

# 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](http://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 Crunchaaas?

Torqueing their brains into abacuses and yardsticks of ruin.

### TIME TO CRUNCH.

Their frontal lobes dangerously overheating  
Het-up haematherms  
Contributing to global warming; such holy rollers, doltish culters,  
Just give me rolling papers.  
Wastrels in winklepickers, and drainpipe trousers,  
numbaa crunchaaas 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

Pico Della Mirandola putting in his knashers,  
Only the tromboning din of clapped out crunchaas,  
Cradling their nugatory numbers, boiling potroasts for dinner.

**TIME TO CRUNCH.**

For they were the crunchaas, the numbaaa crunchaas, now only woozy  
Ghosts

Once stoned on orchid dust

Brandishing advance algorithms in their tumuli, plowed under

By that human sickness: the need to know

No more room left on that runway of promise

Or time for mashups in the moshpits of the sublime.

**OH YES, TIME TO CRUNCH**

Jaded termites have ballocksed the foundational joists

Ushering in a postmodern reign of error,

improved out of all knowledge

resisting the regularization ....of...experience.....into

the soluble and coherent.

Parading an affinity for dispersal, mapping on to queer coordinates,

Vectors on fire, Cartesian planar space banished to Ecuador

Quodlibets in abundance, philosophical wrestling rings,

Fractured horizons, each day perishing, time's walls the strangest

Prison.

Hark hark the dogs do bark, the postmoderns are coming to town

With their badass entourage,

Some in rags, some rolling with Lady Gaga,

And one in a glittering gown.

And before I'd had either coffee, or

A chance to tally the consequences

I knew we were in a story composed by no one from

Nothing.

So adieu, ciao, cheerio Numbaaa Crunchaas.

**TIME TO CRUNCH** one last time

Even though this poem has nonsense elements, underlying it is the wish to negate prevailing neoliberal positivism. In the 1960s as an undergraduate philosophy student, I was greatly influenced by Herbert Marcuse's (1941) *Reason and Revolution* where he states that he wrote the book largely to help preserve "a mental faculty in danger of being obliterated: the power of negative thinking" (p. vii). Marcuse wanted to set in opposition to the prevailing totalitarian power of given facts that tend to define the entire universe of discourse, languages of contradiction and liberation. For many years my thought and writing have been driven by my wish to escape the baleful and deadening influence of the Enlightenment and its valorizing of empiricism and instead to argue for Foucault's (1997) hope that we become artists of our own lives.

## References

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