Cultural Studies as Performative Politics

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This article addresses the role public intellectuals and cultural workers might play in challenging the pervasive institutional and ideological influence of neoliberalism as it continues to attack all public spaces and social services not governed by the logic of the market. The author takes up this challenge by articulating a relationship between the political and pedagogical that is central to any notion of cultural politics. In doing so, he attempts to foreground how the diverse forms of critical pedagogy and cultural studies can engage in progressive cultural politics through the interrelated registers of insurgent citizenship, a performative critical pedagogy, and a contextualized notion of political agency. The interconnected concepts of discourse, context, power, and theory are used to critique notions of textuality that refuse to link the symbolic to material relations of power and to engage the limits of dystopian performative work that fails in spite of its appeal to the transgressive to address urgent social issues. The author concludes by pointing to a number of cultural activists whose work embodies a radical intersection of the performative and the political.

> Intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing, whether that is talking, writing, teaching, appearing on television. And that vocation is important to the extent that it is publicly recognizable and involves both commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability. . . . It is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo. . . . [Intellectuals] cannot be mistaken for an anonymous functionary or careful bureaucrat.
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> —Edward Said (1994, pp. xvii, 12-13)

As neoliberalism spreads its ideology, power, and influence over all aspects of society, there is a growing dislike for all things social, public, and collective. As the obligations of citizenship are narrowly defined through the imperatives of consumption and the dynamics of the marketplace, commercial space replaces noncommodified public spheres and the first casualty is a language of social and political responsibility capable of defending those vital institutions and public spaces that expand the rights and services central to a meaningful democracy. This is especially true with respect to the current debate over the radical implications of cultural politics, the role of academics and cultural workers as oppositional public intellectuals, and the centrality of cultural peda-

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gogy as a moral and political practice. Against the onslaught of neoliberalism, artists and educators have been caught in an ideological crossfire regarding the civic and political responsibilities they assume through their roles as engaged critics and cultural theorists. I want to respond to this debate by addressing the issue of what role cultural workers might play as oppositional public intellectuals who refuse to define themselves either through the language of the market or through a discourse that abstracts cultural politics from the realm of the aesthetic or the sphere of the social. This appropriation of cultural workers as oppositional public intellectuals suggests a critical analysis of the relationship between the political and the pedagogical and a redefinition of artists, educators, and other cultural workers as border crossers and intellectuals who engage in intertextual negotiations across different sites of cultural production.[1] The idea of border crossing foregrounds the historical specificity and relational nature of different modes of address, the shifting nature of borders, and the demands they pose in naming and articulating the problems involved in considerations of agency, identity formation, politics, and the struggle over resources and relations of power. The notion of border crossing also draws attention to the kinds of cultural work that increasingly takes place in the borderspace between "high" and popular culture, between the institution and the street, and between the private and the public. Intellectual work in this instance becomes both theoretical and performative; that is, it is marked by forms of invention, specificity, persuasion, and critique as well as an ongoing recognition of the border as partial, fluid, and open to the incessant tensions and contradictions that inform the artist/educator's own location, ideology, and authority in relation to particular communities and forms of social engagement. At the same time, space and place do not disappear as markers of memory, history, and lived experience; they become more porous and unstable, but still bear the weight of history and the legacies of struggles yet to be fulfilled. At stake here is the call not merely to link art, pedagogy, and other forms of cultural work to practices that are transgressive and oppositional, but also to articulate a wider project that connects artists, educators, and other cultural workers to an insurgent cultural politics that challenges the growing incursions of corporate power while simultaneously developing a vibrant democratic public culture and society.

The problem that I want to foreground is how the diverse registers of critical pedagogy and cultural studies might be engaged to redefine cultural work as acts of insurgent citizenship that help keep alive, as the poet Robert Haas puts it, "the idea of justice, which is going dead in us all the time" (Pollock, 1997, p. 22). In what follows, I try to engage two critical traditions within the fields of cultural studies and critical pedagogy that offer the opportunity to retheorize the role that engaged artists and other cultural workers might play in keeping justice and ethical considerations alive in progressive discourses and in revitalizing a broader set of political, pedagogical, and social considerations within radical cultural politics.

Although critical educators and cultural studies scholars have traditionally occupied separate spaces and addressed different audiences, the pedagogical and political nature of their work appears to converge around a number of points. At the risk of overgeneralizing, cultural studies theorists and critical educators engage in forms of cultural work that locate politics in the interplay among symbolic representations, everyday life, and material relations of power; both engage cultural politics as "the site of the production and struggle over power" (Grossberg, 1994, p. 248) and learning as the outcome of diverse struggles rather than as a passive reception of information. In addition, both traditions have emphasized what I call a *performative pedagogy*, reflected in what such theorists as Grossberg (1996) call "the act of doing," the importance of understanding theory as the grounded basis for "intervening into contexts and power . . . in order to enable people to act more strategically in ways that may change their context for the better" (p. 143). Moreover, theorists working in both fields have argued for the primacy of the political in their diverse attempts to produce critical public spaces, regardless of how fleeting they may be, in which "popular cultural resistance is explored as a form of political resistance" (Bailey & Hall, 1992, p. 19). Yet although both groups share certain pedagogical and ideological practices, they rarely speak to each other because of the disciplinary barriers and institutional borders that atomize, insulate, and prevent diverse cultural workers from collaborating across such boundaries.

The Search for a Project and the Politics of Hope

This topic suggests the need to develop elements of a project that might enable cultural studies theorists and educators to form alliances around pedagogical practices that are not only interdisciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional, but also connected to a broader notion of cultural politics designed to further a multiracial, economic, and political democracy.[2] Within such a project, theory is connected to social change, textual analysis to practical politics, and academic inquiry to public spheres that bear the "texture of social oppression and the harm that it does" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 42).

The meaning and primacy of the notion of the project I mention is drawn from a long tradition of political work that extends from Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall to, more recently, Chantal Mouffe, Nancy Fraser, Lawrence Grossberg, and Stanley Aronowitz, and refers to strategies of understanding, engagement, and transformation that address the most demanding social problems of our time. Such projects are utopian in that they reject the currently fashionable, neoliberal notion that with the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe, capitalism no longer has any opposition and can do anything, or that capitalism is synonymous with democracy itself. But there is more at stake than simply a form of utopianism that is compensatory, that offers up only the

great refusal. On the contrary, a concrete utopianism consists of criticizing the existing order of things and using the terrain of culture and education to actually intervene in the world, to struggle to change the current configurations of power and the allocation of resources in society. Utopianism, in this sense, is both anticipatory and provisional. It refuses to be messianic, but because it cannot predict any final outcome, it does not embrace a politics of despair or cynicism. Rather, as a form of educated hope, it provides the grounds for thinking critically and acting responsibly—pushing against the grain to undermine and transform structures of power and oppression. Similarly, there is nothing abstract about a critically informed utopian project, because it recognizes that progressive educational and political work has to begin at those intersections where people actually live their lives. Such a project uses theory to understand such contexts as lived relations of power while pedagogically fashioning new and imagined possibilities through art and other cultural practices to bear witness to the ethical and political dilemmas that animate the specificity of such contexts and their connection to the larger social landscape. Implicit in this notion of the project is the public and imaginative nature of art as a form of cultural politics and the importance of culture and public pedagogy as a struggle over meaning, identity, and relations of power—a struggle that is essential to addressing those practices and forms of domination that have resulted in a massive increase in social and economic inequality, a marked resurgence in violence against minorities of color and sexual orientation, a renewed attack on the global environment, and a full-fledged assault on those nonmarket, noncommodified, democratic spaces that provide what McChesney (1999) believes are the "public forums necessary for meaningful participation in decision making" (p. 9).

Within the parameters of such a project, I want to address how cultural studies and critical pedagogy advocates might find common ground in a radical project and practice informed by theoretically rigorous discourses that affirm the critical but refuse the cynical, that confirm hope as central to a critical pedagogical and political practice but eschew a romantic utopianism. Fundamental to such a project is a notion of the performative that expands the political possibilities of the pedagogical by highlighting how education as a critical practice might be used to engage the tension between existing social practices produced in a wide range of shifting and overlapping sites of learning and the moral imperatives of a radical democratic imaginary.

Performing Public Pedagogy as Engaged Social Citizenship

Pedagogy, in this context, becomes public and performative. As a public performance, it opens a space for disputing conventional academic borders and raising questions "beyond the institutional boundaries of the disciplinary orga-

nization of question and answers" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 145). Defined through its performative functions, public pedagogy is marked by its attentiveness to the interconnections and struggles that take place over knowledge, language, spatial relations, and history. Public pedagogy represents a moral and political practice rather than merely a technical procedure. At stake here is the call not only to link public pedagogy to practices that are interdisciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional, but also to connect such practices to broader projects designed to further racial, economic, and political democracy; to strike a new balance and expand what Hall and Held (1990) have called the "individual and social dimensions of citizenship rights" (p. 179).

The performative nature of the pedagogical recognizes the partial breakdown, renegotiation, and reposition of boundaries as fundamental to understanding how pluralization is linked to the shifting nature of knowledge, identities, and the process of globalization. In this context, the performative and pedagogical acknowledge the rise of new spaces and social visions regarding what it means to live in a world that has been radically altered by global capitalism, transnational corporations, and new electronic technologies. Yet linking the performative and pedagogical also suggests that cultural workers address critically how new modes of symbolic meaning and social practice necessitate a transformation in how we think about the relationship among knowledge, power, and political agency. Such efforts must then be factored into the broader ethical and political project of expanding and deepening the process of social citizenship to recognize and transform the conditions of oppression and widespread despair that undermine, if not close down, the promise of a resurgent and radical democracy. Undertaking such a challenge means making pedagogy central to any notion of cultural politics while expanding the public nature of pedagogy to include how knowledge, values, identities, and social practices are produced and disseminated across a wide range of cultural sites and social locations.

In this instance, public pedagogy functions as a form of socially engaged citizenship. That is, it articulates knowledge to effects and learning to social change to create the conditions that encourage and enable people to participate individually and collectively in administering the basic institutions that shape their lives and exercise control in wielding power over organizations as diverse as the government, workplace, media culture, and school. Crucial to any viable notion of public pedagogy as social citizenship is the project of developing social movements that can challenge the subordination of social needs to the dictates of the "free" market in every sphere of society and offer alternative models of radical democratic culture rooted in social relations that take seriously the democratic ideals of freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As Fraser and Gordon (1998) point out, social citizenship combines traditional notions of individual rights, equal respect, and public participation in public life with the "entitlement to social provision—the guarantee of a decent standard of living." Within this notion of citizenship, individuals and groups are

provided "with institutions and services designed for all citizens, the use of which constitutes the practice of social citizenship: for example, public schools, public parks, universal health insurance, public health services" (pp. 113-114). In its more substantive forms, citizenship provides the conditions for public participation and engagement within a vastly changing set of historical circumstances.[3] Yet making the pedagogical more political also suggests rethinking the nature of the performative as an exclusively textual gesture, particularly if the notion of the performative is to provide an expanded notion of pedagogical work and social agency.

Beyond the Politics of Performance as Textuality

A performative practice, in its more orthodox register, focuses largely on events as cultural texts and how they are to be "presented," "licensed," or "made excessive" (Frith, 1996, p. 204). A growing tendency is appearing within cultural studies (especially as it becomes more popular in North America) of privileging text over context, language over material relations of power, and discursive relations outside of the frameworks "within which their broader political significance can be established" (Kester, 1999, p. 25). The exclusive emphasis on texts, however, runs the risk of reproducing processes of reification and isolation, as when the performative is framed outside of the context of history, power, and politics. In this instance, texts become trapped within a formalism that often succumbs to viewing such issues as one's commitment to the Other: the ethical duty to decide between what is better and what is worse, and, by extension, human rights as either meaningless, irrelevant, or leftovers from a bygone age.[4] The philosopher Lewis Gordon argues rightly that in its most reductive moment, performativity as a pedagogical practice often falls prey to a one-sided focus on politics as rhetoric, in which the political dimension of such practice "is rendered invisible by virtue of being regarded as purely performative. . . . What one performs is rendered immaterial. Whatever 'is' is simply a performance" (James, 1997, p. 175). Progressive cultural studies theorists recognize that the complex terms of cultural engagement are produced performatively, but they temper Gordon's insight by arguing that the issue is still open regarding how the performative can have some purchase in social action or help produce new forms of identity and politics while simultaneously developing a political and ethical vocabulary for creating the conditions of possibility for a politics and pedagogy of economic, social, and racial justice.

The political and ethical character of the performative are enhanced when politics is not seen as merely symbolic but is inserted into societal contexts and linked to collective struggles over knowledge, resources, and power. In part, such struggles suggest making the pedagogical more political by creating social relations and modes of social agency that enable cultural workers, especially

academics, to work collectively with others within and across a variety of contexts and spheres. Such a task becomes all the more urgent as the bridges between private and public life are dismantled and freedom finds few opportunities for translating private worries into public concerns or individual discontent into collective struggle. As democratic values give way to commercial values, intellectual effort is often reduced to an instrument of the entrepreneurial self, and social visions are dismissed as hopelessly out of date. Public space is portrayed exclusively as an investment opportunity, and the public good increasingly becomes a metaphor for public disorder. As the public sphere is hollowed out, social considerations and notions of the public good are replaced by an utterly privatized model of citizenship and the good life. And increasingly, collapsing intellectual ambitions are matched by a growing disdain toward matters of equality, justice, and politics, and toward how such issues might be addressed critically by educators, artists, and others.

One consequence of the demise of intellectual ambitions and social visions, as the eminent sociologist Bauman (1999) points out, is a politics that "lauds conformity and promotes conformity" (p. 4). In an age that declares that ideology and history have reached their ultimate liberal democratic expression, politics increasingly means that academics and others no longer need to bother themselves with "any coherent vision of the good society [or] of having traded off the worry about the public good for the freedom to pursue private satisfaction" (p. 8). If Bauman is right, we are quickly moving toward a period in American history in which society has stopped questioning itself—and in doing so not only ignores its most pressing social problems but produces a politics that offers nothing but more of the same. This becomes all the more clear, especially as public and higher education are increasingly commercialized and vocationalized to become a source of profits for corporate interests. Against these forces, it is crucial that cultural workers within and outside higher education not only reclaim education as a public good but recognize that academic labor is a social endeavor and that theoretical work is not an end in itself, but becomes meaningful when we use it to find ways to connect private troubles and public concerns, extending its critical, performative, and utopian impulses to address urgent social issues in the interest of promoting social change. As a performative act, cultural studies involves using theory as a resource to think and act, learning how to situate texts within historical and institutional contexts, and creating the conditions for collective struggles over resources and power. At the very least, such a gesture not only affirms the social function of oppositional cultural work (especially within the university) but offers opportunities to mobilize instances of collective outrage, if not collective action, against glaring material inequities and the growing belief that today's culture of investment and finance makes it impossible to address major social problems such as inadequate health care, education, and housing on one hand, and the growing inequality of wealth, generational entitlements, and the racial apartheid characteristic of inner cities on the other hand (Karin, 1998, pp. 78-79).

I would like to address the possibilities of a politically progressive notion of the performative and its relevance for highlighting the mutually determining role of theory and practice and the related project of making the political more pedagogical. This is especially important as pedagogy becomes more central to shaping the political project(s) that inform the work of educators, artists, and cultural workers in a variety of sites, especially within a present marked by the rise of right-wing politics, a resurgent racism, a full-fledged attack on the public funding for the arts, and punitive attacks on the poor, urban youth, and people of color. The invocation of a wider political context suggests that the intersection of cultural studies and critical pedagogy be analyzed more critically, in light of recent interventions by a growing number of progressives and conservatives who attempt to either erase the relationship between power and politics as part of a return to a hermetic view of teaching and the text, or have narrowly defined politics within a dichotomy that pits the alleged "concrete" material issues of class and labor against a fragmenting and marginalizing identity politics on one hand, and a range of diverse, ineffective, side-show battles over culture on the other. Unfortunately, this model not only fails to recognize how issues of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class are intertwined—it also refuses to acknowledge the pedagogical function of culture as the site where identities are constructed, desires mobilized, and moral values shaped. Ellen Willis (1998) rightly argues that if people "are not ready to defend their right to freedom and equality in their personal relations, they will not fight consistently for their economic interests, either" (p. 19). As I have argued in more detail elsewhere, this totalizing model of class functions largely to cancel out how culture as a terrain of contestation shapes our sense of political agency, mediates the relations between material-based protest and structures of power, and provides the resources to negotiate the contexts of daily struggles.[5]

Education as a Performative Practice

Progressives willing to engage the pedagogical as a performative practice that connects and affirms the most important theoretical and strategic aspects of work in cultural studies and critical pedagogy might begin with Raymond Williams's (1989) insight that the "deepest impulse (informing cultural politics) is the desire to make learning part of the process of social change itself" (p. 158). For Williams (1967), a cultural pedagogy signals a form of permanent education that acknowledges "the educational force of our whole social and cultural experience . . . [as an apparatus of institutions and relationships that] actively and profoundly teaches" (p. 15). This suggests that educators and others need to rethink the ways in which culture is related to power, and how and where it functions symbolically and institutionally as an educational, political, and economic force. Culture is the ground of contestation and accommodation and is the site where young people and others imagine their relationship to the

world; it produces the narratives, metaphors, and images for constructing and exercising a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others. Although it has become a matter of common sense for progressive critics to challenge those liberal and conservative traditions that attempt to purify culture and cultural questions by rendering them essentially apolitical or untainted by politics, many critics have failed to take seriously Gramsci's (1971) insight that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (p. 350)—with its implication that education as a cultural pedagogical practice takes place across multiple sites as it signals how, within diverse contexts, education makes us subjects of and subject to relations of power. Nor have they recognized the significance of Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's insistence that questions about culture cannot be abstracted from questions regarding economics and politics or be dismissed as merely superstructural.[6] As a performative practice, the pedagogical opens up a narrative space that affirms the contextual and the specific while simultaneously recognizing the ways in which such spaces are shot through with issues of power. Referencing the ethical and political is central to a performative/pedagogical practice that refuses closure, insists on combining theoretical rigor and social relevance, and embraces commitment as a point of temporary attachment that allows educators and cultural critics to take a position without becoming dogmatic and rigid. The pedagogical as performative also draws on recent cultural studies work in which related debates on pedagogy can be understood and addressed within the broader context of social responsibility, civic courage, and the reconstruction of democratic public life. Cary Nelson's (1996) insight that cultural studies exhibits a deep concern for "how objects, discourses, and practices construct possibilities for and constraints on citizenship" (p. 7) provides one important starting point for designating and supporting a project that brings together various educators, academics, and cultural workers within and outside of the academy.

Central to this concern for social citizenship as an act of critique and resistance is a view of radical pedagogy that locates itself on the dividing lines where the relations between domination and oppression, power and powerlessness, continue to be produced and reproduced. For many cultural workers and educators, this means listening to and working with the poor and other subordinate groups so that they might speak and act to alter oppressive relations of power. But professionalist relegitimation in a troubled time seems to be the order of the day, as an increasing number of academics refuse to recognize the university as a critical public sphere and offer little or no resistance to the ongoing vocationalization of the university, the continuing evisceration of the intellectual labor force, and the current assaults on the poor, the elderly, children, people of color, and working people in this country.[7]

In opposition to such pessimism, educators and other cultural workers can join with a number of cultural studies theorists in raising questions about how culture is related to power—why and how it operates in institutional and tex-

tual terms—within and through a politics of representation. Yet a performative pedagogy does more than textualize everyday life and reveal dominant machineries of power—it is also, as Grossberg (1997) points out, "about remaking the context where context is always understood as a structure of power" (p. 261). Pedagogical work, in this sense, informs and extends cultural studies' long-standing concern with mobilizing knowledge and desires that may lead to significant changes in minimizing the degree of oppression in people's lives. My call to make the pedagogical a defining feature of cultural studies is meant to accentuate the performative as a transitive act, a work in progress informed by a cultural politics that translates knowledge back into practice, places theory in the political space of the performative, and invigorates the pedagogical as a practice through which collective struggles can be waged to revive and maintain the fabric of democratic institutions. Such a call to reform also suggests redefining the role of academics as oppositional public intellectuals to reaffirm the necessity for them to focus on the pedagogical and political dimensions of culture and interrogate cultural texts as public discourses. This suggests expanding the tools of ideology critique to include a range of sites in which the production of knowledge and identities take place (including, but not limited to, television, Hollywood films, video games, newspapers, fanzines, popular magazines, and Internet sites). Yet once again, it is important to stress that progressive educators and cultural workers must go beyond the primacy of signification over power and focus on how these cultural texts work within the material and institutional contexts that structure everyday life.

Public Intellectuals and the Politics of the Performative

Envisioning the pedagogical as a performative practice also points to the necessity of rethinking the role that educators and cultural studies scholars might take up as oppositional public intellectuals. Rather then reducing the notion of the public intellectual to an academic fashion plate ready for instant consumption by *The New York Times* and *Lingua Franca*, a number of critical theorists have reconstituted themselves within the ambivalencies and contradictions of their own distinct personal histories while simultaneously recognizing and presenting themselves through their role as social critics. By connecting the biographical, pedagogical, and performative, artists such as Suzanne Lacy, Coco Fusco, Luis Alfaro, Mierle Ukeles, Peggy Diggs, and Guillermo Gomez-Pena rearticulate the relationship between the personal and the political without collapsing one into the other.[8] As public intellectuals, these cultural workers not only refuse to support the academic professionalization of social criticism, they also take seriously their role as critical educators and the potentially oppositional space of all pedagogical sites, including (but not restricted to) the academy.[9] Such artists do not respond to the degradation of civic life by apologizing for the incivility of social criticism, nor do they capitalize on the

crisis of social life by promoting themselves on talk radio and television news circuits. On the contrary, many performance artists take seriously Pierre Bourdieu's (1999) admonition that "there is no genuine democracy without genuine opposing critical powers" (p. 8) and do everything they can to make their voices heard in those public spaces still available for meaningful dissent, social criticism, and political theater. In doing so, many performance artists provide new tools for understanding how culture functions as a pedagogical and political force at the community level, working to bridge relations between different audiences, theories, and forms of culture.

Performance artists like Suzanne Lacy have worked relentlessly during the past three decades to dissolve the differences between artists and participants, aesthetic artifice and social process, demonstrating that art should be a force for information, dialogue, and social change. Her ongoing public work on rape, women's rights, immigration, racism, aging, domestic violence, and urban youth has been used to mobilize various audiences and agencies about the role that public services can play in servicing the needs of diverse communities, especially those that are marginalized and oppressed.[10] Her efforts on *Three Weeks in May* in 1977 focused on rape and violence against women and brought together a number of organizations, media outlets, and groups to raise consciousness and implement policies to protect women from male violence. In 1993, she installed a public work titled *Underground*, in which she placed a railroad track across the lawn of Pittsburgh's Point State Park. Three wrecked cars were placed on the tracks and were painted with statistics about domestic violence and words from its victims. A phone booth and open telephone line were made available for women to talk to volunteers from various legal and medical services. The installation served as a public space that assisted victims of family violence and educated a larger public about its presence and consequences. It also served to link such victims and the public with a broad network of social agencies. Lacy's most recent work, especially *Code 33*, continues to combine art and social activism through a form of public pedagogy that provides a civic space and form of public outreach to subordinated groups. In this case, Lacy brings together urban youth and the police in Oakland, California to engage in a public dialogue about police brutality, urban youth violence, and what can be done to address such issues. Educators, academics, and other cultural workers have much to learn from artists like Lacy. George Lipsitz (1997) reinforces this point in arguing that academics have much to learn from

> artists who are facing up to the things that are killing them and their communities. Important social theory is being generated by cultural creators. Engaged in the hard work of fashioning cultural and political coalitions based on cultural affinities and shared suffering, they have been forced to think clearly about cultural production in contemporary society. (p. 252)

Of course, few of these artists and cultural workers define themselves self-consciously as oppositional public intellectuals. Yet what is so remarkable

about their work is the way in which they render the political visible through pedagogical practices that attempt to make a difference in the world rather than simply reflect it. The pedagogical as performative offers cultural workers within and outside education the opportunity to grapple with new questions and, as Phelan (1993) puts it, ways of "mis/understanding" how demanding social issues are "framed/acknowledged/and erased" within dominant and resistant ideologies. The pedagogical as performative in this work does not merely provide a set of representations/texts that imparts knowledge to others—it also becomes a form of cultural production in which one's own identity is constantly being rewritten, but always with an attentiveness to how culture functions as both a site of production and a site of contestation over power. In this instance, cultural politics and the authority to which it makes a claim are always rendered suspect and provisional—not to elude the burden of judgment, meaning, or commitment, but to enable teachers and students alike to address what Stuart Hall (1992) calls "the central, urgent, and disturbing questions of a society and a culture in the most rigorous intellectual way . . . available" (p. 11).

Refusing to reduce politics to the discursive or representational, performative strategies can work to reclaim the political as a pedagogical intervention that links cultural texts to the institutional contexts in which they are read and the material grounding of power to the historical conditions that give meaning to the places people actually inhabit in their attempts to live out the futures they desire. Within this notion of pedagogical practice, the performative becomes a site of memory work, a location and critical enactment of the stories we tell in assuming our roles as oppositional public intellectuals willing to make visible and challenge the grotesque inequalities and intolerable oppression of the present moment.

A cultural politics that makes the performative pedagogical engages ideas of how power operates within and across particular cultural spheres to make some representations, images, and symbols under certain political conditions more valuable as representations of reality than others. At issue here is the attempt to develop a theory of articulation in which the meanings produced within texts are understood in terms of how they resonate with public discourses within other cultural sites and locations. There is an important distinction here between the attempt to simply read a text and make claims for it and to read it in light of a whole assemblage of social relations to understand how some meanings resonate as ideologies by being able to define the terms of reality with a greater power than other meanings. In this instance, texts and events cannot be analyzed in isolation from their place within the material contexts of everyday life. In this instance, texts become objects of pedagogical inquiry and pedagogical events through which educators and others might analyze the mechanisms that inform how a politics of representation operates within dominant regimes of meaning to produce and legitimate knowledge about gender, youth, race, sexuality, work, public intellectuals, pedagogy, and other issues. Making

the political more pedagogical means raising questions about how domination and resistance actually operate, are lived out and mobilized, and deploy power and are themselves the expression of power.

Can Education Be Political?

In times of increased domination of public and higher education, it becomes important, as Lipsitz (2000) reminds us, that academics—as well as artists and other cultural workers—not become isolated "in their own abstract desires for social change and actual social movements. [They need to recognize that] taking a position is not the same as waging a war of position; changing your mind is not the same as changing society" (p. 81). Resistance must become part of a public pedagogy that works to position rigorous theoretical work and public bodies against corporate power, connect classrooms to the challenges faced by social movements in the streets, and provide spaces within classrooms for personal injury and private terrors to be translated into public considerations and struggles. For some educators, this represents a violation of academic neutrality, a politicizing of the educational process, or a contamination of the virtues of academic civility and the principles of high culture. But the issue is not whether public or higher education has become contaminated with politics—more important, it is about recognizing that education is already a space of politics, power, and authority. The crucial issue is how to appropriate, invent, direct, and control the multiple layers of power and politics that constitute the institutional formation of education and the pedagogies that are often an outcome of deliberate struggles to put into place particular notions of knowledge, values, and identity. As committed educators, we cannot eliminate politics; however, we can work against a politics of certainty, a pedagogy of terrorism, and institutional formations that close down rather than open up democratic relations. This requires, in part, that we work diligently to construct a politics without guarantees—one that perpetually questions itself and all those forms of knowledge, values, and practices that appear beyond the process of interrogation, debate, and deliberation. Against a pedagogy and politics of certainty, it is crucial for educators to develop pedagogical practices that problematize considerations of institutional location, mechanisms of transmission, and effects as well as make room for ongoing student critiques of how teacher authority functions by analyzing the ideological baggage and subjective investments that teachers bring with them to the classroom experience.

When viewed as a moral and political practice, pedagogy, as I have stressed repeatedly, becomes a site of struggle and the outcome of struggles informed by social relations that always presuppose some vision of the future, some notion of what it means to be a citizen participating in public life. Yet pedagogy and other cultural practices whose aim is to inform and empower are often dismissed as being either doctrinaire or impositional.[11] Unfortunately, the conser-

vative and liberal dismissal of appropriating the pedagogical as political often fails to make a distinction between what I have previously called in *Impure Acts* (Giroux, 2000) a political education and that which is a politicizing education. Political education means recognizing that education is political because it is directive and addresses itself to the unfinished nature of what it means to be human, to intervene in the world because human agency is conditioned and not determined. It also suggests recognizing that schools and other cultural sites cannot abstract themselves from the sociocultural and economic conditions of their students, families, and communities.[12] Political education also means teaching students to take risks, ask questions, challenge those with power, honor critical traditions, and be reflexive about how authority is used in the classroom and other pedagogical sites. A political education provides the opportunity for students not merely to express themselves critically but to alter the structure of participation and the horizon of debate through which their identities, values, and desires are shaped. A political education constructs pedagogical conditions to enable students to understand how power works on them, through them, and for them in the service of constructing and expanding their roles as critical citizens. Central to such a discourse is the recognition that citizenship is not an outcome of technical efficiency but is instead a result of pedagogical struggles that link knowing, imagination, and resistance that, as bell hooks (1991) has put it, disrupt "conventional ways of thinking about the imagination and imaginative work, offering fictions that demand careful scrutiny, that resists passive readership" (p. 56).

A politicizing education refuses to address its own political agenda and often silences through an appeal to a specious methodology, objectivity, or notion of balance or through an appeal to professionalism. Politicizing education polices the boundaries of the disciplines, often refuses to name or problematize its own cultural authority, and generally ignores the broader political, economic, and social forces that legitimate pedagogical practices consistent with existing forms of institutional power. Politicizing education appears indifferent to opening up the questions about the intersection of knowledge, power, ideology, and struggle that are fundamental to the teaching/learning process. In politicizing education, the language of objectivity, methodology, or the rigors of institutional process often ignores the systems of inclusion and exclusion at work in pedagogical spaces; similarly, the appeal to method and rigor too often undercuts any critical attempts to interrogate the normative basis of teaching and the political responsibility of educators, including issues regarding how they might help students identify, engage, and transform relations of power that generate the material conditions of racism, sexism, poverty, and other oppressive conditions (Graff, 1992). Ignored in politicizing education is the crucial issue of how pedagogy puts into place and legitimates certain forms of identification and subject positions: student as consumer, worker, citizen, and so forth. Politicizing education also rarely addresses how pedagogy might function to close down opportunities for students to critically engage the condi-

tions under which knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimated, and how particular pedagogical practices work to shape particular narratives about the past, present, and future—thus forfeiting any claim to neutrality. Lacking a political project, the role of the public school and university intellectuals is reduced to that of a technician engaged in formalistic rituals or professional boosterism, largely unconcerned with the disturbing and urgent problems that confront the wider society. At the same time, critical pedagogy as a theory and practice should not legitimate a romanticized notion of the cultural worker who can only function on the margins of society; nor should it legitimate notions of teaching wedded to an infatuation with method, formalism, and technique.

Conclusion

I would like to argue that public pedagogy as a critical and performative practice be considered a defining principle among all cultural workers—journalists, performance artists, lawyers, academics, representatives of the media, social workers, teachers, and others—who work in popular culture, composition, literary studies, architecture, and related fields. In part, this suggests the necessity for academics and other cultural workers to develop dynamic, vibrant, politically engaged, and socially relevant projects in which the traditional binarisms of margin/center, unity/difference, local/national, and public/private can be reconstituted through more complex representations of identification, belonging, and community. Gilroy (1994) has suggested that progressive cultural workers need a discourse of ruptures, shifts, flows, and unsettlement, one that functions not only as a politics of transgression but also as part of a concerted effort to construct a broader vision of political commitment and democratic struggle. This implies a fundamental redefinition of the meaning of educators and cultural studies workers as oppositional public intellectuals. Central to such an appropriation of our roles as oppositional public intellectuals is the task of defining ourselves not as marginal, avant-garde figures, professionals, or academics acting alone but as critical citizens whose collective knowledge and actions presuppose specific visions of public life, community, and moral accountability.

Decisive to this project is a conception of the political that is open yet committed, respects specificity and place without erasing global considerations, and provides new spaces and opportunities for collaborative work engaged in productive social change. Such a project can begin to enable educators and other cultural studies scholars to rethink how pedagogy as a performative practice can be expressed by, as Lacy (1995) deems it, an "integrative critical language through which values, ethics, and social responsibility" (pp. 20, 43) are fundamental to creating shared critical public spaces that engage, translate, and transform the most vexing social problems we now face nationally and

internationally. Given the current corporate and right-wing assaults on public and higher education coupled with the emergence of a moral and political climate that has shifted toward a new social Darwinism, it is crucial for educators, artists, and other cultural workers to begin to find ways to join together to defend and reconstruct those cultural sites and public spheres that are essential to reformulate the relationship between cultural studies and critical pedagogy not as a new academic fad, but as a broader effort to revitalize democratic public life.[13]

For many educators and others, the future appears to be a repeat of the present, a period not unlike what Gil Scott-Herron once called "winter in America." The time for radical democratic change has never been so urgent, because the fate of democracy itself is at stake. This challenge gives new meaning, if not impetus, to the importance of cultural politics, cultural pedagogy, political agency, and social citizenship. Hopefully it is a challenge that will not be lost on educators and cultural workers who are interested in social change and the problems to be confronted in creating those crucial democratic public spheres, cultural institutions, and social relations that give substance to what philosopher Jacques Derrida (2000) calls "the promise of democracy," a promise propelled by a dream and a collective practice that makes justice, equality, and freedom operational for all members of a democratic social order.

Notes

1. I address the related issues of border crossing and cultural politics in Giroux (1992).

2. My notion of intertransdisciplinary comes from Zavarzadeh and Morton (1992, p. 10). At issue here is neither ignoring the boundaries of discipline-based knowledge nor simply fusing different disciplines, but creating theoretical paradigms, questions, and knowledge that cannot be taken up within the policed boundaries of the existing disciplines.

3. There is an ongoing debate over the meaning and relevance of citizenship for a progressives politics, and I do not want to underplay the problematic nature of my usage of the term. For some recent examples of this debate, see Shafir (1998) and "Citizenship" (2000).

4. Needless to say, cultural studies theorists such as Stuart Hall, Meaghan Morris, Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, Norman Denzin, Doreen Massey, Herman Gray, and Andrew Ross, to name only a few, have long refused reducing cultural studies to a form of textualism.

5. I address this issue in Giroux (2000).

6. I take up this issue in detail in Giroux (1992).

7. The term *professionalist legitimation* comes from my personal correspondence with Jeff Williams of the University of Missouri.

8. See Suzanne Lacy (1995) and Guillermo Gomez-Pena (1996).

9. This theme is taken up in great detail in Lipsitz (2000).

10. For a summary of some of Lacy's work, see Kelley (1995).

11. For a response to the charge that critical pedagogy, especially the work of Paulo Freire, is overly doctrinaire and impositional, see Freire and Macedo (1996).

12. This issue is taken up brilliantly in Freire (1999).

13. For a insightful analysis of the importance of radical democracy as a project for progressive and left cultural workers, see Aronowitz (1996).

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