

Discourses of Opposition

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Since I was young I have enjoyed nonsense rhymes and limericks; as well as irony, satire and forms of mockery. Although I have been an academic for over forty years, I have always felt allergic to academic discipline, accompanied by a desire to escape Enlightenment categories. For the past twenty years or so an international group of academics, and practitioners associated with social work and drawn to postmodern ways of being and thinking, have met every fall in Burlington, Vermont for conversation and often frivolity. The group is the Global Partnership for Transformative Social Work (www.GPTSW.net). One of the evenings—entertainment night—is devoted to performances by participants: music, poetry, storytelling, skits.... At this event I read one of my poems written with the satirical intent of sending up a sacred cow of academic thought. This poem takes to task social work's obsession with empiricism, and number crunching embedded in neoliberal thought. Before reading I gave each participant a stick of celery, and when in the poem the line TIME TO CRUNCH appears, each person was to crunch on the celery stick. My hope was that this crunching would highlight the absurdity of empiricism as our only anchor in life.

FAREWELL to NUMBAAA CRUNCHAAS

So there I was spewing spondees on the Hellespont,
Some nice soundings anapests as well, losing count of all my majors,
And got to thinking whatever happened to those
Numbaa Crunchaas?

Torqueing their brains into abacuses and yardsticks of ruin.

TIME TO CRUNCH.

Their frontal lobes dangerously overheating

Het-up haematotherms

Contributing to global warming; such holy rollers, doltish culters,
Just give me rolling papers.

Wastrels in winklepickers, and drainpipe trousers,
numbaa crunchaas renovating their bathrooms on weekends
they grunt and grind, chop, click and stamp.

Give me drug runneres in art deco motorboats any day.

TIME TO CRUNCH

Formulas of disambiguation, mired in Pentecostal glossolalia,

Numbaa crunching even at the Stray Dog Café, like neoliberal
Enforcers with footwear issues. Wanting the rigor of a lightning bolt—
But Have you ever been hit by a lightning bolt? Torsions of energy?
Do you hear that crunching sound—DO YOU?

Not a squirrel preparing for Winter or even

References

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