can avail themselves of this technology, which though produced under the auspices of post-industrial
capitalism is still appropriated by an increasingly larger population sector, and with the wherewithal produce rap music. Although Allen perhaps exaggerates with the absolute term “anyone,” the argument is germane and relates to cyberpunks emphasis on street cultures utilizing the same technologies (computers, etc.) that central power blocs use to extend their influence.

At the core of this blurring of technology and identity are challenges to traditional literary notions of temporal structure. Zoe Sofia writes of post-modern time that it represents the “collapse of the future onto the present” (in Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., 1992, p. 27). “We live,” she continues, “with the sense of the preapocalyptic moment, the inevitability of everything happening at once” (p. 29). Looking ahead to 1999, Public Enemy cleaves the future with the present, producing what I call speculative history – the perception that if things don’t change, the future is history – while simultaneously attempting to change this future via excursions into the mythos of the past. History is always speculative, always a product of memory creation. The future is similarly constructed.

In fact, Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. contends that because “the living population of the Earth now surpasses all previous humans combined, the historical past has become,
in a genuine sense, a minority report” (p. 27).

Cyberpunk’s “lateral futures of today’s information technology” (Slusser, 1992, p. 3) make sense then. As does Marie-Helene Huet’s (1987) intriguing thesis, which further collapses temporal distinctions, that SF is actually a “complex manipulation of time and history” (p. 37) that functions to anticipate the past. SF writers appeal not to “imagination” but to “memory” she contends – the “fantastic tale . . . save(s) history from sudden oblivion” (p. 37). She continues,

. . . the science fiction text thus chooses and explores the privileged space of a memory blank . . . that which both emphasizes and undermines the scientific and historical chain, and points to its inherent fragility . . . such beginnings are not innocent; they carry violence, murder, and the foundations of new laws. (pp. 40-41)

The most powerful example of this confluence of past, present, and future on MSMA is in “Aintnuttin Buttersong.” Drawing on Jimi Hendrix style guitar playing rearranging the “Star Spangled Banner” (Hendrix offered his rendition at Woodstock in 1969), and with a chorus of young African American school children chanting the “Pledge of Allegiance,” Public Enemy raps with eyes on future, past, and memory creation. Noting that “I got tangled in the star spangled banner/In the middle of Alabama/Or was it Tennessee or Arkansas,” they articulate the violence and
murder of America’s origins, all the while searching for the “foundations of new laws:”

When I pledge allegiance
I shoulda got a sticka
1st grade/2nd grade
I shoulda just kicked a
Verse that worked
In the middle of class
Instead of singin about bombs
Like a dumb ass
Land of the free
Home of the brave
And hell with us nigas we slaves
That shoulda been the last line
Of a song that’s wrong from the get . . .
The red is for blood shed
The blue is for the sad ass songs
We be singin in church while white mans heaven is
   black mans hell
The stars is what we saw when we
Got our ass beat
Stripes whip marks in our backs
White is for the obvious . . .
Land of the free
Home of the slave.

By speaking of 1999 while plumbing the horrific depths of history, Public Enemy approaches issues of memory in appropriately post-modern ways. Memory can become “overloaded” in the “digital narrative” that structures contemporary technocultures (Landon, 1992, pp. 153-167) — thus, anti-memory, can become pervasive. Landon notes that Kathy Acker and William Burroughs, who are often considered cyberpunks themselves or influences to the movement, “cast memory in their writing as an oppressive part of larger
control systems such as patriarchy or language itself" (p. 160).

Which is precisely why, I believe, Public Enemy assaults our senses through rhymes and sounds, as complete an attack on the body as they have available. And it is why they anchor much of their dystopic vision within the confines of the classroom, with children droning a mythos which sweats blood while the dominant culture throws consternation to the violence of gangsta rap. And it is why the penultimate song on the album is entitled “Hitler Day,” offering the following for speculative historians, “reinventing the enemy’s language” (Harjo and Bird, 1997, p. 19) in the process:

500 years ago one man claimed
To have discovered a new world
Five centuries later we the people
Are forced to celebrate a black holocaust . . .

Mass murderer . . .
Give a reason I’m hatin
October celebratin
The dead

Of the black the brown and red . . .

I hate that day
Its as crazy as Hitler day . . .

Public Enemy perhaps avails itself of the only “weapon” it has in confronting the future. Their dystopic vision of the future where white supremacy/nostalgia run
rampant corresponds to general SF trends that Edward James identifies:

American science fiction these days offers few ways out of the perceived trend towards environmental disaster or political or economic oppression. Near futures are, usually, darker versions of our own world. That a revolutionary change is not seen as the way out of this bind is presumably bound up with the political experience of the United States this century where there is a virtual absence of any political tradition of revolution outside the (normally) conservative image of the American Revolution itself. .. Future dystopias we have in abundance, but few visions of how to dismantle them. (pp. 110-111)

Public Enemy, I believe, offers such a dismantling vision through their version of secular prophecy and speculative history.

Notes

1. The title is culled from the Public Enemy song, “Give It Up” on MSMA (1994). All songs cited in this chapter are from the lyric sheet that accompanies the album. Spelling and syntax are quoted directly from these lyrics.

2. I date myself in using the terminology “album.” I do not think that MSMA was ever released on vinyl, as most current releases are only released on compact discs (CDs) and cassettes. However, I will use the term “album” to refer to this work since it implies, to me at least, a unified conceptual undertaking that might not be signified by merely referring to it as a CD or cassette.

3. Although MSMA does not deal overtly with gender issues, the strategic ruptures that feminist science fiction authors have introduced parallel Public Enemy’s focus on race and identity. That is, they are similarly challenging, I contend, Western science’s pretenses toward objectivity and progress.

4. As with many movements, the label was attached from outside of the group’s practitioners, and is thus a label
that many so-called cyberpunk writers resist. See Sterling (1986).

5. I discuss briefly the aesthetics of punk in Chapter Five in relation to Bruce Springsteen’s (1983) album *Nebraska*. 
Chapter Five:
Mapping a New World Order:
Bruce Springsteen’s *The Ghost of Tom Joad*

The world is nothing but complex, and if you do not learn to interpret its complexities, you're going to be on the river without a paddle . . . You got to be able to hold a lot of contradictory ideas in your mind at one time without letting them drive you nuts.

(Bruce Springsteen, 1987/1996, p. 239)

If Public Enemy ruptures traditional conceptions of time through speculative history, Bruce Springsteen similarly disrupts metanarratives of progress, but through an obsession with ghosts, especially recuperative ones. Springsteen’s 1996 album, *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (TGOTJ) resonates with Michel Serres’ vision of contemporaneousness which I explored in Chapter Two. Slattery’s (1995a) explanation serves as a reminder that Serres “uses provoking metaphors and analogies to explain that there is convergence in particular events where many things come together and similar forms provide a passage for making connections the journey of life” (p. 208). On TGOTJ, Springsteen “use(s) contemporary details that anchor the songs in the present even as they resonate with the past” (Cullen, 1997, p. 47).

At first glance, discussing Bruce Springsteen, one of the most successful popular recording artists of all time, and Michel Serres, a "French post-structuralist" (Doll,
1993, p. 32) and member of the prestigious Académie Française, in the same study seems anomalous, even contradictory. But Springsteen and Serres may not, in fact, have as much distance between them as naysayers would have us believe. They minimally both offer texts concerned with our existence in a "global world which rises and seems to replace the old one" (Serres, 1994, p. 2a), a world where "everything changes" (p. 1a). I believe that the juxtaposition, the comparison, and in some ways, the integration, of their ideas on this changing world, provides more than a simple cataloging of reactions. In much the same way that Serres (1995b) trips across time to see the Challenger space shuttle tragedy in relationship with sacrifices to Baal in Carthage (p. 138), I think that bridging the chasms (intellectual, disciplinary, etc.) that are artificially constructed between thinkers like Serres and Springsteen may prove fruitful and function as a form of praxis. It is, I believe, one of many possible forms of cultural studies scholarship and is consistent with Serres' (who I have already claimed epitomizes the anti-disciplinary strengths of cultural studies) vision of a "troubadour of knowledge" (1997): one who, according to Glaser (1997) understands that "knowledge, learning, and philosophy are linked to travel, to seeking and
encountering, to the intersection of genres and disciplines . . ." (p. ix).

In this chapter I hope to forge, however tenuous, a relationship between Springsteen and Serres, between popular culture and academic work. Each, I believe, is looking for foundations that account for the cacophonies that accompany our existence, and each is looking for ways we might consequently act more responsibly in the world, and toward the world.

A "New World Order?"

Bruce Springsteen opens *TGOTJ* with the following grim salutation:

Men walkin' long the railroad tracks  
Goin' someplace there's no goin' back  
Highway patrol choppers comin' up over the ridge

Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge  
Shelter line stretchin' round the corner  
Welcome to the new world order

The entire album is an evocation to reevaluate what it means to be not merely a denizen of the United States approaching a new millennium, but also to reevaluate the responsibilities of being human. On *TGOTJ*, Springsteen challenges conventional notions of historical progress, in much the same way Serres (1995b) does by observing that viewing "history by schisms or revolutions . . . creates a screen that is so opaque and dark that we don't even see
our veritable archaisms" (p. 138). The album's twelve songs form "an inseparable cycle, baffled by our utter despair and the inability to find power anywhere" (Marsh, 1996, p. 16). TGOTJ is Springsteen's attempt to begin navigating, in the midst of our apparent powerlessness, the treacherous waters of our "new world order."

Similarly, in Atlas, Serres asks questions that we must pose if we are to map a "new world order." Although Serres primarily poses these questions to interrogate our relationships to burgeoning technologies, they are similar in scope to those that Springsteen addresses on TGOTJ. In fact, they offer a legend of sorts for mapping our dance with Serres and Springsteen.

Neither Serres nor Springsteen offers answers in the traditional sense. Their mappings are neither simply descriptive nor prescriptive. Instead, they provoke us, through metaphor and narrative, in Serres' words, to "undertak(e) the possible rather than the reality" (1994, p. 3a).

"It's a Big Story:" The Power of Narrative and Metaphor

Doll notes that Serres is particularly adept at utilizing narrative modes of inquiry. Instead of relying on modernist assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge (that it is "out there" to be discovered), narrative forms
recognize dialogic and "interpretive . . . modes of thought" (p. 169). Doll adds:

Metaphors are more useful than logic in generating this dialogue. Metaphors are generative; they help us see what we don't see . . . The narrative mode requires interpretation. A good story, a great story, enduces, challenges the reader to interpret, to enter into dialogue with the text . . . It is this that Serres does so well and so rigorously . . . (p. 169, emphasis in original)

Douglas (1985) recognizes that narrative is at the core of Springsteen's art (p. 486). In fact, she calls him "rock's first sustained narrator" and places him beside Dreiser, Farrell, and Kerouac as practitioners of American "unedited narrative art" (pp. 487-88).

Additionally, Rauch (1986) identifies much of Springsteen's work as "a contemporary version of the dramatic monologue . . . which is usually associated with nineteenth-century poets" (p. 30). Rauch argues that the dramatic monologue, in which the speaker of the poem/song addresses some auditor, whether identified or anonymous, is effective because:

. . . it avoids didacticism by putting the listener in the context of the song. The lesson that is learned from the monologue comes out of immersion in the context of the scenario, rather than from direct explication; thus . . . it demands a great deal from the reader or listener by way of attentiveness . . . the dramatic monologue is a very active and intellectually demanding genre. (pp. 31-32)
TGOTJ continues Springsteen's use of narrative generally, and dramatic monologue particularly. Several of the songs extend Springsteen's incorporation of an anonymous auditor, usually referred to in ironically deferential terms ("sir" or "Mister"). We are forced, in a manner of speaking, into the song, wondering who this "sir" is, wondering where we are in this context.

"Straight Time?"

The heart of Springsteen's new album is an exploration of the contemporaneity of our current social and political situation with previous ones amidst changing landscapes. Springsteen would be comfortable I believe, with Serres' belief that time is "complex . . . non-linear and chaotic" (Egea-Kuehne, 1996, p. 1). Some of the metaphors Serres draws on (explained in detail in Chapter Two) include the automobile (p. 2), which is a composite of contemporary technology with concepts from neolithic times (i.e., the wheel), and the creased handkerchief which brings together or superimposes two points thought to be distant (p. 8).

Springsteen expresses similar modes of thought in the construction of his vision of America on TGOTJ. Like Serres' creased handkerchief, TGOTJ is created in a fashion that makes the United States, circa 1995, contemporaneous with the United States envisioned in John Ford's film
version of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and the music of another great documenter of the Dust Bowl tragedy, Woody Guthrie. As Nash (1996) notes, "(A) ghost hovers over the music here: The album is essentially the Boss's ode to Woody Guthrie" (83). Indeed, on *TGOTJ* Springsteen echoes Serres' (1995b) observation that "(w)e are ancient in most of our thoughts and actions" (p. 138). The horrors that accompanied the migration west in the midst of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the social and political forces that precipitated and sustained the nightmare, in spite of political rhetoric which would render this era "ancient" history, are not simply metaphoric for what is occurring in the United States today; they are frighteningly reminiscent. Rhoda Karpatkin (1996), commenting on similarities between 1936 and 1996 writes that, "(T)he clock suddenly seems to be turning backward. Life has turned edgy and sour for the countless people who have become losers in this economy" (5). Serres and Springsteen, of course, would explain that the clock hasn't turned "backward" -- it is simply "a confusion between time, and the measure of time" (Egée-Kuehne, p. 9). "(W)e never stop founding the city," Serres (1983/1991) says of Rome (p. 259); Springsteen says the same of the United
States on TGOTJ, echoing the significance of memory creation discussed throughout Chapter Two.

Who Should We Be?

A precursor to discussing this question is obviously, Who are we?, and especially for Bruce Springsteen, What is the United States? Springsteen's 1982 album Nebraska, which "bears an obvious kinship" with TGOTJ (Gilmore, 1996, 127), answers this question with an explosion from America's heartland. After defining one of punk rock's origins in the brazen, loud, and nihilistic expressions of the Sex Pistols' first single, "Anarchy in the U.K." (where Johnny Rotten sings, "I am an antichrist/I am an anarchist"), Greil Marcus (1993) writes of Nebraska that it is one of the "quietest punk records ever made, and (one) of the truest . . . (a) complete and unflinching . . . negation . . . hard and cruel," an album that "burn(s) punk down to something close to silence" (pp. 2, 7). The album opens with the title song which "sets the tone and provides imagistically the central theme -- a hopelessness and desperation brought about by loneliness, isolation, and alienation" (Branscomb, 1993, p. 35). "Nebraska" begins innocently enough, with the all-American, homogenized milk and white bread tale of boy meets girl -- but it quickly, very quickly, becomes something more, something sinister:
I saw her standin' on her front lawn just twirlin' her baton
Me and her went for a ride sir and ten innocent people died

From the town of Lincoln, Nebraska with a sawed off .410 on my lap
Through to the badlands of Wyoming I killed everything in my path

"Nebraska" recounts a fictionalized version of Charlie Starkweather's murderous rampage with Caril Fugate in 1958 in which ten people were killed in eight days. Springsteen had viewed Terence Malick's 1973 film, Badlands, which also fictionalized the slayings, and had read Ninette Beaver's, Caril, "the definitive Starkweather account" (Marsh, 1987, pp. 97-98). But Springsteen, according to Marsh, extends Starkweather's character beyond plaintive realism, and places words in the character's mouth that were beyond the scope of the "real" Starkweather's "half-wit" capabilities (p. 99):

Sheriff when the man pulls that switch sir and snaps my poor head back
You make sure my pretty baby is sittin' right there on my lap

They declared me unfit to live and said into that great void my soul'd be hurled
They wanted to know why I did what I did
Well sir I guess there's just a meanness in this world

The America that Springsteen portrays in 1982 is one littered with characters wearied by "family betrayals and failures, dreams that are wasted, hopes that are blasted,
(and) a longing for death as a release from the pitiful consequences of this life" (Marsh, 1987, p. 132). Perhaps the most compelling image, and one metaphoric for the vapid optimism that many feel permeated the Reagan era, is found in the album's closing song, "Reason to Believe:"

Seen a man standin' over a dead dog lyin' by the highway in a ditch
He's lookin' down kinda puzzled pokin' that dog with a stick
Got his car door flung open he's standin' out on highway 31
Like if he stood there long enough that dog'd get up and run
Struck me kinda funny seem kinda funny sir to me
Still at the end of every hard day people find some reason to believe

Marsh notes that many critics, "(b)ecause . . . Springsteen often found reason for optimism in the most terrible of circumstances," read the "chorus . . . to be an affirmation" (p. 138). But, he adds, "'Reason to Believe' said yes to nothing. It stared straight into the void about which Springsteen-as-Starkweather spoke and found exactly what was expected: nothing at all . . . If you were willing to admit what it was saying, it was frightening to listen to 'Reason to Believe'" (pp. 138-39). America, Springsteen unflinchingly tells us, only gives "fools . . . reason to believe" (Branscomb, p. 35).

Whereas Nebraska erupts from middle America, TGOTJ depicts a porous America, one literally imploding from its
borders. The United States that Springsteen is depicting is similar to the ancient Rome that Serres (1983/1991) describes:

Rome is a collection . . . Rome is not only a mixture of whores and ex-murderers, it is also, and above all, a mixture of outsiders . . . Rome is Greek . . . Rome is Sabine . . . Rome is everything at once; it absorbs contradiction . . . If we ask Rome who Rome is, it itself does not know . . . Rome is not a fixed or defined subject; it lacks a well-formed definition. Rome is a melange. (pp. 149-50)

And although America's attitude is perhaps one of violent exclusion as envisioned by Lou Reed (1989) in "Dirty Boulevard"

Give me your hungry your tired your poor I'll piss on 'em
That's what the Statue of Bigotry says
Your poor huddled masses, let's club 'em to death
and get it over with and just dump 'em on the boulevard

it's "reality" is a mixture. Substitute United States for Rome, and Serres describes this nation as "a fabric of others . . . Divide it and it is still Rome; a mixture can be divided without ceasing to be a mixture" (p. 151).

The soul of TGOTJ is contained in a cycle of three songs, "Sinaloa Cowboys," "The Line," and "Balboa Park," placed in the middle of the album's twelve songs. Springsteen describes the significance of these songs to America:
The border story is something that I hadn't heard much of in the music that's out there. It's a big story. It's the story of what this country is going to be: a big, multicultural place. (Corn, 1996, p. 24).

"Sinaloa Cowboys" appropriates one of the most "American" of mythologies, the cowboy tale replete with its multiple perils and rugged individualism, and recasts it in the miasma of illicit drug manufacturing and migrant workers. Springsteen (1995) explains:

In the '60s there was a methamphetamine trade in California run by outlaw biker gangs. In the '70s they were taken over by Mexican drug gangs, a lot from the Mexican state of Sinaloa. And what they do is they come across the border and they get the migrant workers to do the dirty work, cooking up the methamphetamine. It's a very combustible set of ingredients.

Springsteen tells the tale of two brothers, Miguel and Louis, migrant workers enticed into this profitable, but hazardous, endeavor:

They left their home and family
Their father said "My sons one thing you will learn
For everything the north gives it exacts a price in return."
They worked side by side in the orchards
From morning till the day was through
Doing the work the hueros wouldn't do.

Word was out some men in from Sinaloa were looking for some hands
Well deep in Fresno county there was a deserted chicken ranch
There in a small tin shack on the edge of a ravine
Miguel and Louis stood cooking methamphetamine.

You could spend a year in the orchards
Or make half as much in one ten-hour shift

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Working for the men from Sinaloa
But if you slipped the hydriodic acid
Could burn right through your skin
They'd leave you spittin' up blood in the desert
If you breathed those fumes in

Springsteen casts Miguel and Louis, and the other immigrants on TGOTJ, as "American pioneers, and as brothers and mothers and fathers" (McDonnell, 1996, p. 82).

Unfortunately, Louis becomes another statistic when the methamphetamine shack where he and Miguel work explodes:

It was early one winter evening as Miguel stood watch outside
When the shack exploded lighting up the valley night
Miguel carried Louis' body over his shoulder down a swale
To the creekside and there in the tall grass Louis Rosales died

Louis becomes part of what Springsteen calls the "body count built into the American way of life," one where "lives . . . don't count; they're just the price of doing business in the USA" (in McDonnell, 1996, p. 82).

Springsteen's border stories grow increasingly grim. In "The Line," a story essentially first told on Nebraska's "Highway Patrolman", he recasts the story in a manner that forces us to rethink issues of kinship and responsibility. In "Highway Patrolman" we learn of two brothers, Joe Roberts, who "got a farm deferment" during Vietnam while his brother, Franky" spent three years in the army. Joe winds up working as a state trooper, while Franky - well,
"Franky ain't no good." Springsteen poignantly explains family responsibility in the song's chorus:

Me and Franky laughin' and drinkin' nothin' feels better than blood on blood
Takin' turns dancin' with Maria as the band played "Night of the Johnstown Flood"
I catch him when he's strayin' like any brother would
Man turns his back on his family well he just ain't no good

The song's anticlimax occurs after Franky seriously injures someone in a bar brawl. Joe, in his "official" state sanctioned role, chases after his brother, but abandons the pursuit:

Well I chased him through them county roads
Till a sign said Canadian border 5 miles from here
I pulled over the side of the highway and watched his taillights disappear

Marsh notes that Joe Roberts "also watches himself cross the border into the forbidden" (1987, p. 136).

In "The Line," we watch a part of America slide away, paradoxically as it slips across the border into America. We witness desire and hope become commodified; we see someone still clinging to that clearly pointless "reason to believe." The songs chronicles an ex-military man, Carl, who joins the California border patrol, befriending Bobby Ramirez, a "ten-year veteran" whose family is originally from Mexico. Carl's allegiance to his job is compromised by erotic, and forbidden, attraction:
Well the first time that I saw her
She was in the holdin' pen
Our eyes met and she looked away
Then she looked back again
Her hair was black as coal
Her eyes reminded me of what I'd lost
She had a young child cryin' in her arms
I asked "Señora is there anything I can do?"

Later, in a Tijuana bar where Carl and "Bobby drink alongside/the same people we'd sent back the day before,"
he meets the object of his desire again:

She said her name was Louisa
She was from Sonora and had just come north
We danced and I held her in my arms
She said she had some family in Madera county
If she her child and younger brother could just get through

In a scene hauntingly reminiscent of the one in "Highway Patrolman," Bobby Ramirez is the border patrolman, he is Joe Roberts, he is the "brother," who pulls Carl over as Carl is illegally smuggling Louisa and her younger brother across the border. The chilling complication, but one that does not quell Carl's desire/obsession, is that Louisa's brother is smuggling drugs. It is clear to the audience that Carl has been used, but if he is aware of this (which we can assume), it does not alter his quest:

She climbed into my truck
She leaned toward me and we kissed
As we drove her brother's shirt slipped open
And I saw the tape across his chest

We were just about on the highway
When Bobby's jeep come up in the dust on my
right
I pulled over and let my engine run
And stepped out into his lights
I felt myself movin'
My gun restin' 'neath my hand
We stood there starin' at each other
As off through the arroyo she ran

Bobby Ramirez he never said nothin'
Six months later I left the line
I drifted to the central valley
And took what work that I could find
At night I searched the local bars
And the migrant towns
Lookin' for my Louisa
With the black hair fallin' down

What does it say of an America, of a world, where acts of seeming compassion are exploited? And what does it say of an America, of a world, where the consequences of such acts are ignored, where we would prefer the comfort of abusive desire?

In "Balbo Park," Springsteen's metaphoric use of highways and cars (in 1975 Springsteen proclaimed that he was "Born to Run" and ready to take to the highway as a means of escape) takes a harrowing turn as young Mexican border boys take up residence in a section of San Diego where they peddle drugs and their bodies to "the men in their Mercedes." Chasing whatever dreams/despair that make such children "come north to California," one young man's life ends in the metaphorical collapse of any possibility of escape:
One night the border patrol swept Twelfth Street
A big car come fast down the boulevard
Spider stood caught in its headlights
Got hit and went down hard
As the car sped away Spider held his stomach
Limped to his blanket 'neath the underpass
Lie there tasting his own blood on his tongue
Closed his eyes and listened to the cars
Rushin' by so fast

So, who should we be? In a manner of speaking,
Springsteen says we should be who we are. We should not
seek, in Serres' (1983/1991) language, a "system" (p. 151)
that excludes and defines along rigid lines. We should
recognize and revel in the "mixture." Springsteen's tragic
border stories tell us of an America that is, but remains
largely "secret" (Corn, p. 22).

"Written History Kills Lived History:"
Searching for Ghosts, Searching for Babel

In Genesis Serres (1995a) writes about the biblical
story of the tower of Babel from a perspective which
emphasizes its metaphoric significance:

Babel is an unintegrable multiplicity, a sort of
intermittent aggregate, not closed upon its unity.
Together we are this strange object, immersed in the
clamor . . . We are this tatter of languages fringed
with murmuring . . . If the tower was not finished, it
was because this industrious people constructed it,
back in those days, with stones alone. They did not,
as it is said, have the means. Men are not stones, no
community can be built in this manner. Living stones
are needed for it. (124)

The problem, and one that Springsteen assails against on
TGOTJ, is that multiplicity literally and figuratively gets
"trampled" (Serres, 1983/1991, pp. 9-37) on the pages of human history. To requote Serres, "(W)ritten history kills lived history" (p. 140). I believe that this is more than just a philosophical rumination; its counterpoise becomes a political imperative.

In Rome, Serres recounts the legend of Hercules and Cacus. Hercules has stolen Geryon's oxen in battle and then, weary from fighting, falls asleep in "thick grass." Cacus then steals the oxen, dragging them backwards into a cavern so that their tracks point outward, away from their location. Hercules is initially fooled by the tracks, but then hears the oxen bellow. He finds the oxen, kills Cacus, and is pardoned for this killing by Evander, the king. Evander's claim to fame is the "miraculous invention of writing" (p. 11).

Serres comments on the relationship of this legend to human history and the silencing of voices:

The tracks deceived Hercules, and the bellowing undeceived him . . . He reads a text that leaves him uncertain and confused; then he hears a sound that brings him back to the place from which the tracks had chased him . . . The oxen in the cavern, Cacus's black box, makes us think, by the traces they have left, that they are not there; they make us think, by their sound, that they are . . . Because the tracks are misleading, let us put our faith in voices . . . Who cried out? The oxen, certainly . . . (and) Cacus, under Hercules' club, called out for help. The local shepherds arrive. Who cried out? Hercules? Certainly. Amid Cacus's avengers he must have called
for help, because Evander arrives. Evander cried out louder than the others . . . The voice of the sacred drowns out the muddled sounds of murder . . . The oxen hear the other oxen, Hercules hears the oxen, the shepherds hear Cacus, Evander hears Hercules. Everyone hears everyone calling. All transmitters, all receivers. Throughout its history Rome listens to Evander . . . History hears everybody calling; the historian, most often, hears only a single voice. (pp. 13-15)

Evander, the inventor of writing, has articulated what is considered legitimate knowledge. But we know from this tale that written history, the tracks of the oxen, are deceptive. Voices have not merely been marginalized, they have been silenced. They have become anti-memory.

The refusal to silence voices, and to uncover those that have been silenced, is perhaps the artistic core of TGOTJ. Springsteen critiques the monolithic nature of United States' history, in its past, present, and future incarnations (which of course, he and Serres argue, are not as distinguishable as we often suppose). Springsteen is disgusted with, as he terms it, "the hegemony of the homogenous" (Corn, 1996, p. 26), with all of its nefarious ramifications. TGOTJ is, in essence, an attempt to "hear" history.

Springsteen has often written of the dispossessed, characters whose voices have mattered so little that they themselves begin to doubt the value of their existence.
Several of the songs on TGOTJ carry this reality to frightening limits. One disturbing metaphor, which captures the mood of such characters by twisting a traditionally hopeful image, is found in "Dry Lightning:

Well the piss yellow sun
Comes bringin' up the day
She said "Ain't nobody can give nobody
What they really want anyway"

Other characters seek some form of retribution, some way to make their voices heard by lashing out against the anonymous, invisible, but central forces that have rendered so many lives meaningless. They seek relief from the world that Serres (1983/1991) describes when he writes, "the rest, all but one, work for the one at the center" (p. 254). Springsteen evokes the image of the "Okie farmer who tries to hold off eviction with a shotgun, only to be told that the men he wants to shoot are faceless, hidden away in boardrooms hundreds of miles away" (Marsh, 1987, p. 101) in "The New Timer." In this song, a drifter who abandons his family and learns that his mentor in hoboing has been senselessly murdered muses:

My Jesus your gracious love and mercy
Tonight I'm sorry could not fill my heart
Like one good rifle
And the name of who I ought to kill

In "Youngstown," a Vietnam veteran who has toiled ceaselessly in the grueling "mills (that) built the tanks
and bombs/That won this country's wars" questions the faceless power that has reduced him to anonymity:

From the Monongahela valley
To the Mesabi iron range
To the coal mines of Appalachia
The story's always the same
Seven hundred tons of metal a day
Now sir you tell me the world's changed
Once I made you rich enough
Rich enough to forget my name

And in the song's final reflection, one that counters the entire mythological tradition of Western history, this worker refuses final identification with the forces of supposed progress:

When I die I don't want no part of heaven
I would not do heaven's work well
I pray the devil comes and takes me
To stand in the fiery furnaces of hell

Serres writes that "economy and theology are equivalent explanations of history" (p. 34). The character in "Youngstown" clearly understands this. Even the homeless preacher, the ghost of Steinbeck's Preacher Casey, in "The Ghost of Tom Joad," continues hopelessly "Waitin' for when the last shall be first and the first shall be last."

Springsteen most directly confronts the issue of American identity and voice in "Galveston Bay," the tale of two Vietnam "veterans:" Le Bin Son, who "(f)ought side by side with the Americans/In the mountains and deltas of Vietnam," and who brings his family to "the promised land,"
settling as a shrimper in Galveston, Texas; and Billy Sutter, originally from Galveston, who "was wounded in the battle of Chu Lai/ Shipped home in '68," and then takes over his father's fishing boat. After trouble erupts from the Texas Klan and two Texans are killed in self-defense by Le, Billy, who has bought into the "America for Americans" rhetoric, vows to kill Le after Le is acquitted. In a gesture that redefines heroism, Billy refuses to silence the voice of difference:

One late summer night Le stood watch along the waterside
Billy stood in the shadows
His K-bar knife in his hand
And the moon slipped behind the clouds
Le lit a cigarette, the bay was still as glass
As he walked by Billy stuck his knife into his pocket
Took a breath and let him pass

While far from being a positive act of virtue, Billy's refusal to participate in the slaying of another and his responsibility in allowing disparate voices to exist, can nevertheless be interpreted as an act of heroism. It becomes, by virtue of the nature of America's violent, exclusionary history, an act of defiance.

Springsteen concludes the song with an archetypal rebirth in the water:

In the early darkness Billy rose up
Went into the kitchen for a drink of water
Kissed his sleeping wife
Headed into the channel
And cast his nets into the water
Of Galveston Bay
But the symbology here is different from previous
Springsteen forays into baptismal metaphors. Although
there is some sense of rebirth present, the significance of
the water exceeds anything Springsteen has attempted
before.

Springsteen's use of Galveston Bay is analogous to the
appropriation of ocean and river metaphors in Serres'
 writings on multiplicity and pluridisciplinarity.
Throughout Rome, for example, Serres uses the Tiber as a
symbol of multiplicity. And Serres (1995b) says of
knowledge, which is consistent with cultural studies:

(D)on't imagine that the sciences and other bodies of
knowledge are distributed like continents, surrounded
by watery abysses. Not at all. They are more like
oceans -- who can say exactly where the border between
the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean lies? Land
masses are separated, but waters mix together; thus we
have the clear and the obscure. (p. 130)

Transposing the above into the political language of
Springsteen, it is clear that the impulse in human history
has been to silence others via demarcation and exclusion.
In the fluidity of Galveston Bay, Springsteen sees an
America, a world, that allows for mixture and
intermingling; an America where voices do not stifle one

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another as they have been apt to do on the surface, but
to flow under water like fishing nets.

Finally, Springsteen searches for a "ghost," something
or someone from the past to make contemporaneous with our
"new world order." In the title song, "The Ghost of Tom
Joad," the narrator surveys the landscape:

Families sleepin' in their cars in the Southwest
No home no job no peace no rest . . .
In a cardboard box 'neath the underpass
You got a hole in your belly and gun in your hand
Sleeping on a pillow of solid rock
Bathin' in the city aqueduct

The narrator, in the song's chorus, and in lines that are
sketched across the booklet that accompanies the CD
version, articulates the uselessness of traditional,
modernist metaphors of hope and progress:

The highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
Searchin' for the ghost of Tom Joad

The speaker is attempting to conjure up the specter of Tom
Joad, the character from The Grapes of Wrath who endured
similar circumstances and understood his responsibilities
in the face of oppression. The song's narrator finally
joins Tom Joad in the song's last verse after recognizing
the fundamental connectedness of human beings. Tom's words
at the end of The Grapes of Wrath are recalled, and
extended:
Now Tom said "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
Where there's a fight 'gainst the blood and hatred in the air
Look for me Mom I'll be there
Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand
Or decent job or a helpin' hand
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Mom you'll see me."

Well the highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
With the ghost of old Tom Joad (emphasis added)

The ghosts of history, the useful ones at least, can only be made contemporaneous when the issue of responsibility is addressed. Springsteen comments:

With that song ("The Ghost of Tom Joad"), I had been watching what's happening in the world and seeing thirty years of work undone. It seems disastrous to me - and everybody is compliant. I don't think there is any such thing as an innocent man [sic]; there is a collective responsibility. That's in the song's line: "Where it's headed everybody knows." Everybody knows there are the people we write off, there are the people we try to hang on to, and there are the people we don't fuck with . . . Everybody knows that, hey, maybe I'm just on the line. And maybe I'm going to step over from being one of these people to one of those people. (Corn, 1996, p. 222)

Serres (1995a) also confronts the issue of responsibility. Speaking in fundamentally existentialist terms, he writes that we are responsible for who and what we are because we are free to choose "anything:"

I believe that man is blank and un-differentiated. Man has no instinct, man is not determined, man is
free, man is possible. Free as a hand, quick as a thought, possible as youth, free as dance forms him and breaks him. Free, perverse, insane and rational, capable of anything. (p. 47)

And in commenting on the responsibilities inherent in our "new world order" of science and technology, Serres (1995b) adds:

With rockets, satellites, television, and fax machines, we dominate gravity and space . . . Death itself is pushed back, and old age is rejuvenated . . . Being masters imposes crushing responsibilities, suddenly driving us far from the independence we so recently believed would henceforth be the bed of roses of our new powers . . . In dominating the planet, we become accountable for it . . . We are going to have to decide about every thing, and even about Everything . . . In the future we will live only under the conditions that we will have produced in this era. (pp. 173-74).

**Coda: Serres’ Ghost of Tom Joad**

Serres (1991/1997), in articulating and advocating multiplicity and pluridisciplinarity, offers a vision of his "new world order" through his metaphor of Arlequin turned Pierrot. Arlequin originally wears a motley coat of many colors and strips to reveal skin similarly colored — eventually, however, he is converted into Pierrot, and stands in a “dazzling, incandescent mass” of the fusion of all colors:

“How can the thousand hues of an odd medley of colors be reduced to their white summation? “Just as the body,” (Pierrot) responded, “assimilates and retains the various differences experienced during travel and returns home a half-breed of new gestures
and other customs, dissolved in the body’s attitudes and functions, to the point that it believes that as far as it is concerned nothing has changed, so the secular miracle of tolerance, of benevolent neutrality welcomes, in peace, just as many apprenticeships in order to make the liberty of invention, thus of thought, spring forth from them.” (p. xvii)

Springsteen's vision of America, and the world, is similarly blinding, or perhaps I should say deafening - a melange of the multiplicity of voices which exists, and must not be silenced. It is in this melange that the new knowledges that we need for survival will be found.

Whereas Springsteen confines himself generally to social and political hybridization, Serres offers a vision of cross-breeding of intellectual disciplines. But both are arguing for a broadening of our contexts. And both see such a broadening as a more appropriate mode of existing in and relating to the world.
Conclusion
It's a Rap With Vampires: Toward Continuing Curriculum Reconceptualization

I would like to end where I began, with vampires.

I am reminded, when thinking of subterranean youth cultures and the search for curricular visions, of the moment when Dracula's daughter, as re-presented in Michael Almereyda's 1995 film Nadia says to a woman she is "picking up" in a bar (a woman who has just complained that her younger brother who committed suicide "didn't know anything"), "I don't believe that young people don't know anything. I think they know just about everything, but they can't defend themselves against what they know."

Consider for a moment that one of the most vulnerable points in students' lives is the intrusion of the "older generation" as it "chooses (what) to tell the younger generation" (Pinar, et al., 1995, p. 847). Hence, via schooling, youth cultures become sites of contestation, repression, violence. Maybe exploring what Stone (1995/1996), calls "the vampire of subjectivity" (p. 182) is one of the keys to the continuing reconceptualization of curriculum, and a possible avenue of avoiding the aforementioned dilemma. After all, she says, "The gaze of the vampire, once achieved, cannot be repudiated; it changes vision forever" (p. 183).
Ruth Vinz (1996), drawing on Bakhtin's "historical poetics on carnival" (p 15), explores the complex intersections of adolescent desire and identity in adolescent readings of horror fiction. She concurs with the assertion that contemporary youth are drawn to such cultural forms because of the ruptured identities presented therein, and the transgressive functions of engaging with such texts (pp. 14-15). She writes of the "inherent fascination with what is beyond sight, reason, and explanation" (p. 14). Thus, adolescent immersion in "horrorscapes . . . serve a deconstructive function, challenging and violating definitional schemes of sensation, experience, and reason," and allow adolescents "to transgress and negotiate themselves in these out-of-the ordinary horrorscapes" (pp. 14-15).

The carnivalesque, Vinz notes, summarizing Bakhtin, "destabilize(s) cultural norms and permit hierarchies and boundaries to dissolve, creating spaces for the unofficial or the antiofficial to mock or subvert the social order" (p. 15). Although Vinz and Bakhtin, I believe, may unintentionally reify the normalcy of the social order, this nevertheless supports my conception of the subterranean, that which while informed by dominant
discourses, is constitutive of independent identities and cultural practices.

Vinz extends her argument to note that adolescents, while transgressing established boundaries with their readings of horror fiction, do not do so because they are “disenchants intent on living an alternative life” (p. 15). This is crucial to understand the subterranean, I believe, because although it is a challenge to normalized, dominant discourses, it’s existence is complex and as I’ve argued cannot be reduced to simple rationalized resistance. Every adolescent action cannot be defined, especially in fluid post-modern constructs, as rebellion or as identification with subaltern groups.

Dinah Ryan (1998) identifies a “recurring cultural effluence” (p. 6) that might explain the current attraction of adolescents to vampires and other “horrorscapes.” She explicates the “current pervasiveness of a Gothic sensibility in art,” commenting that “(i)t is a haunted oppression that has been understood by some analysts as a historical responsiveness, a recurring sensitivity to ghastly specters raised by disturbing social and psychological impulses within civilization” (p. 6). This renewed interest in Gothicism, replete with “dark and suppressive space” and a fascination with the “macabre” (p. 157).
6) draws inspiration, Ryan argues, from the late 18th century literary phenomenon of the Gothic romance. Ryan explains the tripartite value of the Gothic aesthetic to the late 20th century:

First, as a mode of expression . . . it seems capable of endless metamorphosis. Second, though it is postmodern in its cleverness, nihilism, and elusiveness, it has an extended cultural and philosophical history . . . and, therefore, provides a potentially instructive point of view for understanding . . . the break . . . between modernism and postmodernism. Third, as a genre, it provides both lens and laboratory in which certain social, psychological, and spiritual conditions of the late 20th century can be examined, acted out, and critiqued. (pp. 6-7)

Nina Auerbach (1995), in Our Vampires, Ourselves, contends that vampires offer a similar barometer (lens and laboratory) and "blend into the changing cultures they inhabit" (p. 6). Vampires, Auerbach contends, "inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal . . . they can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not" (p. 6).

Gothicism, Ryan believes, is useful because of its "ability to allow us to look at that which we might not prefer to analyze, experience or acknowledge . . . (and) in its ability to provide a safe release for intense feeling, and in the opportunity it provides to goose the powers that
be" (p. 10). The multiple subterranean echoes that I articulate throughout this study serve a similar function I believe. Youth might be attracted to vampires and rap music, for instance, not only for pleasure, but because the complexity of the forms tell us something about our emerging confrontations with post-modernity generally, and information technology specifically. Remember, Stone, Turkle, and Rushkoff remind us that young people are in many ways leading the exploration of the blurring of identities and the lived experiences of multiple subjectivities.

Amy Taubin (1995) notes that there has been a spate of vampire films recently, including major films like Neil Jordan's (1994) adaptation of the Anne Rice novel Interview With the Vampire and Francis Ford Coppola's (1992) Bram Stoker's Dracula, as well as independent films like Nadia and Abel Ferrara's (1995) The Addiction. Repudiating that vampires have suffered through defeatism in the face of such horrors as Reagan and AIDS (Auerbach's contention), Taubin contends that the mainstream films are "Aids-anxiety movies" where "(b)lood functions . . . as the medium for a network of contamination. It means death from without, even as it circulates within living bodies" (p 10). Nadia and The Addiction, however, both black and white films,
deal with blood as an abstraction, a “state of mind rather than body” (p. 11). The Addiction offers the “vampire’s as the only subjectivity” (p. 11, emphasis in original). Whereas mainstream constructions “keep the undead at a safe distance,” Nadia and The Addiction “let us know that vampires are here and they are us” (p. 11).

It seems appropriate to introduce Allucquere Rosanne Stone’s (1995/1996) “thought experiment” now. Drawing inspiration from the Vampire Lestat, the antihero of Rice’s Vampire Chronicles (and not from the film it seems to me), she explains Lestat’s significance to our post-modern era:

Lestat is a liminal creature and - though not to belabor the obvious - a cyborg. Cyborgs are boundary creatures, not only human/machine but creatures of cultural interstice as well; and Lestat inhabits the boundaries between death and life, temporality and eternity, French and English, gay and straight, man and woman, good and evil. He nicely exemplifies a style of cyborg existence, capturing the pain and complexity of attempting to adapt to a society, a lifestyle, a language, a culture, an epistemology, even in Lestat’s case a species, that is not one’s own. Lestat is a vampire for our seasons, struggling with the swiftly changing meanings of what it is to be human or, for that matter, unhuman. (p. 178)

Lestat, Stone contends, is a melancholy vampire, simultaneously fascinated and saddened by the mortality of humans. The blood he needs to survive attracts him, but he cannot fully participate in the “world of sensual experience and sensory adventure” that transitory mortals
are “locked into” (p. 179). Lestat’s perspective, Stone argues, is thus framed within an absolute sense of being “other,” for despite being a being that used to be human, his immortality becomes a translucent screen that perpetually deprives, perpetually excludes.

This is the Lestat that Stone conducts her thought experiment on, “sending him back to the university, to encounter and learn to cope with the modern academic milieu . . . Once there . . . (h)e studied cyborg theory and cultural theory, and he earned a Ph.D. in anthropology” (p. 179). Lestat achieves a different kind of vampire vision — he becomes the “vampire of subjectivity” with a “new vocabulary of vision” (p. 179). No longer seeing humans as merely mortal, Lestat sees the nature of “subject position” and thus “sees subjectivity as possibility” (p. 180, emphasis in original). He sees the “crosscurrents of fiction and physicality, desire and technology, eddy and conflict” (p. 180).

The pre-PhD Lestat had the power to confer the “Dark Gift” — to choose which mortals he would turn into vampires (not everyone killed by a vampire becomes a vampire — it, at least in Rice’s work, requires an exchange of blood offered from the vampire and accepted by the mortal, reversing the typical flow of vampirism). The
anthropologist Lestat also has a Dark Gift to offer:

The new Dark Gift is the passing on of the newly transformed vampire gaze, the visual knowledge which makes the machineries of subjectivity visible and the nuts and bolts that hold the surface of reality together stand out from the background . . . if such vampires, vampires of subjectivity, really do exist, then none of us is safe—safe, that is within our traditionally bounded subject positions, our accustomed places in a rapidly shifting world . . . Ultimately the gaze of the vampire is our own transfigured and transfiguring vision. Claiming that vision is our task and our celebration. (pp. 182-183)

Therein resides the power of subterranean visions achieved through the anti-disciplinarity of cultural studies. It moves us in our perceptions of curriculum to seriously consider multiple identities and the cultures that might be, in Hebdige's (1988) terminology (which roughly corresponds to my vision of the subterranean), "hiding in the light."

Re-enter **Buffy the Vampire Slayer.** Fran Rubel Kuzui's (1992) film has been adapted by writer Joss Whedon for television for the Warner Brothers (WB) network, and it has quickly garnered an impressive following. There are over one hundred web sites devoted to the show (as of September, 1998), run as far as I can tell primarily by adolescents, many with bulletin boards where extensive discussions over the show's content rage. In fact, I subscribed to an internet Buffy newsletter for all of one day, as my online
mailbox maxed out at one hundred messages within twenty-four hours.

Buffy seems to be a typical adolescent year old. But she is also the “chosen one” - the one that arises, as each episode’s introduction notes, each generation to “come forth from the darkness and do battle with the vampires and demons.” Under the tutelage of the school librarian, appropriately known as “the watcher,” Buffy has been summoned to the town of Sunnydale because the Hell Mouth has opened there - a portal for various “evil” entities.

All of this sounds like routine genre horror, but there is I suggest something subterranean occurring, and it perhaps is responsible in some part for the show’s success. For one thing, in spite of her “watcher’s” modernist bend - he constantly consults his “texts” for guidance - Buffy’s actions belie prediction. In fact, her particular brand of “girl power” offers adolescent females one of the few images of a strong female teenage presence on TV.

Buffy also serves to blur boundaries. In any given episode, multiple subject positions might be explored. Students often take over for teachers, doing as adequate if not a better job. Main characters are metamorphosed into werewolves or hyenas. Halloween costumes unwittingly
transform their wearers' into the characters they are portraying.

And even though Buffy stakes plenty of vampires, turning them instantly to dust, she has also been in love with a vampire. In fact, she dates said vampire for some time. A subterranean relationship, hidden from official vampire/slayer duties, existing in the adolescent realm of the night. Buffy, according to writer Whedon,

speaks so plainly to the high-school experience, which is something you just don’t really get over. Everything’s bigger than life. In high school, my internal life was so huge, and so dark and strange and overblown and dramatic, that this show seems kind of realistic . . . we try to talk with teenagers, not to them. (in Dunn, 1998, p. 44).

Curriculum theorists might emulate the stated goal of Buffy – talking (and learning) with students, not to them. Perhaps we should be less jealous and suspicious of those things that adolescents do pay attention to, as I contend in Chapter One, and see their attraction from the gaze of multiple subjectivities, finding not only insight but revelation therein.

Reflections and Future Considerations

Throughout this study I have undertaken the task of treating popular cultures seriously, as an aesthetic terrain that might inform curriculum theorizing and as an expression of the lived experiences of students that
frequently are marginalized and or oblivious to official schooling practices. I have attempted, as Peterson (1998) outlines, “to recognize and integrate our multiple identities” (p. 5). Thus, my multiple roles as teacher, student, scholar, and perhaps most significant, fan, all intersect in the various approaches I have brought to bear on each chapter. I have expressed a similar surprise with the popular cultures I studied as Walkerdine (1997), who while “researching aspects of six-year-old girls’ subjectivity and education” finds herself “enthralled and fascinated” with two comics designed for the young audience of her study (p. 45). Walkerdine goes on to analyze her relationship with not only the texts but the subjects of her study, arguing that

> If we adopt research techniques which place our own subjectivities more centre-stage in the research process perhaps far more may be gained than it is feared will be lost. . . . It is also necessary to examine the possibility that the participants in an event understand, remember and narrate that event differently, bringing into play some of the same kinds of issues as those of different interpretations and emotions on the part of the researchers. (p. 75)

I do hope that my predilections and interests are evident in the forms of analysis I provide - but I simultaneously hope that my interpretations do not preclude those of others.
I have been guided by Peterson’s (1998) assertion that in “recognizing our multiple selves and learning to integrate them, we must sometimes reinvent our methods . . . (and) reinvent our texts” (p. 8). The condition of post-modernity as I articulate it, especially as it intersects with the multiple identities being explored in youth cultures, demands I believe, new modes of re-presentation.

I began this study with familiar turf, trying to re-visit and re-search the course at Shadows-on-the-Teche. In encountering difficulties with not only confronting the ethical dilemmas of qualitative research but also the meanings embedded in post-modern alternatives to extant structures, it was through the use of cultural studies analyses and methods that I found a possible method of inquiry and presentation.

This recognition that innovative museums were actively engaged in the kinds of recombinant textuality that pervades rap music led to further insights and quandaries. In exploring rap, I discovered that post-modernity is not an all encompassing term, and that rap occupies multiple positions and bodies, many of them contradictory to so called emancipatory agendas. I do believe that one crucial factor emerged from my study of rap, however - the willingness to listen to youth cultures in process. It was
my former students, after all, who first introduced me to the medium. One of the most significant insights relates to my role as an academic. What became apparent in listening to and studying the cultures surrounding rap is that many of the debates swirling in academia are already existent and being played out within hip-hop culture. Rap music doesn't need me or any other scholar, for example, to save it from misogyny - it contains internal discursive practices that address such issues.

Returning to some of the themes that emerged from my museum study, namely the necessity of re-thinking memories, time, and histories, led me to the hybrid form of SF rap. I believe, as Appelbaum does, that SF functions isomorphically with curriculum and offers insights that can restructure our future curricular possibilities. Public Enemy's innovative appropriation of cyberpunk strategies illustrate the complexities of post-modern conceptions of time and the power of speculative histories. SF occupies the potentialities (and hazards) of fictional realities as they intersect with fundamental questions of racial and gender identities. The potentially transformative nature of such aesthetic forms was underscored time and again throughout my study.
Juxtaposing Bruce Springsteen and Michel Serres was an experiment in the possibilities of cultural studies bridging the perceived chasm between popular and academic cultures. If we expect our students to become creators of their own theories, then it might prove useful to carefully examine the cultural expressions that they attend to in attempts to discern possible insights into the perplexities of post-modernity. No artist is closer to my heart than Bruce Springsteen. And no thinker embodies the spirit of cultural studies more, I believe, than Serres.

Finally, my own renewed fascination with vampires (and to a lesser extend, Gothicism) served to anchor this study within shifting frameworks of multiple identities and cyborgian possibilities. The fact that other scholars recognize the power of vampire lore, and the fact that vampires seem to occupy an increasingly conspicuous place in the terrain of popular cultures, reinforced my forays into such avenues of cultural criticism.

The spirit of this study is to attempt to find possibilities for sites of curriculum theorizing. There are other sites that I need to study now. It is important to "take alternative readings seriously with regard to the nature of what does or should take place in schools" (Farber, Provenzo, & Holm, 1994), and such readings can be
gleaned from popular cultures. But as Holm (1997) points out, other generative, and often surprising readings can be garnered from actively engaging youth in discussions about popular cultures. It might be the only way to appreciate the "realities" of multiple subject positions. Thus, I hope to move beyond the scope of my current analysis, and take to the field, engaging in various forms of qualitative analysis to further explicate the possibilities of popular cultures.

I also intend to further study the changing role of youth. Jenkins (1997) argues persuasively that childhood "in the digital age" needs to be reevaluated in light of emerging technologies and possibilities. But Stone's (1997) warnings about the potential to valorize such technologies is equally essential to bear in mind. What new conceptions of youth are emerging? What are the possibilities? And what are the limitations?

I think it is essential for curriculum theorists to investigate the ways in which popular cultures might be integrated into classroom practices. As Fischer (1998) states, "Beginning with everyday materials and means of communication with which learners are to some degree expert provides a good jumping off point for confident analysis and criticism" (p. 24).
voyeuristic or stripping youth of cultural privilege remains a challenge.

Finally, Pinar (1998) notes that "new hybridities" (p. ix) are emerging in curriculum scholarship. He views cultural studies as a possible trend, with the potential to "create new identities for us, including how we regard ourselves as scholars and teacher" (p. xiv). I agree that cultural studies might, in its treacherous navigation against the maelstrom of academic disciplines, be just noisy enough to alter our identities as well as the field of curriculum generally.

But this noisy navigation is of course problematical. Walcott (1997), for example, warns against the romanticization of youth cultures that seems to draw strength from nostalgia for youth movements in the 1960s. Such nostalgia implicitly or explicitly establishes the "political significance of youth cultures as counter-narratives to dominant orders of knowing" (p. 37). One must acknowledge, Walcott argues, that "aspects of youth popular culture are not necessarily always counter-hegemonic" (p. 37). He concludes, and I agree, that "tough critical questions need to accompany the celebrations" of youth cultures, and that the "very category 'youth' needs to be explored, since it is not a transparent term" (p. 170).
If we replace curriculum studies with cultural studies in attempts to be transformative, where are the analyses, as Walcott identifies them, of "the cultural politics of conservative and religious fundamentalist youth who organize for the anti-abortion movement and against affirmative action, equity, and access, campaign for conservative political parties, and are members of the Third Millennium" (p. 38)? Even within the forms that I examine – museums, rap/popular music, and vampire texts – contradictory themes are present that diminish the potential for a transformative reorientation of curriculum studies.

Cultural studies itself must also be questioned, especially if, as I contend, it ought to supplant curriculum studies. Ayers and Quinn (1998) warn that if cultural studies is "an antidote to what has become weak and ineffective, its proponents ought to look again at the history of resistance and rebellion, as well as the strategies of containment and control" (p. 48). In celebrating its anti-disciplinariness, how can we be assured that the very disciplines cultural studies purports to transgress are not reinforced and further entrenched? How do we stop cultural studies from becoming "codified and static" (Ayers & Quinn, p. 48) and functioning in the
intellectually stifling manners that cultural studies scholars contend dominate extant disciplines? In moving across boundaries do we not acknowledge, or more disturbingly, depend upon, the existence of said boundaries? There is nothing inherent within cultural studies that prevents it from becoming "overly academized self-referencing goop that . . . fails to create or even find the public domain" (p. 48). In attempting to elude modernist meta-narratives, how can we avoid constructing new ones?

Listening for subterranean echoes via the generation of complicated conversations perhaps might continue the quest for new modes of curriculum inquiry. Curriculum theorizing, reconceived as cultural studies, might then emerge with new paths, and new vitality.
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Vita

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Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Title of Dissertation: Subterranean Echoes: Curriculum Theory as Cultural Studies

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

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