

There is no 'space', and there are precious few 'moments', at the FIFSW. Not for risks or mistakes that may be deemed 'incompetency'— certainly not for political dissent, intimacy, or fervour. Not for the 'truth' that emerges only in difficult dialogue across fluid, prismatic difference (hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984; Yuval-Davis, 1999). There is no room for the messy, at times ugly, use of whole self that is essential to deep, critical (self-)examination and awakening (hooks, 1994; Wong, 2004). Nor for the sort of close, tender attunement to collective and subjective discomfort that nurtures radical acceptance and change (Wong, 2004, 2014). We have no time for the 'here and now' analysis that reveals the injustices and possibilities that permeate the everyday (Campbell et al., 2008). Nor for critique that might reveal immediate, incremental opportunities for genuine, necessary action. So, it is an absolute test of mettle and spirit to hold on, at the FIFSW, to the critical hope and vulnerable courage integral to transformative pedagogy and praxis (Freire, 1992; hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984).

- leedham, 2019a, p. 6

Choosing the Margin Mainstream as a Space of Radical Openness Brokenness:

Mobilising Pedagogical Crisis at the U(niversity) of T(roubles)

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"Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated and transformed through artistic and literary practice.

'The appropriation and use of space are political acts.'

- hooks, 1989, p. 23 citing Parmar, n.d. 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness'

"I will focus on a figure who intended to be retrieved, who wrote with her body."

- Spivak, 2010, p. 22

"Whenever my work messes with my mind, I suppose that I am on to something, some truth among many, that others may also find useful. When my body vibrates with the gravitational pull of another body's version of reality, I know that I need to release my own gravitational hold on reality and dialogically engage this other time and space." - Spivak, 2001, p. 725

Choosing the Margin Mainstream as a Space of Radical Openness Brokenness

How many more times can I 'do' this: bleed my theory dry to "prove my self a worthy, 'empty vessel'" (Leedham, 2019a, p. 11 citing Freire, 1970, p. 79; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2001)? Break my heart and bones to harvest them of all their love and marrow (hooks, 2001; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2001)? Then use this as an ink deprived of page to write my sorrow? I've borne ten thousand words that do not count because they fail to follow (Beltrán, 2019; hooks, 1989; Simpson, 2014). I've ripped my verse to shreds to reinscribe the meek and hollow (hooks, 1989; Simpson, 2014). Denied my sense of what is brave and just to resubstantiate the base and shallow (Fraser, 2012). A bitter pill, a shattered will, and still I cannot fill a space so narrow.

I've Come Undone: The "Choice is Crucial"¹

You can't ('learn' to) 'do' social work while trying to *undo* it (Rossiter, 2001). God knows I've tried – scraping the very depths of my soul to meet divergent political and pedagogical requirements, losing my life and my self in the praxis (Freire, 1970; Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). And a few glorious times, I have even managed to achieve this kine(sthe)tic, precarious, regenerative balance (Simpson, 2014; Wahab, Bhuyan, & Park, 2018). I have riddled out the 'truth' in the dialogue between intentions and revisions, between body and theory, between poetry and page, between syllabus and substance (Beltrán, 2019; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2001; Smith, 1999). I have chosen to *do* more, while being counselled to 'do' less – urged to

¹ (hooks, 1989, p. 15).

purge my transformative desires, obligations, ethics, and actions so that I might meet the constraints of lessons already learned, papers already penned, dialogues run their course, and theory that pretends (hooks, 1994; Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005; Simpson, 2014; Witkin, 2014). To be clear, there is so much more I yearn, and *need*, to read, re-member, write, revise, (re)think, inquire, sing, and chatter about – from soil and books and symphony, with friends and mentors I never see – but that work, I’ve finally accepted, can’t be done here (Simpson, 2014). Not in this place (and not on these pages), not by me (not right now) anyway. Oh, I am in deep reverence of those who can occupy academia oppositionally, you magnificently “subversive beings who wreck, scavenge, retool, and reassemble the colonizing university into decolonizing contraptions” (paperson, 2017, p. xiii). Your defiant endurance has built my very sense of ‘self’ and solidarity and ‘truth’ and hope and justice – and I aspired to devote the rest of my life to the very same praxis – but I’ll die if I spend any more time trying to (feign to) learn while institutionalised. I have been (re)shattered into a thousand pieces by this curricular annihilation; every time before – rather than succumbing to despair, defence, cynicism, or contempt – I have (re)collected these fragments into an unrepentant offering of insurrectionary hope, transgressive vulnerability, creative rage, and revolutionary love (Grain & Lund, 2016; hooks, 2001; Lorde, 1984; Simpson, 2014; Wahab et al., 2018). Sometimes, this chaos of affect (re)birthed coherent theory – resulting in radical, meaningful, ethico-onto-epistemological healing (Ahmed, 2013; Barad, 2007; hooks, 1994; Simpson, 2014). I wrote my self back to life, while I stayed in good graces; and it *felt* like a risk, but I checked all the boxes (hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984). It seems my lesson, this time, is to *choose* to stay broken: it is deeply inconvenient, but profoundly important. I *know* I’m trying to do too much. I *know* the task set out for me. I’ve carried out your best-laid plans, and studied what that means to me.

But I've made deeper promises my body will not break for me; and STILL although I've pledged my choice, the words, they will not speak for me (hooks, 1989; Spry, 2001). So, this is a work in progress, an incomplete praxis. A pervasive, insistent, pedagogical crisis (Grain & Lund, 2016; hooks, 1989; Kumashiro, 2000). An ongoing process – a discordant practice – of revision, infiltration, translation, and affect (Ahmed, 2007, 2013; hooks, 1989; Mignolo, 2009; Probyn, 1993).

A politics of (mis)location, (dis)location (hooks, 1989),

Transmutation,

Capitulation.

An ethics of refiguration (Ricoeur, 1984; Spry, 2001),

This act of (in)articulation²

On the first slide – in the notes section of an undelivered, undeliverable presentation – a re-regeneration I denied elocution:

I struggled so very deeply to find an entry point into this talk, for reasons I hope will become meaningful and palpable as we make our way through this learning process together. There is so much that I would want to share, to examine and unpack together, to have challenged and expanded upon and moved and reciprocated. Ultimately, at 4:00am this morning, I realised how I *must* begin: by telling you this – how *difficult* it has been. By again rehonouring the wisdom of this discomfort (Wong, 2004); by *again* reembracing the performative possibilities of this ethico-affective excess (Butler, 1997; Kumashiro, 2000); by *again* renewing my radically vulnerable, loving commitment to my self, to you all, because without this – without making this embodied politicospiritual, theoretical process explicit – there would be *no possibility for learning* here today.

² (Butler, 1997; hooks, 1989).

And that is what I long for, for all of us. That is what we are (always) meant to be doing here – and beyond – together as a collective of scholars and workers and changemakers and community members. Not proving that we ‘get it’, or that we’re ‘competent’, or that we’re ‘critically conscious’, or that we’re ‘professional’, or that we are ‘good’ – although we may, of course, be obligated to and committed to these investments in many complicated, potentially incommensurable, ways (Rossiter, 2001; Tuck & Yang, 2001). But no, we are *learning* here together, sharing our deep knowledge and our even deeper not-knowing, “liv[ing] the questions” in what is hopefully an audaciously attuned, potently messy, emotional, political, dialogical dance (Freire, 1970; Rilke, 1986, p. 34; Wong, 2004). I forgot to trust the rhythm, lost my sense of the refrain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I had to re-re-member, so I could re-re-mind us, that transformative learning takes place only through chaos, only through risk, “only through crisis” (Felman, 1995, p. 55; Fook, 2015) – at the “razor’s edge” of hope and despair, of love and rage, of forgiveness and accountability, of awakening and discomfort, of conscientisation and complicity (Freire, 1992; Grain & Lund, 2016; Lorde, 1984; Rossiter, 2011, p. 989). That it *must* implicate us in the tension of work that is carried out with vigilant awareness of the very injustice that requires it (Rossiter, 2011); *must* ensnare us in the political and ethical turmoil of uneasy solidarities, radical idealism, and crucial collective action (Ahmed, 2013); *must* force us to confront our dearest ‘truths’, our broken vows, our basest fears, our very ‘selves’ – to expose these precious, tenuous constructions to daring, harrowing scrutiny so as to unfold new matter and meaning, so as to remake each other and the world (Barad, 2007; Lorde, 1984). I (we) *need* an “intimate [re]intervention”; to sing, to soar, to weep, to fight; to demand time and space for the power and pace, the “response-ability”, the rebellious communion of close, unhurried listening and noticing and creating and grace (Beltrán, 2019; hooks, 1989, p. 17; Springgay & Zaliwska, 2017, p. 280). I (we) *need* to be, and *stay*, affected; to maintain entanglement in the gorgeous promise, the vibrant flux, the revelatory burden of anguish and indeterminacy; to accept the dangerous invitation, the delicious invocation to become something, someone else (Beltrán, 2019; Springgay & Zaliwska, 2017). So here I am, in all my agony, all my glory...terrified that no one will join me (leedham, 2019b).

Exactly where I’m supposed to be.

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